

CALDBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Caldbeck Parish Hall on Tuesday 9th May 2017 at 7:00p.m..

Cllrs Present: Norman Atkinson (Chairman), Alastair MacFadzean Paul Doherty, Alan Tyson, Richard Hellon, Ian Shaw, Angela Glendinning & Christina Coulthard.

Also Present: Andrea McCallum (Locum Clerk) & eight members of the public.

Apologies for absence were received from Tim Cartmell & Colin Smithson.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th May 2016 were agreed and signed as a true record.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome everyone and thank you for coming tonight. For those of you who do not know me, I'm Norman Atkinson and I am Chairman of Caldbeck Parish Council, having held the post for the last three years.

The Chairman's report is the opportunity for me to give you a summary of the Parish Council's work over the last year, which as I hope you'll see, has been quite productive. However, before I do this I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our parish councillors for the service they have given to our community over the last 12 months. Often much of the work goes on unseen and without favour or reward, while at other times it can be overt and controversial. I do know that to the best of your ability, you represent the whole parish and always have the best interests of the community at heart. You're one of a number of cogs that helps keep the community machine running smoothly. So thank you.

Before getting down to business I must mention one obvious change to the parish council's structure and that is the resignation of Elizabeth Clark our Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. After 2 years in the role, Elizabeth decided that she needed to give up the post due to other work and family commitments. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for the service provided to our community over the last 2 years. The Parish Council did advertise and appoint a new Clerk, however only last week the new person felt they were no longer able to take up the post. We will now be re-advertising position.

So now to the years events.

One of the Council's responsibilities is scrutinising and commenting on planning applications. The Council supports most applications but having voted on the issue sometimes decides to object, having taken into account local views, correspondence and any other material factors. Planning applications are advertised on the National Park website, in the local papers, on statutory notices and are on the Parish Council Agenda for each meeting, which is published on all the parish notice boards. Residents can give their views to both the Parish Council and to the National Park Authority, either in support or to object to a particular application.

Over the last 12 months the Council dealt with 23 planning applications, of these 20 were supported and 3 were objected to. Two of the objections related to the removal of the payphone at Hesket Newmarket. There were a variety of applications comprising of minor extensions, barn conversions, and new buildings which included domestic, agricultural and commercial premises, as well as tree felling. It goes without saying that the length and variety of debate on all these varied considerably, depending on the application under discussion.

At the January Parish Council meeting we had a presentation by the Allerdale Housing Officer who gave a general overview of housing needs within Allerdale but also focused on those for Caldbeck Parish. The 2016 housing survey identified a need for 16 homes, varying in size from 1 - 4 bedrooms including bungalows. In particular, affordable housing and homes for rent were identified. Since then Allerdale have recently been successful in receiving a £770,000 grant to support community led housing developments in areas such as Caldbeck, where the impact of second homes is particularly acute and house prices are high, putting them out of reach of young people. A further meeting I had with them confirmed they are keen to work with any local groups or individuals, who would be willing to progress this on behalf of the community. An item has been placed in the May edition of the Parish Magazine, highlighting this and looking for a community response.

Currently the Lake District National Park Authority are reviewing their Local Plan. A key part of this is to ask local communities to identify suitable sites within the park for both domestic and commercial development. Normal planning process will still be followed but basically they are looking for ideas from people on the ground. In February it became apparent that the Friar Row area of Caldbeck was not included in Allerdale's Local Development Plan, which effectively precluded any development. Following a meeting with them it was requested that any planning applications for this area are considered outwith the plan on their own individual merits.

We no longer have a current Parish Plan, which expired in 2015. For the future the Council needs to consider whether it needs to have such a strategic document to guide how we move forward over the next 10 or more years. How do we maintain a vibrant and caring community, that young people can come into and are not forced to move away in order to get on the housing ladder, due to the lack of affordable housing? It would also cover such issues as leisure, tourism, infrastructure, and services. In addition to simply doing nothing, there are the options of having either a Neighbourhood Plan or a Community Plan. Producing either document would require a great deal of work from councillors and the community as a whole. It is a big undertaking and would likely take 12 - 24 months to complete due to the level of consultation currently required by the Department of Communities and Local Government. However, other communities have managed and help and grants are available. It's not urgent but it's something for us to consider over the coming months.

