

DALSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Victory Hall, Dalston on Tuesday 28th April 2009 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT

Mr Ronnie Auld (Parish Council Chairman in the Chair), PC Colin Hird (Caldew Area Community Officer) and forty eight Parishioners including Parish Council members.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Collier (Cumbria County Council), Trevor Allison, Nicola Clarke (Carlisle City Council), Felicity Kaye-Krzeczkowski, David Hand, Stephen Scaife (Parish Council), Zoe Sutton (Carlisle CC Rural Support Officer), Judith Gardner (Cumbria CC Rural Support Officer), Stephen Fraser (Head St Michael's School), David and Molly Marsden, Alan Lyne, Peter and Liz Walsh, Stephanie Diver, Peter and Jean Garnett.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 29th April 2008 and the Parish Meeting Notes from 7th February 2009 were agreed and signed.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Ronnie Auld, Chairman, reported that it had been a busy year dominated by the consideration of some major planning applications, as well as issues arising from the traffic and parking and Conservation Area review consultation early in the year. The messages from the questionnaire, which were discussed at the meeting, were quite clear, namely that the people of Dalston wanted action on traffic and parking issues, ranging from around the schools twice a day to the Square where, on bad days, upwards of 50 vehicles could park, through to the difficulties around Glave Hill garage and down the Kingsway caused partly by business overspill. The consultation responses underlined the need for action and that a number of options should be examined. Following meetings and negotiations with Cumbria Highways and Carlisle City Council representatives it was hoped that time limited parking in the Square and a 20mph speed limit in the middle of Dalston would be introduced, together with the Parish Council providing an additional parking area and environmental improvements on the Kingsway near the centre of the village.

The Station access and adjacent footway environmental and safety improvements had been completed. A group of volunteers was working hard to improve the Station platform area.

2008 saw the introduction across the county of the Highway Stewards Scheme. Dalston was allocated a share of a Highway Steward's time to make repairs to parts of the road system under the control of the County Council. The work was mainly concerned with emergency pothole repair and the clearing of blocked drains. Councillor Stephen Scaife was appointed to liaise with and report any minor defects to the Cumbria Highways Steward.

Capital projects, which included renovation of the Green fencing, CCTV and a litterbin at the Recreation Centre and Primrose Hall floor covering, were all gratefully supported financially through Carlisle Parish Councils Association. The annual village presentation budget was enhanced by volunteers helping with successful Cumbria in Bloom (Silver Gilt), Village of the Year (Environment Award), Barras House (residential home category runner up) and St Michael's School (Certificate of Merit, Britain in Bloom Neighbourhood Awards) competition entries, gardening tasks and litter picking (1,400 bags). Specific thanks were expressed to Bob Nichol, Jenny and Ian Gray, Merle Smith, Stephen Carruthers, Judy Rickerby and Stephanie Diver. In addition, the Parish Council was able to help many local organisations financially with grants totalling £5,971.

The Dalston Festival had been a huge success due to the hard work of Committee members under the chairmanship of Alan Dinning, with Judy Rickerby organising the scarecrow competition and trail. Some proceeds had been put towards the provision of Christmas lighting in Dalston.

Looking beyond Dalston Parish, members of the Parish Council and the Clerk had sat on a number of committees including the Cumbria Association of Local Councils Executive (Liz Auld and Pauline Dalston), Carlisle Parish Councils Association Executive (Liz and Ronnie Auld), Carlisle Environment Forum (John Kelsey) and the Carlisle Economic Development Forum (Ronnie Auld). Every opportunity was taken to represent the needs of Dalston at both district and county level.

The Chairman felt it inevitable that, in the next year or so, there could be changes to local government in Cumbria. Two years ago there was a rejected bid by the County Council to impose a unitary model on Cumbria. More recently the proposed merging of Carlisle and Allerdale also failed to progress. The state of Carlisle's finances could result in major economies in the coming months and thoughts of unitary principles might resurface. A certainty was the need for Dalston Parish Council to consider its role and to be open minded to changing responsibilities.

