

## DALSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Victory Hall, Dalston on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 7.30pm.

### PRESENT

Mr Ronnie Auld (Chairman, Parish Council) in the Chair, Sgt. Paul Senior (Cumbria Constabulary), Dr Jim Cox OBE (Commission for Rural Communities Board Member) and forty eight Parishioners including Parish Council members.

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Collier (Cumbria County Council), Trevor Allison, Stephen Tweedie (Carlisle City Council), Gary Harrison, John Kelsey (Parish Council), Zoe Sutton (Carlisle CC Rural Support Officer), Stephen Fraser (Head St Michael's School), Insp. David Coates (Cumbria Constabulary).

### MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007 were agreed and signed.

### CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Early in the financial year one local business man commented that the Parish Council '*does not appear to do very much*'. As it turned out, he couldn't have been more wrong! Your Parish Council has been extremely busy on many fronts, some involving capital expenditure and some others in support of groups within the Parish.

2008 has seen the completion of the environmental and safety improvements to the Station Access. This project took four years to plan and bring to fruition with the total costs involved in the region of £40,000. Apart from the precept income, outside funding had been obtained from BP Oils (£2,500), Mallinson Fabrications (£3,000), Carlisle Parish Councils Association (£2,363.20 - Carlisle District and Cumbria County Councils) and the Carlisle District Councillors Discretionary Fund (£3,000). Grateful thanks were due to all of these bodies for their help.

During the year there had been two resignations from the Parish Council – Michael Smillie and Oliver Roberts. Michael's business knowledge and financial expertise had been invaluable, especially in relation to building the budget. Olly, with his great knowledge of all things Dalston, had served on the Council for 21 years in two spells beginning in the 1980s. His responses to issues were well considered and he was always able to fill in the details relating to Dalston history. Michael and Olly had been replaced on the Parish Council by Stephen Scaife and Cynthia Millar respectively.

The Parish Council had continued to meet monthly at Forge Green, as it had not proved possible to move to a more central location. The Parish Council and others had worked very hard to try and find alternative premises as a replacement library. The County Council, at considerable expense, commissioned Capita Symonds to produce a report into other suitable sites around the centre of Dalston with little materialising, but dialogue was on-going.

In 2007 PC Colin Hird was joined by a Police Community Support Officer, Emma Tonge, both now familiar figures around the village. A new Police Post had been established at St Michael's School, with the help of a £3,240 grant from the Parish Council towards refurbishment of the rented space, as well as car parking provision at Nestle and it would hopefully remain operational for many years.

In November 2007 £5,328 was awarded in annual grants to parish organisations. Organisations were reminded that they can apply annually for funding from the Parish Council.

Councillors and the Clerk represented Dalston Parish on outside committees and attended relevant meetings. Pauline Dalton and Liz Auld were on the Cumbria Association of Local Councils Executive and Ronnie Auld and the Clerk on the Carlisle Parish Councils Association Executive. John Kelsey attended the Carlisle Environment Forum and Bryan Craig and Oliver Rickerby in particular represented the Parish Council at other organisation meetings. A good number of Dalston residents and councillors attend the Neighbourhood Forum meetings to lobby the County and District Councils on matters which were of special interest.

The Redsppearlands Group, in particular Alan Lyne, was to be thanked for its hard work and dedication in looking after the parish footpaths. This year they had been working on the Redsppear Circuit and in 2008 hoped to be involved in replacing stiles with new access gates on a footpath to the rear of the Station. The

Redspear Circuit was Dalston's Health Walk for all ages and abilities and featured 6 beautifully painted marker posts created by the children of St Michael's and Raughton Head Primary Schools.

In last year's Cumbria in Bloom competition, Dalston won the Large Village Trophy, Barras House residents were presented with the Special Category Award by the Mayor of Carlisle and St Michael's won the Youth Award. Obviously it was hoped to build on the success this year with a new team of people looking after the Station and the Square areas. Grateful thanks were extended to Carlisle City Council for its continuing support with the provision of bedding plants. Special thanks were also due to Judy Rickerby for lots of work over several years in these areas.

Another group of parishioners enjoying considerable success in their endeavours was the Festival Committee under the chairmanship of Alan Dinning. The Festival had been a huge achievement and it was hoped that the 2008 event would build on the previous two years. Congratulations were due to all who plan, organise and run the Festival and the Parish Council would continue to support their efforts wherever possible.

We were very lucky to have a couple of excellent schools in Dalston village and a first class primary school in Raughton Head and the Parish Council tried to support the schools whenever possible. Next year was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Caldew School and more information on events should be available from Cheryl Eastburn, the Caldew Enterprise and Communications Co-ordinator. Stephen Fraser, the much respected Head at St Michaels, had been put forward for the award of National Headmaster of the Year and the Parish Council had been delighted to write an endorsement in support of Mr Fraser.

In 2007 a questionnaire was completed by 340 parishioners and businesses and the overwhelming message arising was that there was a traffic and parking issue in Dalston and that the Parish Council must try and do something about it. Everyone recognised that the volume of traffic through Dalston was increasing – Dalston was the de facto southern bypass for Carlisle and this situation would only get worse as Carlisle grew and crept ever closer to Dalston. While the Parish Council was unable to do little about traffic movement, it could, in conjunction with Cumbria County Council and Carlisle District Highways, look to improving parking, not just in the Square, but elsewhere in the village. Following this questionnaire and a subsequent very well attended public consultation, the Parish Council was sponsoring a working group, which would meet in the near future to progress some plans to alleviate parking in the village as well as to improve the environs of the Square. This would probably be an even bigger project than the Station access and it was essential to attract as much external grant funding as possible, together with other ways of financing the scheme, but it may well result in further pressure on the precept. Hopefully Cumbria County Council and Carlisle District Council will find it possible to assist Dalston with such a major environmental project.

