

PARTON PARISH MEETING

Minutes of The Annual Parish Meeting **Held on 28th April 2021 at 7.30pm by Zoom Video Conferencing**

Attendees: 14 in total including the chair and clerk.

Chair: Councillor Steve Tumelty, Clerk: Mrs J Coltman.

01-APM21 7.31pm the clerk started the meeting and said that as the Parish Council Chair was in attendance, the meeting would be chaired by him.

The Chair thanked everybody for attending and invited Ruth Colley from St Bridget's School to speak.

02-APM21 St Bridget's Primary School Mrs Colley explained how the school had continued to work during the lockdown. At first a hub for children of key workers across the area had been created at Jericho School and teachers volunteered on a rota basis. In June the school re-opened for the children of key workers and year six children. They felt that the year six children were able to better socially distance and they wanted to give them their last days of primary school within the school environment. In September the school fully reopened.

They had looked at all the measures they had previously taken, such as telephone contacts, dropping work packs off for children and Zoom calls, and had put a policy in place making them fully prepared for any future lockdowns. They had been lucky in that there was only one isolated case of Covid19 at the school and no others had been infected.

In January the school had decided that they would not reopen and then the new lockdown was announced. The school had a structured plan in place and children had to turn up for registration via Zoom every morning. There was a timetable with their regular subjects being taught. Some were via a live Zoom lesson, others with PowerPoint presentations or videos. Two members of staff and two student teachers remained in the school to take classes for the children of key workers, while regularly taking lateral flow tests.

The school is now fully open again but the children remain in bubbles. They are looking to relax and broaden the bubble system gradually, starting with a possible upstairs and downstairs bubble, although this will be carefully monitored and the bubbles can be reduced in size again if necessary. In the future they are hoping to reintroduce the carnival, beach schools and outside trips.

They have had plays live streamed into the classrooms and celebrated World Book Day during the lockdown when children dressed up as a book character for their Zoom lessons. They also held a live lunch event, when children brought their lunch to eat in front of their screen so that they could mix socially with their friends. Mrs Colley stressed the importance of the social contact and routine for the children and said that academically the children would bounce back. Any gaps in their learning could be identified and addressed. Everybody has had the same disruption for the year and the children will be fine.

03-APM21 Questions. The chair thanked Mrs Colley for her report and asked if there were any questions.

Mr Armstrong said that he coaches athletics for Copeland for 7–11-year-olds and that a number of children had not returned to the sessions out of hesitancy to mix with others, having been isolated for so long, but noticed that the numbers of attendees had now started to increase again. Mrs Colley said that although everybody wanted a return to a normal way of life, it was difficult to know how far to go as nobody wanted anybody to get ill. She agreed that restrictions on P.E. were very difficult as it was impossible to play team sports or to compete against others without meeting. Mr Armstrong said that he was due to come to the school the following day with his wife with a view to setting up an after-school athletics session.

Mr Sinar asked if the school children could help with a project to keep on top of the weeding in both the memorial garden and the war memorial. Mrs Colley said that would be a lovely idea and the school would be happy to organise something if somebody makes contact with them to arrange things.

04-APM21 Parish Council, Chair's Report. The Chair said that it had been a difficult couple of years with the pandemic and a number of resignations. His written report had been made available on the website and he asked if there were any questions. The Chair was asked to read the report out as number of people had not read it. The Chair read out the report covering the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021 (appended below)

05-APM21 Questions. The Chair asked if there were any questions about matters raised in his report.

Mrs Bateman asked about the bell tower on the village hall. She noted that it had been taken down and wondered if there were plans to replace it. The Chair said that this was down to the Village Hall rather than the Council. Mrs Bateman said that it would be a shame if it was lost and Mr Barton agreed but said he thought that it was due to cost. The Chair said that it had been removed because it was dangerous and he would bring it up at the village hall meeting.

The war memorial was raised by Mr Barton who said that Parton Reunited should be thanked for arranging for it to be painted. The Chair said that Parton Reunited had done a lot of things in the village that they would be thanked for and said that their report was coming up next. Mrs Bateman suggested that the British Legion may be worth approaching if the memorial was to be cleaned and regilded. The clerk said that the War Memorial Trust may be able to provide a grant and this was being looked into.