The Parish Council liaises regularly with County Highways Department, reporting potholes and other damage to roads, drainage problems and damaged or broken signs. Where necessary, councillors will meet with Highways Engineers onsite to ensure the problem is fully understood. Due to the 2015 December floods, resources allocated for some minor works were redirected to those areas of the County where the need was greatest. I am pleased to report that some of those works such as resurfacing of the road at the back of Caldbeck Green and at Upton are now back on this coming years schedule of works. We continue to push for proper resurfacing work to be done on Hesket Lonning. We also have responsibility for the grass cutting on Hesket Newmarket and Caldbeck Greens. Each year the contracts for cutting both Greens are put out to tender and last year's contractor, Mark Binney, was successful again this year and cutting is already underway. This year it was agreed to extend the grass cutting to include the common area above the Methodist Chapel, adjacent to Caldbeck Pond.

The Parish Council has responsibility for notice boards, benches and litter bins throughout the parish. Some of the notice boards have now been upgraded or replaced. In conjunction with Allerdale Borough Council, additional litter/dog fouling bins have been erected at various points around the parish, while a further bench has been donated and now sits on Hesket Newmarket Green. We are also responsible for the Market Cross in Hesket Newmarket and the John Peel Shelter in Caldbeck, which is rented to the Fair World Shop. Both are insured by the Parish Council and are inspected each year and where necessary, repairs are carried out. This year the Market Cross required timber treatment preservation to ensure its long-term future. Management of Hesket Newmarket Allotments is again the responsibility of the Council and working with their Allotment Holders Association, the allotments are inspected by Councillors twice a year.

On 27 August last year the Caldbeck Parish Boundary Walk took place and as most will know it happens every 21 years and has its roots going back to at least 1686. The Parish Council were instrumental in initially progressing the 2016 walk and a number of our councillors were actively involved with the organisation of the event, together with other members of the community. I think we all can reflect on a thoroughly enjoyable day that was a well organised community event, which was safe, fun and in keeping with tradition but fit for current times. We had 305 walkers taking part and were assisted by 40 volunteers. See you there 2037?

On 5th September, the Tour of Britain Cycle Race came to our parish passing through both Hesket Newmarket and Caldbeck. There was an excellent turnout locally and the Parish Council contacted local businesses, encouraging them to make best use of the opportunities presented by increased visitors to the area. Local residents got into the spirit of the event with decorated yellow bikes in both villages and bunting hanging from walls.

Work on the Caldbeck to Hesket New Market Footpath still continues and remains the only item still outstanding within the 2005 - 2015 Caldbeck Parish Plan. At this time 6 landowners have signed option papers, with one other almost there. We are grateful for their continued support. However, back in December a bombshell was dropped on our project by Messrs Hodgson no longer being prepared to sell or dedicate their relevant pieces of land for the purpose of the footpath. This is despite being in agreement with it for over two years. Notwithstanding the Parish Council's best efforts, they still remain opposed to the project. The Parish Council were both frustrated and disappointed that Messrs Hodgson decide to 'pull the plug' at this late stage, given the considerable number of voluntary hours dedicated to the project and not to mention the £5,000 - £6,000 that was spent unnecessarily on solicitors fees and detailed surveying. The Parish Council were faced with two options, to either give up on the project or to go down the Footpath Creation Order route. After a difficult debate we reluctantly chose the Footpath Creation Order option, knowing the sensitivities and complexities involved in such a course of action. Cumbria County Council are the responsible authority who have the legal powers to create a footpath. At this time the Parish Council are currently in negotiations with Cumbria County Council senior officers and elected members, together with Lake District National Park officers and elected members. We expect to hear from Cumbria County Council during the coming month. We remain optimistic for the success of the project and even at this late stage, the door still remains open for Messrs Hodgson and Messrs Mounsey to come on board. Over the last 12 months I am grateful for the support given by the parish council to the project and in particular the work put in by Tim Cartmell, Alan Tyson and Alick Grieve.

