

CALDBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Caldbeck Parish Hall on Tuesday 10th May 2016 commencing at 7pm.

Councillors Present: Norman Atkinson, Alan Tyson, Colin Smithson, Angela Glendinning, Tim Cartmell, Alastair Macfadzean, Ian Shaw, Paul Doherty & Christina Coulthard.

Also Present: Elizabeth Clark (Clerk), Duncan Fairbairn (District and County Councillor) & numerous parishioners.

Apologies for absence were received from Antoinette Ward, Sally Vaux, Laura Potts & PCSO Kerry Harris.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th May 2015 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT and PARISH PLAN

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 two 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 highlight this it is worth pointing out that at this time last year following a number of councillors not seeking re-election we had only 7 councillors, three of whom were new to the role. I am now pleased to say that following further notification of the vacancies in the Parish Magazine and on the public notice boards, we now have our full complement of 10 parish councillors, they having being co-opted onto the council.

In August we were joined by Richard Hellon, who has strong local connections to Caldbeck and the surrounding community. Then in September, Paul Doherty joined us, who for the last five years has been the Northern Fells Broadband representative, and probably already felt like a member of the Parish Council due to his regular attendance by updating us on progress. In March this year, Christina Coulthard joined us and no doubt reduced our council's average age considerably. We were all agreed that it would be good to get the opinions of some of the younger members of our community, especially through Christina's strong links with the Young Farmer's Club.

Despite our best efforts we were unable to persuade anybody from Hesket New Market to join us, although I am very pleased with our current bunch of willing and able councillors, who to the best of their ability, represent the whole parish and always have the best interests of the community at heart. So thank you for the public spirited work that you have done over the last year, much of the work you do will often go unnoticed but rest assured, you're one of a number of cogs that helps keep the community machine firing on all four cylinders - well most of the time.

It has also been a year since our new Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer took up her post. Elizabeth has now become part of the scenery and her guidance and reporting is much appreciated. This is reinforced by the favourable comments received from our external auditor, who had no matters to bring to the attention of the Council following our annual audit.

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, the parish plan 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 18 planning applications, of these 16 were supported, 2 were objected to. There were a variety of applications comprising of minor extensions, barn conversions, 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 these varied considerably, depending on the application under discussion.

Over the last few years the Parish Council have become concerned over some applications, which we have either supported or objected to but the decision by the National Park Planners is at odds with our viewpoint. Therefore some councillors recently met with the North Distinctive Area Planning Officer and looked at ways that we could improve our responses by reviewing some relevant planning applications. It was felt that we all gained from this meeting but it is early days and is one that we will keep an eye on over the coming months.

The Parish Council have been pressing the National Park to improve their planning website so that all documents relating to an application, such as letters of objection or support, are available to be viewed on-line, as is the case with Allerdale Borough Council. Despite a positive response over a year ago from the National Park's Director of Planning, this has still not been achieved. We will continue to press for this.

At the last Parish Council meeting we had a presentation by the Allerdale Housing Officer on affordable housing. Amongst other things, the 2013 housing survey identified within the parish a need for 21 homes, varying in size from 1 - 3 bedrooms, primarily for social rent.

The Caldbeck Parish Plan 2005 - 2015, as its title suggests, is now out of date. 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 or are not forced to move away in order to get on the housing ladder, due to the lack of affordable housing? 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.

In September a bombshell was dropped upon us in the form of the impending closure of Caldbeck village shop and post office. In response to public concerns, the council, in conjunction with the church, worked together to hold a public meeting to consider options for the future, as at that time it looked as though a buyer for the business was unlikely to be found. Approximately 150 people attended the meeting, which clearly demonstrated how important such an asset is to our community. Fortunately Mike and Lynne Steadman later recognised its importance to the community and were in a position to buy the shop as a going concern. We wish them well with this venture but it also serves as a stark reminder of our need to support local businesses such as this, as we don't have to look too far afield to see what happens when the shop, the pub and the school goes, none of which I hasten to add, is under any threat. Again it's all about sustaining a viable community.

The Parish Council liaises regularly with County Highways Department, reporting potholes and other damage to roads, drainage problems and damaged or broken signs, even the gravel heaps at Blue Gate Cross Roads. Where necessary, councillors will meet with Highways Engineers onsite to ensure the problem is fully understood. However due to the December floods much of the resources allocated for some minor works, have been redirected to those areas where the need was greater, for example resurfacing of the road at the back of Caldbeck Green and at Upton. That said, they are still on our radar for the future. Fortunately the December floods did not directly impact on our parish in terms of damage, although a short while before then, some properties were affected on Riverside, Caldbeck.

Currently we are waiting for drainage work to be carried out on School Hill, which is causing problems for residents on Commercial Row and we are also looking for improvements to be made to Wath Brow, which can be particularly dangerous in winter, when the excess water freezes across the road. Although we have had further meetings with the County Council Highways Department these remain unresolved, so we will continue to push for all these works to be completed. On a more positive note the County Council have now installed cycle stands in both Caldbeck and Hesket New Market. The Parish Council continues to welcome any residents to get in touch with us should they have any concerns over any issues affecting the parish.