Out of a total of 76 planning applications considered during the year, the application for 12 dwellings with associated workspace at Kingswood, Cumdivock, a Dobbies Garden World at Westwood Nurseries and the proposal for a new Co-op on the Glave Hill garage site had taken up a great deal of Parish Council time. The Parish Council meeting venue had been moved three times to the Victory Hall to accommodate many more members of the public than usual, including a public consultation meeting for the village regarding the Co-op application. A capacity gathering was given the opportunity to question the developer, the architect, Cumbria Highways, Carlisle City Council conservation officer and Co-op management. So far only the Kingswood application had been resolved. Consideration of the Dobbies Garden World and the Co-op applications had been deferred pending reports and more information. The Co-op proposals had caused some controversy due to the size of the project on quite a small site. Various straw polls suggest that Dalston residents were broadly in favour of a new improved Co-op. While housing might have been the preferred option, a replacement Co-op would probably be a better solution for Dalston than a continuing garage and car sales operation.

The Chairman expressed his indebtedness to all members of the Parish Council, who did a great deal of unseen work away from the glare of monthly meetings. Members mentioned in particular were Ian Newton for maintenance tasks, Steven Scaife for litter picking along the cycle track at the back of the schools and David Cowen, Bryan Craig and Gary Harrison for their building and surveying knowledge. Mr Dave Couling, the Internal Auditor, was thanked for his help to the Clerk by ensuring that the accounts were presented for external audit in a satisfactory manor. Normally the Parish Council Chairman extended grateful appreciation to the Clerk, for all the help, guidance and sheer hard work which she had done throughout the year. Being Clerk to the Parish Council was a much bigger job than it might appear and the range of skills needed was quite formidable. A Clerk must have a knowledge of local Government law and procedures, guide the Parish Council on planning policies, be on hand at all times to keep the Council and its members out of trouble, as well as dealing with Cemetery administration and helping bereaved people. The Clerk had the responsibility of finding and applying for capital grants to help fund projects, responding to consultations, knowing who was who in the District and County Councils and keeping the Chairman on the right lines at all times. After 17 years as Clerk Liz Auld intended to retire at the end of October to spend more time with the family and to follow her many other interests inside and outside the Parish. The Chairman, on behalf of all current and past Members, publically thanked her for so successfully steering Dalston Parish Council and keeping it clear of the many pitfalls that can befall whole councils and individual councillors. The Chairman also thanked Jean Rawstron and Dalston WI members for providing refreshments at the end of the meeting.

PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31st March 2009

The Clerk presented the draft Parish Council accounts for the year to 31st March 2009. Income for 2008/09 was £60,058.73, expenditure £70,004.21 – a deficit of £9,945.48. The balance carried forward was £27,621.16. Bank interest and burial ground income was down, as was miscellaneous income with Station access receipts shown in 2008 accounts. Additional expenditure on open spaces included an extension of the recycling surface area to accommodate the plastics container, Raughton Head war memorial cleaning/repairs to lettering, tree work at Walk Mill and Jubilee Garden, a replacement notice board at Forge Green and riverbank warning signs on the Green. Capital scheme expenditure included the second part of the Station access and additional kerbing work, the Green fencing renewal/repairs, purchase of a seat and litterbin for Raughton Head and an additional litterbin at the Recreation Play Area. Burial ground expenditure was down, but work was pending on headstone and grave space repairs, with s137 payments reduced due to the Police Post donation being included in 2008 accounts. Both the income and expenditure had been lower than budgeted. Mrs Cowen was assured that the Forge Green rents had only been increased in line with inflation.

OBSERVATIONS ON PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES 01/04/09-31/03/10

The Precept had been increased for 2009/10 to £35,200 – a cost of £33.50 for a D Band property for the year. This was less per household than seven other Parishes in the District. The budget included grant and loan income and capital expenditure for the Kingsway environmental and parking scheme. Carlisle Parish Councils Association capital and village hall grants had been allocated towards Raughton Head church path

resurfacing, Recreation Centre litterbin, Victory Hall roof repairs, Church House replacement water heater and Cumdivock Reading Room emergency lighting. The budget for administration had been increased to cover the overlap following the appointment of a new Clerk and a sum carried forward for the final settlement for the retiring Clerk. Riverbank repairs, village presentation and footpath work were all included in the anticipated costs. Mr Ebbatson requested that Parish Council support might be considered for undergrowth removal and maintenance of the Penn Beck in Gaitsgill as the sides were in danger of collapse.