The Parish Plan published in 2005 included a list of important tasks for the future. The Council had pursued some of the high priority actions identified, but there was still much to do before 2015.

During the year the Parish Council was consulted on 101 planning applications.

The Chairman thanked his colleagues on the Parish Council who had contributed to a busy and reasonably dynamic year for the Council, with specific mention of Ian Newton who was always willing to attend to the many little repair jobs that frequently crop up in the Parish. Outside the Council, acknowledgement was made of Stephanie Diver for her dedicated clearing up after the selfish and mindless people dropping litter around the village, to the Recreation Association team, many of whom were involved in the organisation of the Festival and Judy Rickerby for making such a success of the very popular scarecrow event. Liz Auld, the Chairman's wife with 16 years experience as the Parish Clerk was a ready source of information and grateful thanks of all the Council were expressed to her for another year of sterling service and support. Dalston WI was thanked for providing the refreshments at the meeting.

One resident expressed concern regarding the amount of expenditure on the Station access improvements. The meeting was advised that Mallinson Fabrication had offered to make a decorative entrance archway to the platform area. It was suggested that funding towards the cost of cycle racks or boxes, which were more secure, might be applied for from the Neighbourhood Forum.

#### PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

Copies of the unaudited accounts for 2007/08 were made available at the meeting. Income (£63,259.61) exceeded expenditure (£58,040.22) leaving a profit of £5,219.39 for the year. The total balance carried forward was £37,501.54. The Clerk reported that interest and burial income was up and rent was received from both properties at Forge Green for the full year. Miscellaneous income of £5,500 was received for the Station access project. Expenditure included the Clerk's salary rise by one scale point, increased Cemetery maintenance, grave space and headstone repairs. Capital costs of £18,105 were for the Station access scheme. Section 137 expenditure of £3,240 went towards the refurbishment work for the Police Post. The income, expenditure and profit were all higher than the budget figures.

## OBSERVATIONS ON PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES 01/04/08-31/03/09

The precept had been raised by £1,600 to £33,600. It was budgeted to receive capital grant income of £15,000 and a £4,000 concurrent services grant. Figures for expenditure included an overlap of Clerk's employment and settlement, an allowance for office development and equipment and an increase in open spaces costs. Capital schemes costing £30,000 included the Station access, car parking provision professional fees, riverbank repairs, village presentation and fencing renewal/repairs around the Green. The predicted deficit was £25,919, reducing the balance carried forward to £6,585.

## DALSTON FESTIVAL REPORT AND UPDATE FOR 2008

Alan Dinning reported that the Festival would run from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August 2008. There would be a scarecrow trail and competition, a Friday evening event in the Square and a Parade to Dalston Show on the second Saturday, as well as other events throughout the week. Additional members on the Committee were welcomed and offers of help with the floats and tents would be appreciated.

## CUMBRIA CONSTABULARY – POLICE REPORT

Sergeant Paul Senior thanked the Parish Council for its support in getting a PCSO and the Police Post up and running in Dalston. The telephone line alone had cost £23,000, the IT facility was still to install and the annual rent of the school premises was £9,000. He reported that the crime statistics for the Dalston area had steadily improved over the last five years, with the Brampton Local Policing Team achieving the best figures in Cumbria. The Police were moving into a period of customer focused objectives rather than excessive desk work. Traffic operations were to include regular speed and HGV checks and enforcements. The presence of Emma Tonge in the village was making a difference, despite only having limited powers as a PCSO. These powers were explained to those present at the meeting. Councillor Millar asked for a police presence at the Station. Incidents of vandalism and anti social behaviour there should be reported to the British Transport Police. Mr Hickson reported that the wall adjoining Garden House Nursery had been damaged four times by vehicles being parked on the pavement outside the Corner Shop, as well as school children climbing onto the outbuilding roofs. Parking on the junction was causing visibility problems for drivers. The quality of CCTV cameras had to be good enough for Police standards. Sergeant Senior indicated that 2 mobile CCTV units could be deployed to the worst crime areas in the Brampton area.

## GUEST SPEAKER: DR JIM COX OBE, COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES BOARD

The guest speaker was Dr Jim Cox OBE who gave a talk as a board member of the Commission for Rural Communities. The Board, funded by DEFRA, focused on tackling rural disadvantage in relation to rural economies, affordable housing, social exclusion, road safety and access to health care. Its role was to feed information to local and national government by providing knowledge and expertise regarding the state of the countryside and the often misleading statistics, acting as an advocacy for rural people by highlighting the misconceptions regarding rural poverty and ensuring that government policy was rural proofed. Through representation and decision making it was hoped to move power and finance closer to people locally. People moved to the countryside but wages were lower, with one million people being below the poverty line in rural England. Dr Cox highlighted the work of the Commission with stories of local relevant situations. He indicated that future work included looking at fuel, food and house prices and how to sort out affordability for rural communities. Rural services, such as primary health care might need to change, with the attached implications and affect of cost and accessibility. He stressed the need to be aware of friends and neighbours who were less fortunate. Mr Turnbull indicated that Housing Associations had planning difficulties with the Government in relation to rents and property values. 11,000 new rural homes were required per annum and District Councils needed to take into account the increasing difficulties. Dr Cox was thanked for his interesting and entertaining talk.

## OPEN QUESTIONS

Mr Jackson suggested that there were an awful lot of good youngsters in the Parish and that too much 'youth bashing' as a result of the few trouble makers, might be out of proportion.

The meeting closed at 9.08pm.