Thick green algae on Caldbeck Pond was a concern last year during the summer months, however after investigation by the National Park Ranger it was deemed to be filamentous algae, which can occur during hot periods when combined with a build up of some nutrients. A group of volunteers were organised to remove it but fortunately nature took its own course and it disappeared naturally. Hopefully we will be spared it this year. The condition of some of the trees on Caldbeck Green and the Straights have recently been inspected by Lowther Forestry, and generally are in good shape.

We also have responsibility for the grass cutting on Hesket New Market 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. It must be spring.

Work on the Caldbeck to Hesket New Market Footpath still continues and remains the only item still outstanding within the Parish Plan. Tim Cartmell, Alan Tyson, Alick Grieve and myself continue to work with all 10 landowners, the County Council and the National Park to achieve this. Unfortunately one landowner has since withdrawn their support, however after consultation with the Highways Department they are happy for the project still to progress, as the footpath will only go back onto to the road at a relatively safe point, for a very short distance. Detailed mapping of the route, suitable for planning, legal and compensation purposes, has now been completed by specialists. These are the first costs we have incurred, as all work so far has been done on a voluntary basis. The next stage is for legal contracts to be drawn up for each landowner and then to submit the planning application. Having reviewed our estimate of costs, we felt there was a likelihood that the project might just exceed

the generous donation from Doreen Steadman. Therefore County Councillor Duncan Fairbairn kindly offered us £4839 from his member grant, which we successfully applied for. For a small council like ours, this is a considerable project and will still take a concerted effort to achieve it. We do however remain optimistic for its success.

On 27 August this year the Parish Boundary Walk will take place and as most will know it happens every 21 years and has its roots going back to at least 1686. The Parish Council has been instrumental in progressing the 2016 walk, as it is a strong community event, bringing together a variety of people old and young, friends and families, to be part of a piece of living local history. In January a meeting was held with 26 people attending, with offers of help from several more who were unable to attend. A Steering Group of 11 people was formed, chaired by yours truly with five key areas of responsibility identified. The group meets regularly to ensure good progress is being made and we are all confident it will be a successful, safe, fun and well organised family event, fit for current times. We anticipate there may be 300 walkers taking part, with up to 40 volunteers. All we need is good weather.

July finally saw high speed broadband being delivered to Caldbeck and Hesket New Market, which is a great step forward, although there still remains some difficulty with downloading speeds for those living in the more isolated part of the Parish. If needed, I'm sure Paul Doherty will be able to update you later, as to the latest position on possible solutions for those areas suffering low speeds.

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 Allerdale parishes, as well as those county wide. Two key issues relevant to our parish are those concerning the ownership and maintenance of street lighting and public toilets, which Allerdale are looking to off-load onto parishes due to ever shrinking budgets. No firm dates have been set but there is general feeling of inevitability that it will happen in the next couple of years. This would mean at least £3,000 for street lighting and £1500 for the toilets, which would be a considerable chunk of our £10,900 budget. After careful consideration in order to start to build a reserve to cover this, the Parish Council agreed to increase the 2016 - 17 parish precept by an average of £3.07 to raise £1000. We continue to closely monitor the situation.

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. You may have noticed the donation box which appeared in Caldbeck car park last year, and we have since established any monies received, is for maintenance of that car park, not the National Park as a whole. David Ward kindly continues to act as representative for the Parish Council on the Northern Fells Group. The Police Community Support Officer continues to provide us with regular reports on local activity in the area and when available attends our meetings. Duncan Fairbairn, our Borough and County Councillor, 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.

The Parish Council has responsibility for notice boards, benches and litter bins throughout the parish. The 'Men in Sheds' have kindly agreed to assist with the maintenance of the benches. The notice boards at the school and opposite the Caldbeck shop still require upgrading. Work to repair the one by the school is currently underway and the notice board at Haltcliffe is also being replaced. We are also responsible for the John Peel Shelter in Caldbeck, which is rented to the Fair World Shop, and the Market Cross in Hesket New Market. Both are insured by the Parish Council and are inspected each year and where necessary, repairs are carried out. Management of Hesket New Market Allotments is again the responsibility of the Council and are inspected by Councillors twice a year. Following enquiries by the Parish Council we established that Hesket New Market Play Area had been omitted from Allerdale's Dog Control Order list, which has now been resolved.

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

It was questioned that it was rumoured that the reason one landowner pulled out of the Caldbeck & Hesket footpath was that he was advised that he would have to 'upkeep' his part of the land. Cllr Atkinson confirmed that this was not the reason, there were a number of issues raised, which the Council believed they could have resolved, however the landowner no longer wanted to go ahead with the project. Although a setback, it had been worked through with the Highways Authority and the Council are pleased the other ten landowners are still onboard with this worthwhile community project.

A parishioner advised that the pond at Hesket Newmarket was clogged up with grass. The parish council were thanked for all their hard work.

Fairtrade refreshments were provided during the meeting.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7:45 pm and was followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting.