

**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of St Bees Parish Council held on
Monday 15 April 2024 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall**

PRESENT: Cllrs D Sim (in the Chair), P Argyle, N Bettinson, G Gilmour, N Graham, C Hale, A Kaldos, J Mellor, D Millington, E Taylor & the Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Taylor, Area Highways Network Manager (agenda items 7 & 8a only)

Also present: 12 members of the public.

58/24 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the item on water safety would be deferred to a later meeting.

59/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Linton and also from Cllr Minshaw, Ward Councillor, who was unable to attend due to work commitments.

60/24 DISPENSATIONS & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

61/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public present expressed an interest in several agenda items including the flooding on the Outrigg road, flooding and drainage issues in the village, various highways issues, access to the beach from the promenade and the ongoing planning application for holiday pads on Nethertown Rd. It was agreed that comments and questions would be taken during discussion of these agenda items.

62/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 18 MARCH 2024

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 18 March 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

63/24 CUMBERLAND COUNCIL MATTERS

The Chairman welcomed Martyn Taylor, the Area Highways Manager, and invited him to outline progress with various highways and drainage matters.

(a) Flooding on Outrigg to Egremont road

Mr Taylor began by apologising to the residents of St Bees for the time taken to find a solution to the flooding problem. The initial plan to install a new drain had proved to be prohibitively expensive and other solutions had been investigated. In recent days a meeting had taken place with owners of adjacent land and he believed that a plan had been found which would provide a permanent solution. He anticipated that work could begin in 4 to 6 weeks and he would attend the May meeting to report on progress. He extended an apology to the landowners concerned that Highways had only recently contacted them and confirmed that they were in no way responsible for the delay in resolving the issue. In answer to questions Mr Taylor explained that the water would begin to drain naturally with better weather but it was likely that arrangements would need to be made to pump out some of the water.

(b) Potholes

Councillors and members of the public raised concerns about the number of potholes on the B5345 through the village, particularly on Egremont Rd and near the Byersteds junction, where drivers avoiding the pothole were in danger of colliding with traffic coming down the hill. Problems had been reported on several occasions but repairs did not last more than a few days. Mr Taylor explained that the budget was not sufficient to deal with every pothole immediately but he stressed the importance of continuing to report problems via the hotline or online reporting system. He had brought forward the next regular inspection in St Bees.

(c) Request for ‘Residents Only’ parking scheme – Firth Drive

Mr Taylor explained that it was not possible to have a ‘residents only’ parking area on Firth Drive as it would require formal parking bays to be set out and this would be very difficult to do with so many drives and property entrances. It would also reduce the number of spaces available.

(d) 20mph Limits

The Chairman indicated that the Parish Council would welcome discussions about the possibility of 20mph speed limits in the village. Mr Taylor explained that Cumberland Council was discussing new criteria for 20mph limits. Once agreed, the criteria would be publicly available so the PC could consider how they could apply to St Bees.

(e) Collapsed wall – Abbey Rd

It was pointed out that drivers were pulling out to avoid the obstruction and this was creating problems for drivers coming out of the Abbey Farm entrance. Mr Taylor explained that his staff had visited the site to see if they could improve the situation and were pressing the insurance companies involved to resolve the matter as soon as possible. Members of the public reported that a gas pipe was starting to bend under the weight of the collapsed wall. Mr Taylor agreed to check that Northern Gas Networks were aware of the situation.

(f) Drainage Problem _ Byersteads Rd to Abbey Corner

There had recently been further problems with flooding from Byersteads Rd to Abbey Corner, although not to the extent of the problems on New Year’s Eve in 2022 when water had caused damage to buildings at St Bees School. However, recent events suggested that the drains were again blocked. Mr Taylor offered to follow up this issue with Cllr Bettinson outside the meeting.

(g) Blocked Drain – Sea Mill Lane

It was noted that some progress had been made with the problem affecting several properties on Sea Mill Lane. Work was now due to take place on 19 April.

(h) Other Cumberland Council Matters

The written report from Cllr Minshaw was received and noted.

Members of the public raised the issue of access to the beach from the promenade. The steps at the south end of the promenade had been removed some time ago and had not been replaced. The only access to the beach was now via the lifeboat ramp which was often slippery and had been the site of several falls. It was noted that Cllr Minshaw was pressing for safety signs but so far without success. It was suggested that members of the public could contact Cllr Minshaw direct with their concerns. Although the beach was not within his remit, Mr Taylor offered to pass on the concerns to the officers concerned.

(i) Co-operation on Response to Planning Applications

The Chairman explained that the Parish Council would like to work more closely with Highways on issues relating to new developments. In some cases, it appeared that officers did not appreciate the problems of narrow roads with no pavements when raising no objections to applications. It was suggested that officers needed to visit the sites to gain a better understanding of the problems.