Mrs Bateman said that there was no footpath from the bottom to the top of the village along any of the roads. Mr Barton said that the only off-road route was via the Ghyll Steps which were not safe. Mrs Bateman thought that argument might help to reinstate the bus service, but the Chair explained that there was still a bus service along the bottom of the village but only in one direction. Which meant that for a trip to Whitehaven people had to go to Lowca first. The Chair said that there would be a problem trying to put a footpath at the side of any of the roads because they were so narrow. Mr McKee asked if smaller buses could be used to get along Criffel Road, but the Chair said that the Council had already raised that idea which had been rejected by Stagecoach. He said that the focus was on getting dropped kerbs and parking places sorted so that the road wasn't obstructed. Mr McKee said that there were a lot of places that could be used for parking and the Chair agreed, although the problem was getting people to use those places.

06-APM21 Parton Reunited. The Chair said that a written report from Parton Reunited was available on the website (appended below). He asked if there were any questions about the report, although there were no members of Parton Reunited present to answer them.

Mr Sinar said he didn't know much about Parton Reunited, he'd seen things painted by the beach area but didn't know more than that. He said that it seemed like a good idea, but it appeared to be just a few people involved with it and the majority knew nothing about it and weren't involved. He said he thought people would feel better if they felt included. He'd been in the village for 11 years and knows nothing about it. He said that people should be asked and included but it just seemed to be a few people deciding what they want to do and just doing it. He said even though they may be good ideas, people should be included and there was a lot of anger about that. Mr Barton said that he could put Mr Sinar in contact if he wanted to join. He said that it wasn't a closed group, anyone who wanted to help could join. He said that it was just a community group trying to do good. The Chair said that it had only been going a couple of years and they had a committee and Facebook page which was open to the public. Mr Barton asked Mr Sinar if he had seen their Facebook page and he said he was not on Facebook. Mr Barton said that would be why he hadn't heard, because they were just on Facebook. Mr Sinar said that excluded a lot of people in Parton and there should be some other way of communicating rather than Facebook. Mr Barton offered to pass on Mr Sinar's ideas to those involved. Mrs Bateman suggested a village flyer through letterboxes to reach those not on Facebook. Mr Sinar said that the older residents not on Facebook felt excluded.

07-APM21 Other Reports. The Chair said that there was an update from David Roberts about the youth club that activities would be starting for 11-19 year-olds from 13th May but would start for the younger age groups when restrictions had been lifted further. Andrew Barton queried why there was no report from the village hall and the Chair explained that the clerk had contacted their Chairman, however he was new to the position and was perhaps unaware of what normally happened.

Mrs Bateman said that the coastal walk towards Lowca was eroding quite badly. The Chair said that he would put it on the next Parish Council agenda and we would see who we needed to contact about it.

Mr McKee said that one of the pillars on the war memorial was in need of repair and the Chair said that would be brought up at the next Parish Council meeting.

The Chair thanked everybody for coming and said that he hoped to meet everybody again next year in the village hall.

The meeting closed at 8.21pm

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

Chair Presiding.....Date.....

Parton Parish Council

Chair's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 28th April 2021

Introduction

This has been an extraordinary period for the Parish with the coronavirus pandemic affecting everybody's lives. Covid-19 has had a profound effect in our own community, throughout the country and around the world. Most of us have experienced sadness or health concerns within our own families or among our friends. Many things have changed and some of the changes will last. I think we will all agree that our sense of community is stronger and with the roll out of the vaccine, there will soon be opportunities for people to meet again and to take up interests and activities once more.

At the start of the lockdown last year, Annual Parish Meetings were cancelled by the government. This year, although meetings are now to go ahead, we are unable to do this face to face at the moment, so have had to adapt to the times and embrace new technology, switching to the Zoom platform to make this possible, just as we have had to do for our regular Council meetings. Because of the lack of a meeting last year, this report will cover the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021.

Members

I was elected as Chair of Parton Parish Council on 27th August 2020, taking up the baton from Rob Huck, who had previously been elected as Chair following the resignation of Kevin Young. There was an election held in May 2019 when 11 councillors were elected. Since then, some councillors have resigned and others have been co-opted to join the council. At the point of writing this report we currently have five members who are Andrew Barton, Billy Morton, Maisie Rogan, Joseph (Jolo) Williamson and myself and we are in the process of co-opting for five vacant seats, with a sixth seat due to be filled in a by-election.

