

DALSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at The Victory Hall, Dalston on Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT

Ann McKerrell (Parish Council Chairman in the Chair), 24 parishioners including Parish Council members. The Parish Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer were also present.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Allison.

The Chairman welcomed everyone.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 2nd May 2023 were approved as a true record.

2. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL – Cllr McKerrell

Good evening and welcome to Dalston Victory Hall.

It certainly doesn't seem like a year since our last Parish annual meeting, the time flies.

I'm pleased to report that the Parish continues to thrive and look very welcoming; the ongoing improvements the Parish Council make add to this, I hope.

In the cemetery the rest of the paths have been tarmacked, it makes a huge difference to the appearance and accessibility of the area. We have added three more seats, we did plan to have them facing the river however the proximity to the riverbank made it impossible and we are happy that they are well used as they are. New signage has been placed discreetly around the cemetery. Wigton Town Council are removing items that are impeding cutting. This includes loose items and flowers that are past their best. We have requested that artificial flowers and items be removed, and we will continue to carry out that policy. It makes their job very difficult and is time-consuming, they do a great job, and we want to assist them as much as possible.

Wigton Town Council have been awarded the contract for the next three years up to 2027. They do a great job and are very helpful, keeping us informed of any issues.

The Village relies on volunteers to do jobs like weeding flower beds and looking after small areas.

Unfortunately, it is becoming harder and harder to recruit people so we have engaged a gardener to do some of these jobs. It often goes unnoticed until someone stops doing their bit! A couple of new bins have been installed but we have to empty them ourselves, often a very unpleasant task. I thank everyone who makes a voluntary contribution to village life, it's a magnificent effort from you all and makes a huge difference.

We lost several trees during the storms at the beginning of the year and were grateful to the contractors for their hasty action in clearing the debris from footpaths and pavements. We received a letter from the Highways department telling us that we had to remove 18 trees in total due to ash dieback. We had a meeting with the tree officer which has resulted in us starting these works. It is a considerable expense to the Parish but we have many footpaths which we must keep safe. The Woodland Trust awarded us with 345 trees, and they have been distributed around the Parish..

After several requests from Parishioners we have four new disabled parking bays, two outside the chip shop and two in the Townhead Road car park. They are being well used.

The Kings Coronation path and seat were completed and have enhanced the appearance of the area in front of the Coop. New seating has also been installed. It's nice to see people sitting and enjoying the occasional sunny day.

There will be several events on D Day, details of which are on the notice boards and in the Parish magazine.

There are two new defibrillators, one at the Coop and the other at Bridge End. There is a training evening at the Victory Hall on 24th July at 7pm. Places are limited so please let the Clerks know should you wish to attend.

The Coop have kindly hosted the Police desks. They have been quite popular and our PCSO Graham Kirkpatrick is happy to help anyone who wishes to report a problem. The next one is on 15 June between 1pm & 3pm.

There is a new Tenant for The Green after over 100 years of being in the stewardship of the Scott family.

Someone asked me why we pay a precept which is a regular question. We don't get the same services as the City residents and the precept is to facilitate the extra money we spend on for instance grass cutting by Wigton Town Council. It goes into the general pot and doesn't have a specific use. I refer you to Barbara Cannon for further enquiries.

I end my report by thanking all the members of the Parish Council and the Clerks who give their time and efforts to the running of the Parish. Parish Councils are the lowest layer of the Council Structure and are the

only one where Councillors receive no remuneration or expenses. It's not always an easy task and their regular attendance and support is much appreciated.

3. QUESTIONS ON THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There were no questions in relation to the Chairman's report.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCILS ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024 - M Watling (Responsible Financial Officer)

Copies of the Accounts were available on all seats.

When the budget was originally set in December 2022 for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 it was anticipated the year would end with a small surplus of £1,898. We were facing the uncertainty Local Government Reorganisation would bring and in the midst of the cost of living crisis which had major impacts on costs and services. Despite this the year ended with a surplus of £5,271 before Dalston in Bloom and transfers to reserves.

Expenditure exceeded income for the General Parish Fund by £2,047. Building Society interest rates increased which was good news. We were able to provide 2 new defibrillators in the village at the Co-op and Bridge End pub, we have provided a footpath and seat at the Co-op triangle, 2 disabled parking bays have been created in Glave Hill car park and the road surface at the entrance to Glave Hill has been repaired. A celebration was held for the coronation of King Charles 111. The Dalston Show Committee kindly donated £200 towards this. We also thank The Dalston Parish Charitable Trust for their contribution towards new seats in the Parish.

The Cemetery income surpassed budget due to the sale of new grave spaces and one non-parishioner burial. Grass cutting, grave digging, cemetery maintenance and capital expenditure exceeded income by £2,171. The major expense was to resurface the paths which cost £19,280 although we did receive a grant of £1,500 towards this.

The sale of each grave space reduces the asset value of the cemetery. The £4,200 income from the sale of the 6 grave spaces in the year has been transferred to an earmarked fund for the eventual extension of the cemetery. This fund is known as The Cemetery Diminishing Asset Reserve and now stands at £20,550.

Forge Green was fully occupied all year. The excess of rental income over expenditure was £9,489. The only major expense in the year was to increase the level of loft insulation in both properties.

The Dalston and Cumbria in Bloom fund stands at £3,181 and £161 for Kelseys Meadow. Two small grants were paid out for The Forge and Garden Link for the Railway Station.