PARISH PLAN UPDATE AND REPORT

Pauline Dalton reviewed the Parish Plan, highlighting the actions that had been achieved as well as the failures and the need to make progress with, in particular, youth and business areas. Mrs Dalton indicated that a thorough review of the Parish Plan was due to be carried out in 2009/10 and ideas for revision of the Action Plan were requested. High priority actions addressed had been the Recreation Centre completion, the instigation of the Dalston Festival Week, the establishment of the Police Post and the on going work in trying to improve the Square and parking provision. Public safety had been considered and although the mobile library hours had been extended, efforts to provide a more permanent static solution had failed. The Design Statement had been completed and submitted for consultation and approval as a Supplementary Planning Document. Government Office North West had objected and recommended refusal, but following some discussion with Carlisle City Council Local Plans Officers, it had been agreed that the Parish Council, with the help of volunteer input, would carry out revisions and resubmit it for adoption. A show of hands indicated that those present were generally in favour of the setting up of a Parish Trust

TRAFFIC AND PARKING – KINGSWAY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS AND PARKING

The Kingsway parking and environmental scheme proposals were on display and some aspects of the project were highlighted. Mrs Nichol questioned whether the provision of 65 spaces on an outline plan available with the documents held by Carlisle CC planners, but not included in the Co-op planning application, would reduce the number allocated in the Kingsway provision, as the Glave Hill car park had been full by 9am.

GUEST SPEAKER: MRS LINDSAY COWEN, CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICER

The guest speaker was Mrs Lindsay Cowen, Cumbria County Council Emergency Planning Officer in the Resilience Unit. She informed the meeting that emergency planning had developed on the back of civil defence, but was now a legal duty. The roles of Category 1 & 2 Responders, as well as the structures in place were explained and in the event of an emergency, what would happen. Risks were assessed, preventative risks were taken, plans for dealing with emergencies were made, information was shared and training was undertaken twice annually. Links were in place between the Region, Cumbria, coordinating groups, warning and informing structures, flooding group, mass fatality sub groups, animal health, welfare support etc. When an incident occurred there needed to be multi agency coordination in an organised response structure. This was split into Gold (Strategic – action to take), Silver (Tactical – how undertaken) and Bronze (Operational – task done) categories. The main risk for Dalston was flooding, with the fuel depot being a lower tier risk. The major risk for Cumbria was pandemic flu, followed by flooding. Community risk management arrangements could be put in place and there would some reimbursement available for facilities if needed. Mrs Cowen was thanked for her interesting and instructive illustrated talk. PC Colin Hird spoke about the 11% reduction in Dalston Parish crime in 2008/09 (89 in 2007/08, 79 in 2008/09). He indicated that more speed checks would be undertaken and he urged residents to report any suspicious incidents, particularly in the rural areas (Tel 0845 3300287).

OPEN QUESTIONS

- 1) Mr Ebbatson thanked the retiring Clerk for her support of the Primrose Hall Committee over the years.
- 2) Mr Jeff thanked Ronnie Auld for his work as PC Chairman and as Webmaster for the Dalston website.
- 3) Mrs Oakley asked for some action regarding Ben Hodgson Cars Ltd business vehicles being parked everywhere and in inappropriate places at Bridge End.
- 4) Concern was expressed about parking on pavements causing obstruction especially at the Corner Shop. It was hoped that increased enforcement and ticketing would be possible. It was felt that the introduction of bollards should be re-considered.
- 5) Mr Harrison indicated that a revised planning application for the Co-op, which better addressed Highways and Conservation concerns, was being submitted shortly.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.