

**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of St Bees Parish Council held on
Monday 18 March 2024 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall**

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr G Minshaw, Cumberland Councillor- Egremont North, St Bees
Mr D Pierce, Viberoptix
Two officers of Cumberland Council Streetworks Team

Also present: 5 members of the public.

38/24 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Gilmour chair the meeting in the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

39/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Graham, Linton, Sim and Taylor.

40/24 DISPENSATIONS & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that a dispensation had already been given to Cllr Millington in respect of the drainage issues on Sea Mill Lane.

41/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public present expressed an interest in several agenda items including the Hyperfast GB Project, the planning application for holiday pods on Nethertown Rd, drainage issues on Sea Mill Lane and other Cumberland Council matters. The flooding and Planning matters would be dealt with under Cumberland Council Matters.

42/24 VIBEROPTIX - HYPERFAST GB PROJECT

The Chairman welcomed David Pierce of Viberoptix to the meeting.

Mr Pierce began by explaining that Viberoptix was the company installing fibreoptic cables as part of the Hyperfast GB Project, a government funded project for which Fibrus was the main contractor. He apologised for the lack of communication when work began a few weeks ago, which he recognised had caused concern over road closures and access to properties. Viberoptix was keen to improve communication and keep the Parish Council informed about the programme of work. It was inevitable that there would be some disruption as cables were installed but the work would be done in short sections and it was not anticipated that prolonged road closures would be required. There might be occasions when a large vehicle would be required but the inconvenience would be kept to a minimum. There would always be access for emergency vehicles and a contact number would be provided for residents with specific concerns,

In answer to questions, Mr Pierce explained that the project would provide a network of fibreoptic cables throughout the village which would make a full fibre connection available to any property that wanted it. This would be an alternative to the current broadband which was delivered by a combination of fibre and copper wires. The full fibre broadband would initially be provided only by Fibrus but after a period of time other providers would be able to offer a service via these cables. Householders would be given the option of signing up to full fibre broadband as soon as the installation of the network was completed but would be under no obligation to do so.

A question was raised about whether the network would extend to Rottington where broadband speeds were slow. Mr Pierce explained that all properties in Rottington would be covered by the fibreoptic network but the cabling was unlikely to happen until June. The original plan had been to continue from Sandwith to Rottington but this would have involved significant environmental damage because of the number of trees. The plan now was to bring cables from St Bees. It was hoped that cables could be run alongside fields to avoid the use of poles but this would depend on obtaining landowner consents.

It was noted that road closure signs were in place by the level crossing but no notification had been received from Highways. Mr Pierce stated that Viberoptix had requested a road closure but this had been refused. Cumberland Council officers present agreed to check the ownership of the signs.

The Chairman thanked Mr Pierce for his explanation of the project and looked forward to receiving information on the programme of work. He offered the council's help in publicising information via its website and Facebook page.

43/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 FEBRUARY 2024

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 19 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44/24 CUMBERLAND COUNCIL MATTERS

- **Community Panel-** Cllr Minshaw explained that the Whitehaven & Coastal Community Panel had awarded a grant of £8410 to the Village Hall Committee to enable work to be completed on the back of the building. The next Panel meeting would be on 20 June.
- **Ongoing Highways Matters-** Cllr Minshaw had asked Martyn Taylor, the local Highways Manager, to come to the next PC meeting to answer questions on the various highways and drainage issues affecting the village.
- **Flooding on the Outrigg to Egremont Road** -Cllr Minshaw explained that a scheme had been designed to install a new drain and raise the road level and discussions were taking place on funding the scheme. Once the road was reopened, Highways would look at repairs required on minor roads used as a diversion route during the closure. Councillors expressed concern over the time that it was taking to resolve the flooding problem and would take the matter up with the Highways Manager at the next meeting.
- **Blocked drain Nethertown Rd/Sea Mill Lane** -Cllr Minshaw reported that officers had undertaken to contact Cllr Millington by the next day to discuss plans. It was expected that work would begin in April, if landowner consent to access land was in place. Further cracks had appeared close to the original cavity in the garden of one property, raising concerns about the possibility of a further collapse. Cllr Millington reported that he and a number of other residents had submitted formal complaints to Cumberland Council about the delays in resolving the issue and he had contacted the Chief Executive about the lack of response to his complaint. He had been promised that a senior officer would contact him but no call or email had been received. He had now made contact with the Office of the Local Government Ombudsman. It was also noted that no reply had been received to the complaint submitted by the Parish Council. It was RESOLVED that a letter be sent to the Chief Executive of Cumberland Council if there was no progress within the next few days.
- **Traffic Safety– B5345 Barony House – Wood Lane** -An email had been sent to Highways officers requesting a site meeting to look at the safety issues on this section of the B5345 but no reply had yet been received.
- **Beach Litter Bins** -The delay in providing a bird proof near the beach café had been raised with the Street Cleansing Team at Cumberland Council. The officer in charge had offered to meet PC representatives on site to look at what bins were currently in place and what additional requirements there might be. A member of the public drew attention to problems with the lids of the bird proof bins which were not sufficiently robust to remain closed in windy weather. This would be raised with the Cumberland Council officer at the site meeting.
- **Request for Residents Only Parking Scheme** -Cllr Minshaw reported that Highways officers were not supportive of a residents only parking restriction on Firth Drive. It was noted that there had been no formal response to the request and it was agreed that the matter be raised with the Highways Manager at the next meeting
- **Collapsed Wall on Abbey Road** -Following the last meeting, the debris obstructing the road had been reported to Highways. Highways officers had visited the site and confirmed that the matter was being dealt with by the insurers of the two properties. Highways had issued a letter to the owners about the obstruction and would follow this up if no action was taken within a reasonable time.
- **Planning Application for Holiday Pods, Nethertown Rd** -Cllr Minshaw explained that no further information had been received following his request that the application be considered by the Planning Panel.