Mr Taylor pointed out that Highways officers did take account of responses from the Parish Council but it was not usually possible to insist on conditions or planning gain for small developments. In the case of the Abbey Rd development, Highways had asked for the creation of a pedestrian route at the time of the original approval for 11 houses in 2010 but this appeared not to have been included in the final approval. He pointed out that Highways were only statutory consultees and could not insist on conditions being applied. He anticipated that creation of a pedestrian route would be requested by Highways in their response to the current application.

64/24 PLANNING**(a) New Applications****(i) Ref 4/24/2094/0F1 Erection of five detached dwellings with associated infrastructure, access, landscaping and car parking - Land to the south of Holly Mews**

The Chairman outlined the details of this new application for a further five houses on this site in addition to the approval given for eleven houses in 2010, six of which were yet to be built. The new application extended development further into the valley and would be close to the churchyard and Priory.

A number of issues were raised including the lack of a safe pedestrian route to the village and beach. Abbey Road had no pavement along most of its length and pedestrian safety had been raised with Highways over a number of years. A further five family homes would further increase the number of pedestrians and cars using Abbey Rd. It was believed that Highways had asked for a pedestrian route to be created at the time of the earlier approval but this had not happened. Whilst the road was not wide enough to allow a pavement to be created, a safe route could be constructed through the development to link up with the public footpath. The new application offered an opportunity to press for a pedestrian route, open to the public, to be created as a condition of approval.

Among other issues to be considered was the potential damage to archaeological remains, as the survey carried out at the time of the original development did not cover this area of the site. A new archaeological survey should take place before any decision was made to allow the new development. The development would also have some visual impact on the Priory, a Grade 1 listed building, and the associated buildings. Councillors pointed out that part of the site was regularly flooded. Whilst it was classified as being in Flood Zone 1 for river flooding, this did not take into account the natural springs under the site. Three of the proposed houses appeared to be along the line of the springs.

It was RESOLVED to forward these concerns to Cumberland Council, requesting that the following conditions be attached to any decision to approve the application:

- an archaeological survey to take place before final approval was given to the development
- a safe pedestrian route to the village, available to the public, to be constructed before the houses were built
- a proper assessment to be carried out of the risks of flooding from natural springs

(ii) Other new applications

Ref 4/24/2096/0F1 Demolition of existing detached dwelling & erection of replacement dwelling
Mellendene, High House Road

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application.

Ref 2/4/24/2100/0L1 Listed building consent to install new window in kitchen
10 Abbey Farm

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application.

(b) Other Planning Matters

(i) It was understood that further information was to be provided by the applicant for holiday pods on a site on Nethertown Rd and the Parish Council would be given the opportunity to comment.

(ii) Cumberland Council had given permission for a static caravan to be sited at Plot 2 on the Nethertown Rd site whilst building work was taking place.

(c) Applications approved by Cumberland Council

- Ref 4/24/2046/0F1 Raised patio with wheelchair access – Seacote Hotel
- Ref 4/24/2082/TPO Reduce height of hedge in conservation area to 1.5m approx -The Priory
- Ref 4/24/2022/0B1 Variation of condition 2 to amend floor & elevation plans for Plot 3 -Land to the south of Southrigg, Nethertown Rd

65/24 FINANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT**(a) Financial Report**

The summary of accounts at 31 March was received and noted. It was noted that expenditure in the year had been lower than anticipated but there were invoices yet to come for play area repairs which had been authorised but not yet completed.

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The AGAR forms had been received from the external auditor and documentation had been forwarded to the internal auditor with the aim of approving the accounts at the May meeting.

(b) Lengthsman Project

A meeting had taken place on 19 March to discuss a continuation of the lengthsman scheme for 2024/25. The contribution from St Bees Parish Council for 2024/25 would be £2220. The future of West Copeland Partnership was still to be decided but, if the Partnership was disbanded, Egremont Town was willing to host a new contract from 2025.

It was RESOLVED to approve a contribution of £2220 for 2024/25

(c) Payments

It was RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

- Cumberland Council– play area inspections Jan-Mar 2024 £382.65 + £76.53 VAT Total £459.18
- JRB Ennterprise Ltd – dispenser bags £209.95 + £41.99 VAT Total £251.94
- CALC – annual membership Total £375.96
- Egremont Town Council - lengthsman scheme 2024//5 Total £2220.00
- Petty cash top up – Total £52.06
- J Donaldson – salary April Total £632.85
- J Donaldson – reimbursement for printer ink charges (£9.99+ £2.00 VAT) & gift of appreciation (£21.49) Total £33.48
- D Robinson – reimbursement for VIB plants £179.03 + £35.80 Total £214.83 (chq 002945)
- Thomas Milburn Property Ltd – toilet service (April) £583.33 + £116.67 VAT Total £700.00 (standing order)

The following payments made/direct debits due since the last meeting were noted:

- CALC -course fee – Total £30.00
- Water Plus- water/wastewater charges Total £197.53 (direct debit 18/04/24)
- Answer 4 U -answering service £14.50 + £2.90 VAT Total £17.40 (direct debit 17/04/24)

66/24 CONSULTATION – PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER

Representatives of the Parish Council had attended an online presentation by Cumberland Council officers explaining the proposed new Public Space Protection Order. The Order was intended to tackle persistent anti-social behaviour and would cover all the Cumberland Council area. It would include powers to prohibit certain activities in town centre areas and would designate dog exclusion zones and areas where dogs must be on a lead. The proposal was that the two play areas in the village should be dog exclusion zones with other areas at the main beach, around the Priory and on Outrigg being areas where dogs must be on a lead.