I would like to thank those members that have left the Council during the last two years for their efforts and service whilst in office. Rob and Kevin I have already mentioned, the others were Kirsty Barton, Joyce Bestford, David Garrett, Julie Huck, Janice Miller, Stan Peel, Benny Quayle, Sharon Rogan, Melanie Ryden, Gillian Troughton & Valda Young.

Ward and County Councillors

The efforts of our ward and county councillors, David Banks, Martin Barbour and Jackie Bowman must also be acknowledged. In particular I would like to thank Councillor Banks for his determination and steadfastness in making representations to the Borough Council for us, ultimately resulting in power finally being connected to the replacement streetlight on the Queenies footpath.

Council Staff

The Council employs one part-time member of staff, the clerk and responsible financial officer, which is Mrs Jane Coltman. Jane joined the Council at the start of April 2020, in the early days of the pandemic, which made a smooth handover difficult. She was only employed for half of the hours that our former clerk was and although the frequency of our meetings was reduced, this was insufficient time to cover all of the work required. I would like to express my thanks to Jane for all the extra unpaid hours that she has put in over the last year to keep the Council functioning.

Ongoing Matters

Bus Route:

The Council continues to liaise with Stagecoach, Cumbria Highways and Home Group to remedy the problems with parking along Criffel Road, which is the reason given by Stagecoach for the change made to the service. Places for additional off-road parking are being investigated. It is still hoped that the original route will be reinstated if these issues can be resolved.

Render on Seven Acres:

We have made representations on behalf of residents to Home Group, but unfortunately, we have no authority or power to compel any action by them. They inform us that there is ongoing legal action against the contractors and have assured us that the problem is purely cosmetic, as there is no evidence of damp within the properties. We will continue to ask them for regular progress reports.

Parker's Steps:

The land is owned by Cumbria County Council (CCC) and the dangerous state of the steps has been reported to them on numerous occasions, however previously they have refused to accept responsibility for the steps as they state that they did not install them, that they are there without permission.

We have been unable to find any minute relating to the installation of the steps, so we have no evidence of which authority installed them, or if it was simply a person or persons unknown acting on their own initiative.

We sought legal advice and have been advised that as there was no objection from CCC at the time the steps were installed, nor did they ask for them to be removed, or remove them themselves, then (especially after so many years have passed) they have accepted the steps, regardless of who installed them in the first place and they are therefore responsible for their maintenance.

We are still waiting for a response from CCC, but given that a member of the public has now been injured, we will seek to escalate the matter through the HSE if there is no action from them. In the meantime, we would advise everybody to avoid using the steps at all times.

Community Item Expenditure

Over the previous two years the Council has replaced and repaired damaged items on the play park, including replacing the basket swing and a picnic bench that were damaged in an arson attack. The bus shelter on Criffel Road has been repaired twice after being vandalised.

A remembrance service was held at the war memorial in 2019, but in 2020 this had to be scaled back because of the restrictions. Nonetheless, there was a good turnout, with people sensibly observing social distancing. The Council paid for the planting of the war memorial in 2019 and wreaths were laid in both years by the Council Chairs on behalf of the people of Parton.

A new notice board was purchased for the Criffel Road bus shelter and Hi-Viz vests were bought for people undertaking litter picking in the community. In addition to this, general maintenance including grass cutting, landscaping and litter bin emptying were paid for.

Donations & Grants

The following donations and grants were made to local good causes.

- Parton Old Folks - Summer Trip £115
- Citizens' Advice Bureau £100
- Parton Reunited – Christmas Tree £250
- North Copeland Youth Partnership - Summer Activities £250
- Parton Old Folks – Christmas Meal £200
- Great North Air Ambulance £150
- Parton Reunited – Paint for War Memorial £180
- M Clark (Help for Heroes) – Easter Eggs £150

Financial

At the start of 2019 the Council held reserves of £9494.79. The precept requested for the 2019-2020 year was £8240.00 although there was no budget plan laid out to support or arrive at that figure. During the course of the 2019-2020 financial year, the total receipts were £9162.33 and total payments were £9767.75, leaving a balance of reserves at the year-end of £8889.37.