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- **Other Cumberland Council Matters** -It was noted that the road markings had not been completed on the east side of the Fleatham Farm/High House Rd junction and the light opposite Abbey Farm had still not been replaced. Cllr Minshaw agreed to follow up these matters. Work was being scheduled to resolve the drainage problems adjacent to the entrance to Station car park but no date was available.
A member of the public reported that the surface of the public footpath from Beach Rd to the Beach estate was covered with green moss which made it slippery. The Clerk would request that the surface be sprayed to remove the moss.

45/24 FINANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT

(a) Financial Report

The summary of accounts at 29 February was received and noted. It was noted that the Chairman had authorised urgent expenditure (£500) to take professional advice on planning application ref 4/24/2051/0F1 as the deadline for submission of comments was before the March meeting.

A quotation of £1289.88 excl VAT had been received from Cumberland Council for monthly play area inspections for 2024/25.

It was RESOLVED that the quotation be accepted.

The annual inspection of assets was taking place. The stile at the entrance to the allotment field was in poor condition. It had already been agreed with the Rights of Way officers that a new stile was not needed and the stile could be replaced with fencing.

It was RESOLVED to ask the lengthsman to remove the stile and instal new fencing.

There were a number of items to write off and remove from the asset register including the seat on Scalebarrow, the wooden sign at St Bees Common and the damaged litter bin from the Post Office wall. It was RESOLVED that these assets be written off.

(b) Grass Cutting Contract

The current three year contract provided for a mutually agreed price increase in years 2 & 3 in line with inflation.

It was RESOLVED that the payment for 2024/25 be increased to £3772 excl VAT (a 4.2% increase in line with the January inflation figure).

(c) Lengthsman Project

A meeting was taking place on 19 March to discuss a continuation of the lengthsman scheme for 2024/25. The cost would be available for the next meeting but it was agreed in principle that St Bees Parish Council wished to continue to be part of the scheme.

(d) Payments

It was RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

- Npower -toilet electricity February £37.93 + £1.90 VAT Total £39.83
- I McAndrew – renewal of website software Total £48.14
- Groves Town Planning – professional fees Total £500.00
- J Donaldson -salary March Total £680.85
- J Donaldson – reimbursement for printer ink charges £8.32 + £1.67 VAT Total £9.99
- HMRC -PAYE Qtr 4 Total £770.34
- Thomas Milburn Property Ltd – toilet service (March) £583.33 + £116.67 VAT Total £700.00 (standing order)

The following payments made since the last meeting were noted:

- Water Plus -water to allotments – Total £22.71 (direct debit 01/03/24)
- Water Plus- water/wastewater charges Total £185.43 (direct debit 19/03/24)
- Answer 4 U -answering service £14.50 + £2.90 VAT Total £17.40 (direct debit 17/03/24)

46/24 BEGA FLATS

Following the discussion at the last meeting, enquiries had been made of Eden Housing about plans for letting the empty units.

Eden Housing had explained that they acted as managing agents for Mitre Housing. Mitre Housing had taken a decision some time ago to convert the property to two family sized units to replace the four single person flats. One side of the property had been converted in 2017 and it was planned to convert the other two units shortly as both were now vacant.

It was noted that the property had originally been funded by public subscription with the intention of providing accommodation for elderly people who wished to continue to live in the village. It was unclear whether there was demand for elderly person accommodation as the tenancies had not been actively advertised. However, if there was no demand for single person flats, it would be preferable to see the property occupied by a family rather than allowed to remain empty and deteriorate.

It was RESOLVED to ask Mitre Housing what public consultation had taken place before the decision was taken to convert the property.

47/24 VILLAGE IN BLOOM COMMITTEE

The minutes of the VIB Committee meeting on 19 February were received. It was noted that Eileen Todd, the founder member of the group, was retiring after 30 years of volunteering.

It was RESOLVED that a letter and a token of appreciation be sent to Mrs Todd to recognise her contribution.