As we start the new financial year we will continue to monitor expenses to maintain and improve the Parish for those who live, work and visit here.

Responding to questions the RFO confirmed that the income from the Solar Farm which the Parish Council receive annually is paid over to the Dalston Parish Charitable Trust. The income is then distributed by way of grants to groups and organisations in the Parish.

It was clarified that the balance sheet was a statement of current assets. The Forge Green property and assets such as seats, bins, car parks, common land etc are not included in the statement. The RFO confirmed that a full asset register is maintained which is published on the Parish Council website and the value of assets is disclosed on the return submitted annually to the external auditor.

5. DALSTON CHARITABLE TRUST UPDATE – Cllr Kyle

A copy of the receipts and payments account for the year ended 31 March 2024 was available on all seats.

Cllr Kyle explained that applications for grants were more than the funding from the annual contribution from the Parish Council, the difference was made up from the income received from the Solar Farm. Following the receipt of a legacy left to the Parish, the Trust now administers four funds. These were outlined by Cllr Kyle who also encouraged parishioners to consider leaving a legacy to the Trust which invested would benefit the Parish in years to come.

Responding to questions, Cllr Kyle confirmed that the Trustees will consider all applications for grants and applications are welcome from individuals as well as organisations and community groups.

6. DALSTON FESTIVAL 2024 UPDATE – David Fowler

2024 will be the 20th Dalston Festival. Festival week will begin on 3rd August on The Kingsway with music and a bouncy castle. A full programme of events is planned for children during the daytime and for adults in the evening throughout the week. Childrens activities will be free of charge. The week will end on Festival Friday followed by Dalston Show on Saturday 10 August.

Thank you to all the organisations who help out to make Festival Week a success.

7. D-Day 80th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS – Cllr Dinning

Cllr Dinning reported that the following activities will take place on the 6th June 2024:-

8am – Proclamation by Cllr Clarkson Webb at The Lamp (Cockerill) followed by refreshments at The Country Kitchen.

6.30pm – Church Bells, ringing out for peace.

9.15pm – Light the Beacon on The Green. Beacon is being made by Raughton Head Young Farmers.

8. DALSTON IN BLOOM REPORT – Cllr Byers

Last year our entry into Cumbria in Bloom gained many certificates for all the It's Your Neighborhood entries. We took the judges around in a bus kindly driven by Ann McKerrell as there were 4 assessors and volunteers to show around the village. Paragon vets very kindly hosted us all, along with refreshments as Ronnie Auld gave a super overall presentation of the village.

We are helped by so many Dalston volunteers in making the village almost weed free. A lot of work was done by so many, clearing litter, sweeping, washing doors, emptying litter bins, making use of green fingers in flower beds, it just goes on and on. We couldn't do it without our front-line volunteers, but there are just as many who do wonderful unseen things, for example repairing planters by Ian Rousell. The local businesses play their part too as well as Capsticks and Wigton Town Council who cut all the grass. We are very grateful for any donations which go towards helping individual groups obtain items for an area. This money is ring fenced for Dalston in Bloom.

We have again entered Cumbria in Bloom this year and welcome all our volunteers to help in making our village clean and tidy in any way you can. If everyone makes sure their house fronts and pavements are tidy and weed free it makes such a difference. If we have any new volunteers who would like to help please let me know.

Thank you to all those who do a sterling job in making Dalston look lovely in the Summer for residents and also visitors. I hope you will continue to contribute this year too - every little helps. Thank you.

9. PARKING THE SQUARE

A parishioner spoke to say that they were grateful for the disabled parking spaces now available in Glave Hill Car Park but there were still not enough blue badge spaces in The Square. The poor bus service was now bringing more people into the village by car. Blue badge spaces should be considered at St Michaels Church, the Shops and opposite Victory Hall.

A parishioner spoke regarding the number of vans parked in The Square and vehicles parking on the corner of the exit to Kingsway car park obscuring the view for vehicles leaving the car park.

A parishioner spoke regarding the parking in The Square and asked if spaces could be marked out.

Cllr McKerrell advised that the vehicles in The Square were all legally taxed and insured and unfortunately nothing could be done. The Parish Council and Cllr Allison are already looking into installing a planter on the corner of Kingsway car park to improve visibility at the exit. The Parish Council have received comments both in favour and not in favour of marking out spaces in The Square.

A parishioner commented there were a number of cars parked on the road outside Victory Hall tonight when there were plenty of car parking spaces available in the village in close proximity of the Hall.

A parishioner spoke regarding parking on Ninerigg where vehicles are parking opposite each other narrowing the width of the road. Cllr McKerrell read out reports from Caldew School and PCSO Kirkpatrick regarding the issue. Cllr Baxter advised that it is a long process to get approval for yellow lines. It was suggested that the parishioner should approach PCSO Kirkpatrick directly at the Police desk in June.

10. OPEN QUESTIONS

A parishioner spoke regarding the bus service. Due to the Southern Link Road roadworks the bus service will soon be disrupted for approximately three months. Cllr McKerrell commented that the Parish Council will try to resolve the problem whilst Brow Nelson is closed.

A parishioner enquired when the Parish Rooms were to be re-roofed. Cllr McKerrell advised that the matter is ongoing and will be revisited later in the year.

There being no further questions the Chair thanked everyone for attending and invited everyone to stay and enjoy the refreshments served by Dalston W. I.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.