In January 2020 a properly costed budget was agreed by the Council so that the precept amount requested would accurately reflect the planned expenditure. This meant an increase of the precept to £13348.52. This was a large jump but was necessary to meet the budget and to prevent the year-on-year decline of the reserves held by the Council. During the 2020-2021 financial year. The total receipts were £14425.98 and the total payments were £13340.93, leaving a balance of reserves at the year-end of £9974.42.

This year the Council again had a properly debated and agreed budget in January 2021 from which it set the precept for the coming year. There was no increase in the precept amount requested, although individual households may see a small variance in the amount that they have to pay, which is affected by the number of people that the contribution is shared between.

Future Plans

The budget for this year includes a provision to provide a bus shelter and we will consult on its preferred location if it goes ahead. There is also a sum for topping up the bark in the play area as well as general repairs. An increased amount has been included for waste removal so that we can look at getting extra litter bins, although we need to identify the most suitable locations for these and we can see if Copeland Borough Council will contribute towards them. In order to comply with GDPR guidance the Council has budgeted for the purchase of a laptop and software.

This year will be the centenary of the war memorial, which is a joint memorial with Moresby. We are looking into the possibility of having the memorial cleaned and the lettering regilded and will ask Moresby Parish Council if they would be prepared to share some of the costs, but we will also investigate any grant funding that may be available.

Costly Failure

The Council, in November 2019, failed to follow correct procedure or heed the guidance offered to it by the Cumbria Association of Local Councils when dealing with an employment matter. This left the Council open to a claim which would be hard to defend. In the absence of its own disciplinary procedure the Council should have followed the procedure laid down by ACAS as a minimum default standard, but failed to do so. Because of this failure our insurers declined to cover our legal costs or represent us in the matter when the claim was made early in 2020.

The decision was taken to instruct a solicitor and this incurred additional costs. Ultimately the solicitor advised that it would be prudent to settle the claim rather than contest it at a tribunal, where the costs associated with losing could be much higher. The solicitor said that the failure to follow correct procedure would negatively impact our case, so the Council agreed to settle the claim as advised.

The cost of the settlement and solicitor's fees totalled £8500.00. This used up nearly all of the reserves that the Council had at the start of the 2020 financial year. Money was saved against some items because they could not happen due to the lockdown, such as the hire of the village hall, but other items that had been budgeted for did not go ahead because of the need to curtail spending, such as the new bus shelter, play area improvements, landscaping and the purchase of a laptop and office equipment. At the end of this financial year, because of these savings from the budget, the Council finds itself back with manageable reserves, despite the unexpected payments.

I do not include this within my report in order to point fingers or try to lay blame with individual members of the Council, but because as Chair I believe that the public have a right to know why these payments had to be made and how this has affected the village finances. Many people have asked questions and not received satisfactory answers, so I hope that this will now answer those questions and the village can move forward and put the matter behind them.

Although the Council may have been divided over the decision that was taken, as part of the democratic process a decision made by the majority is a decision of the whole Council. I offer my apologies to the residents of Parton for this costly failure by the Council, but can assure them that we will be implementing policies to ensure that this sort of failure can never happen again.

Stephen Tumelty

Chair, Parton Parish Council

31st March 2021

APPENDIX B

Parton Reunited Community Group.

Parton Reunited Community Group was formed over two years ago on Tuesday 5th March 2019, when, at its inaugural meeting, it adopted its Constitution and an Unincorporated Association as its legal structure. A Chair, Secretary and Treasurer were elected. It's sole aim is to work together to improve the quality of lives and the environment of the community of Parton. There are twelve members on the committee and 580 people have joined our Facebook Group.

Since it's formation the group, collectively and individually have achieved the following :

- * Purchased a convex mirror for the bottom of Brewy Brow which has significantly improved the safety of pedestrians, particularly parents bringing their children to and from school and has been warmly welcomed by them. It has also been welcomed by motorists who are now able to see clearly if there are any approaching vehicles, removing the need to sound their horns as a warning as they approach the corner. The mirror has virtually totally eliminated the incessant noise experienced daily, from sounding car horns and improved the lives of residents of Main Street and Foundry Road by removing this noise pollution.

- * Getting the bus shelter on Criffel Road cleaned, removing mould and algae. The shelter hadn't been cleaned since it was built.