It was RESOLVED to respond to the consultation stressing the importance of unfenced play areas being included in the dog exclusion areas.

67/24 RECRUITMENT OF NEW COUNCILLORS

The Chairman introduced a discussion on how residents could be encouraged to become members of the Parish Council. At the last election there were three seats unfilled and, despite advertising in the parish magazine, no-one had put their name forward for co-option. It was suggested that many people were unaware of the projects that the Parish Council was currently delivering or actively working on. It was suggested that manning a stand at events such as the Big Bash could help to raise the profile of the Parish Council and provide an opportunity to talk to residents on a one-to-one basis.

68/24 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Clr Linton had trialled the questionnaire with a small group and it was agreed that it should now be publicised more widely. Paper copies would be available for those who did not wish to use the electronic version.

69/24 PROJECT REPORTS

(a)Community Events – there was no report.

(b) Beach & Play Area

Cllr Linton had reported that she was still investigating the possibility of creating a mural at the beach toilets.

A site meeting had taken place with an officer of Cumberland Council to discuss litter bins at the beach area. He had agreed to order a new bird proof bin to be sited near the beach café and was investigating how to prevent the hinges becoming loose in windy weather. He had also arranged to have the missing 'Firth Drive' street signs to be replaced and to speak to the Legal Dept about signage to warn that removal of stones from the beach was prohibited.

(c) Upgrading of Outrigg Play Area

Cumberland Council had apologised for the delay in progressing discussions about a Community Asset Transfer but the Legal Dept was still heavily involved with issues associated with local government reorganisation. It was not clear at this stage what arrangements had been made for cutting the grass in the play area.

(d) Station car park extension/transport hub

Cllr Taylor's written report was received and noted.

(e) Office Improvements

Work was progressing to redecorate the Parish Council office at the Village Hall.

(f) Priory Paddock

Cllr Bettinson reported that it was hoped to obtain some plug plants with the remaining grant funding. The Friends of Priory Paddock were finalising an application to this year's RHS It's Your Neighbourhood competition. Cumbria Wildlife Trust would be holding an event on 25 May with a talk in the Village Hall and a walk around Priory Paddock. The event was free but registration was required. An online event 'Spring Bees' was planned for the evening of 30 April – booking required cost £3.50. It was RESOLVED to approve purchase of plug plants with a maximum budget of £100.

(g) Interpretation Boards

It was proposed to put a sign on the gate of the Dandy Walk on Coach Rd to encourage visitors to use the path to visit the Priory and Priory Paddock. It was reported that the path was very muddy in places and it was agreed to ask the lengthsman to put down some hardcore to improve the surface. It was RESOLVED to authorise expenditure of £60 for the sign.

70/24 FOOTPATHS

Cllr Hale's written report was received and noted.

71/24 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of meetings attended.

72/24 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report on ongoing matters was received and noted. Viberoptix had since confirmed that a further road closure was likely to be necessary at the end of April for work to take place along the B5345. From the information available it seemed that the work would be done in sections to reduce inconvenience to residents but the Clerk was seeking further information.

73/24 CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Information had been received from Cumberland Council on the elections for the Fire, Police & Crime Commissioner on 2 May. Noted.

(b) Angel Advocates (a Christian based independent & legal advocacy service) was seeking financial support for its service which is available to all irrespective of race, colour or creed. Noted

(c) Information had been received from Cumberland Council on various environmental and climate initiatives across the county. Noted.

(d) A question had been raised via Facebook about noise from work taking place at the station. It was noted that residents of nearby properties had received a letter from the contractors and a representative of the company had agreed to call at the property to provide up to date information on progress.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- NALC Newsletters & Chief Executive’s Bulletins
- Rural Services Network Newsletter & Funding Digest
- Cumberland Council newsletters
- Connecting Cumbria Newsletter
- Police Newsletters (Egremont & Rural and Whitehaven & District) March 2024
- Northern Gas Networks Stakeholder Update
- CALC News
- Open Spaces Society March update

74/24 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION /FUTURE AGENDA

(a) The sublease between the Village Hall Committee and St Bega Lodge was now ready and had been signed by representatives of the Village Hall Committee. As the Parish Council was Custodian Trustee for the Village Hall, two signatories from the Parish Council were required to sign the lease. It was agreed that Cllrs Taylor and Millington would sign on behalf of the Parish Council.

(b) A Beetle Drive would be taking place at the Village Hall on 27 April at 5pm and an event entitled ‘Florence – the lesser known life of Florence Nightingale’ would take place on 18 May.

75/24 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Parish Council meeting take place on Monday 20 May 2024 at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....