48/24 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The written report from Cllr Linton was received. It was noted that the format of the questionnaire had been modified to make it compatible with Google Forms and the questionnaire would be tested on a small group before being used more widely.

49/24 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

A draft policy had been circulated with the agenda.

It was RESOLVED that the policy be adopted.

50/24 PROJECT REPORTS

(a)Community Events - The Light District event at the Priory on 14/15 March had been a great success and had attracted lots of visitors from across the county. The Chairman had designed a hand-out which was given to those attending to explain more about the Priory and St Bees School.

(b)Beach & Play Area

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

The zip wires had been taken down for repair but it was hoped that they would be back in operation shortly. Cumberland Council had quoted a price of £1160 + £105 delivery excl VAT for parts to repair the bearings on the dizzy roundabout.

It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation for repair.

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(c)Upgrading of Outrigg Play Area

There was no further progress to report.

(d)Station car park extension/transport hub

Cllr Taylor's written report was received and noted. A further meeting would be taking place with Cumberland Council, Network Rail and the Community Rail Partnership on 12 April.

(e) Office Improvements

Work had begun to redecorate the Parish Council office at the Village Hall. Approval of expenditure on decorating and furnishing the room would be sought once repair work was completed.

(f) Priory Paddock

Cllr Bettinson reported that most of the annual maintenance tasks had been completed with help from the lengthsman and volunteers.

(g) Interpretation Boards

The lengthsman had installed the new interpretation board by the Priory before the Light District event. This had been well received and a number of visitors had been seen reading the information. It was noted that the Planting for Pollinators Group had offered to provide signage for the rewilding project on the Beach Road verge.

51/24 PLANNING**(a) New Applications**

The Planning Advisory Group reported on the following applications received for comment:

- Ref 4/24/2022/0B1 Variation of condition 2 to amend the floor & elevation plans
Plot 3 Land to the south of Southtrigg, Nethertown Rd – additional information

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

- Ref 4/24/2067/0F1 Roof over silage clamp
Fairladies Farm Outrigger Rd, Egremont

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

- Ref 4/24/2082/TPO Reduce height of hedge in conservation area to approx 1.5m
The Priory, St Bees

It was noted that this was not a hedge in the usual sense but was actually a collection of small trees, some of which were large enough to be treated as individual trees rather than a hedge. There were also concerns about the timing of any work as the bird nesting season was now beginning. It was RESOLVED to object to the application on the grounds stated above.

(b) Ref 4/24/2051/0F1 Land adj to Stonecroft, Sea Mill Lane

A statement of objections had been submitted to Cumberland Council.

(c) Applications approved by Cumberland Council

4/23/2381/0F1 Siting of static caravan as accommodation for greenkeeper – St Bees Golf Course

52/24 FOOTPATHS

Cllr Hale's written report was received and noted.

53/24 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of meetings attended.

54/24 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report on ongoing matters was received and noted.

55/24 CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Information had been received from CALC on the new official D Day 80 flag which is available to purchase. Noted.

(b) Cumbria Fire & Rescue had announced a consultation on its Community Risk Management Plan to inform its priorities for the next four years. The online link was available from the Clerk. Noted.

(c) Information had been received from Fluoride Free Cumbria about a meeting being organised to discuss the re-introduction of fluoride to the domestic water supply. Noted.

(d) A letter had been received from Cumberland Council explaining that it would not be taking on any new grounds maintenance contracts. Noted.

(e) Westmorland & Furness Council was working with Cumberland Council to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cumbria. The link to the online survey was available from the Clerk. Noted.

- (f) Helen Sharpe had provided further details of the event to launch her series of children’s books. The event would take place at the Priory on 27 April. Noted
- (g) An incident of anti-social behaviour had been reported affecting private property in the village. This had also reported to the police. Noted
- (h) National Highways had announced that planning permission had been granted for the dualling of the A66 from Penrith to Scotch Corner. Noted.
- (i) National Highways had announced that 2300 trees had been planted on the site of the A595 improvements at Moresby to mark completion of the project. Noted.
- (j) Cumbria Wildlife Trust would be holding a Planting for Pollinators event on 25 March at Cleator Moor Town Council offices at 6.30pm. The event would be free but anyone planning to attend was required to notify the organisers. Noted.

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) Feb 2024
- Northern Gas Networks Stakeholder Update
- Cumbria in Bloom Spring Newsletter
- Hyperfast GB Newsletter
- Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Spring Newsletter
- ACT Update March

56/24 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION /FUTURE AGENDA

- (a) It was noted that a meeting of the Allotment Committee would be organised shortly.
- (b) The Village School Association was organising an Easter Trail on 29 March to raise funds for the Village School.

57/24 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the next Parish Council meeting take place on Monday 15 April 2024 at 6.30pm with the Annual Parish Meeting taking place at 6pm that evening.

Signed.....

Date.....