- * Arranging for the United Utilities Pump House on the foreshore to be painted, covering the graffiti with bright, colourful murals of marine life, turning it from an eyesore into an attraction.

- * Donating two wooden picnic benches to the community for use by residents attending the village hall.

- * Donating two Bistro sets to the community for use by residents attending the village hall.

- * Organising and funding the painting of the village hall.

- * Organising the painting of the War Memorial railings and walls, in cooperation with the Parish Council who agreed to pay for the paint. Thanks go to Lee McKee for completing this, and for maintaining it voluntarily.

- * Organising the refurbishment of the benches near the War Memorial, with new treated timber work and iron work, courtesy of Howdens.

- * Organising for a new grit bin to be placed at the top of the Ghyll steps, to improve safety during winter months.

- * Organised the total refurbishment of the Northern Gas SubStation on Criffel Road.

- * Cleared and cleaned the paved areas of weeds, inside and outside the War Memorial.

- * Organised and funded the acquisition of ten wooden barrels planted up with flowers, located around the village hall and the village green. Also organised for the youth club to maintain an additional five barrels outside the village hall.

- * Organised the placement of a flower boat, planters and hanging baskets on the railway platform.

- * Organised an Easter Family Fun Day, with egg hunt, Easter bonnet competition and refreshments in the village hall.

- * Organised a Summer Family Fun Day with children's rides, bar and barbecue, attended by Service Providers Cumbria Police, Whitehaven Fire and Rescue, Whitehaven Air Cadets and West Cumbria Coastguard. Entertainment provided by Cockermouth Eukalele Band.

- * Organised the first ever Parton Christmas Tree located on the village green with Santa's Grotto in the village hall giving out 150 selection boxes and 56 treat boxes for senior citizens. Entertainment provided by St Bridgets school choir and the Whitehaven Male Voice Choir.

- * Organised the provision of twenty four food crates, every week for over a year, to families in Parton and West Cumbria, to help them throughout the Pandemic.
- * Organised West Cumbria Look for a Book scheme to encourage families to spend time together and to promote reading and literature.
- * Organised Paint a Pebble scheme to promote families getting out into the fresh air, working purposely together to be creative.
- * Organised the collection and distribution of Christmas toys and books around the village and West Cumbria.
- * Organised the preparation and distribution of freshly made meals, weekly, to residents around the village and West Cumbria.
- * Organised several Table Top Sales, raffles and Bingo Sessions in the village hall.
- * Organised and paid for the overgrown vegetation in the foreshore boatyard to be cut and tidied up.
- * Organised and paid for overhanging vegetation on Brewey Brow to be cut back.
- * Organised for the overgrown vegetation on the entry roads to be cut back.
- * Kirsty and Andrew Barton donated new football nets for the football pitch.
- * Donating £150 to help and support the distribution of Easter eggs to the children in the community.
- * Donating £100 worth of books to the children of the village school, promoting the joy of reading and literacy.
- * Organising and coordinating the production, including several parishioners helping, of 20,227 face masks, distributed around the village, the town, the county, the country, and oversees to the British Army in Afghanistan and to the hospitals of the people of Papua New Guinea

At our recent Annual General Meeting, officers were again appointed for the forthcoming year.

Forthcoming projects include getting four full sized wooden barrels, planted up with flowers for the railway platform, individually signed and also a "Welcome to Parton " mural behind the flower boat. New hanging baskets and notice boards depicting the history of the village, complete the second phase. The main challenge for the third phase, next year is the power washing, base coating and artistic mural for the underpass, and, hopefully, acquiring disability access ramps.

Our current bank balance is £1289.08p, of which £685 is allocated to the improvements for the station platform.

Only, realistically, in place for one year, barring the Pandemic, the group have worked unrelentingly and selflessly to make Parton a better place to be.

We are very proud to fiercely rebuke, resist and deride the non sensible and corrosive stain of local politics, and the sad and deluded representatives who support them, instead putting our community first, above ourselves, for the betterment and improvement of the quality of lives of the residents of this wonderful village.

We welcome, with heartfelt open arms, any like minded people from the village, whose sole aim is, like ours is, to work together to improve this community.

Rob Huck MBE

Chair of Parton Reunited Community Group

Janice Miller

Vice Chair

Kirsty Barton

Secretary

Janice Miller

Treasurer