Cumbria Association of Local Council's Allerdale meetings, National Park Forums and the Local Neighbourhood Forum are regularly attended by members of the Council, which allows us to get a better perspective on issues affecting parishes both in Allerdale and the National Park, as well as those county wide. The future funding of local street lighting still remains an issue and although the push from Allerdale to off-load the cost onto parishes, seems to have quietened over the last 9 months, we have look to maintain sufficient reserves to cover the cost should the need arise. We continue to closely monitor the situation. What is clear is that there is no money available for additional street lighting, something that the Council has been looking into regarding an additional street light in Caldbeck, on the way to the school from the village.

The Council continues to work with our local Lake District National Park Area Ranger, Cath Johnson, who is a useful contact for assisting with park maintenance issues. Following concerns raised by residents about vehicles parking and erosion of verges on both Hesket Newmarket and Caldbeck Greens, the Parish Council met with her to consider what, if anything, could be done to improve the situation. Long term, the Parish Council have made initial enquiries about extending the car park at Hesket Newmarket to help ease the problem. Other options such as bollards, kerbs and grasscrete were considered, as has been done previously but clearly there is no simple solution. Cath will give consideration to the options and will report back in due course. The Parish Council have also queried the amount of money raised through the voluntary donation box on Caldbeck Car Park. On a separate issue we have made tentative enquires regarding the feasibility of transferring pockets of land, owned by the Park, into Parish Council ownership. It's early stages and we will continue to oversee this during the coming year.

David Ward kindly continues to act as representative for the Parish Council on the Northern Fells Group. The Police Community Support Officer when available attends our meetings, however the Parish Council did raise concerns directly with the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding timeliness of their crime mapping data, which can be months out of date. Duncan Fairbairn, is/was (I wrote this before the local elections on Thursday) our Borough and County Councillor and nearly always attends our meetings and reports on issues affecting us, as well as listening to any concerns raised and where possible, assists in resolving them.

In February the Parish Council were disappointed to learn that Stagecoach would no longer be operating the daily summer 73/73A service from Carlisle to Keswick, via Caldbeck. This only leaves it operating on a Saturday. Despite expressing our concerns to our local MP Rory Stewart, it appears little can be done to resurrect it.

The Parish Council have monitored the optimistically named 'Success Regime', which is reviewing healthcare in North and West Cumbria. From a local perspective we sent letters of support to maintain the residential beds at Wigton Hospital, knowing that local residents, particularly the elderly and their families, have benefited from this facility.

That concludes this year's report, which I hope has given you a good insight into the Parish Council's work over the last 12 months. The Council and I look forward to hearing any comments you may have and listening to any issues you may wish to raise.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & OPEN DISCUSSION

Gillian McElvague, Headteacher of Fellview Primary School addressed the meeting and asked if the Parish Council would be willing to cover the cost of grass cutting over holiday periods? This was envisaged to be in the region of £200-400/annum and had become necessary due to drastic cuts in education funding. Advised that she would forward exact costs to the council for consideration. This item to be considered at the AGM to follow.

Resident congratulated the council on their persistence with the proposed footpath along Hesket Lonning and advised that their persistence was appreciated by village residents.

Resident raised that the current Parish Plan was out-of-date and that consideration of a revised plan or the production of a Neighbourhood Plan should be considered? This item to be considered at the AGM to follow.

A representative of the History Society congratulated the council on decisions it had made in the past and advised on the History Society's problems in attracting new members.

Fairtrade refreshments were provided during the meeting.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7:37 p.m. and was followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Footnote - In relation to the Caldbeck - Hesket Newmarket Footpath, at the time the Annual Parish Meeting was held, the landowner who was about to sign (Mr S.Watson), had actually signed. This referenced in the Annual Parish Council Meeting minutes.