

Buttermere Parish Council

Minutes of the parish council meeting held on Tuesday 7th December 2021 in The Old School Room, Buttermere, at 7.30pm.

The chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Y Kahane (chair), J Temple, A McGuire, E Beard (joined 7.37pm), L Kyle, H Fear Davies, K Beard.

District and County Councillors: Neither present.

Clerk: Mike Milner. No members of the public.

Apologies for absence: None received

256.00 Apologies. As noted above.

257.00 Declaration of Interest. None

258.00 To approve and accept the minutes of the last Buttermere parish council meeting held on Tuesday 21st September 2021 as a true record.

259.01 The minutes were approved by councillors and duly signed.

259.00 Police Matters.

259.01 Clerk had circulated police e-newsletters when received.

260.00 Applications for development.

260.01 There were no applications to consider at the meeting, but clerk confirmed that app' 7/2021/2203, Turners How, considered at the September meeting had been approved.

261.00 District and County Councillors Reports. Neither present to make reports.

262.00 Receive and approve the parish council accounts for 6 months to 30th September 2021. All documents distributed prior to the meeting.

262.01 Clerk had circulated all relevant docs prior to the meeting with a copy of the signed auditor's report. The accounts indicated that the former savings account had been transferred to the current account as agreed at the September meeting.

262.02 There were no questions raised and councillors approved the accounts presented for the first half of the financial year.

263.00 Receive an update on budget for financial year 2021/22 and consider the budget presented for 22/23. Finalise the precept figure for 2022/23. Budget spreadsheet and budget notes to be circulated. Budget submission by 7th January 2022 to Allerdale.

263.01 Cllr H F D raised the issue of the deficit indicated, asking if it was a planned decision to use up reserves and what assets did the parish council have.

263.02 Clerk explained that there was no specific policy to run a budget deficit, however over the past few years the precept had been held static or increased by a minimal amount. There are very few properties in the parish and the current registered number of voters on the last electoral roll was 92, current guidelines indicate a minimum of 150 for a parish, but as Buttermere has parish status it would not lose it unless the parish council decided to amalgamate with another parish.

263.03 During a lengthy discussion it was established that the parish is responsible for no assets and as the budget figures indicated the biggest financial commitment was the clerk his salary and expenses. The discussion touched on the financial implications that may occur with the new unitary council and how that would affect the precept figure. The chair then raised the issue of the clerk's hours. Clerk confirmed that his current contract at Buttermere was for 8 hours per month. At Loweswater he was on 12 hours/month and at Lorton 15 hours/month. At his other 2 parishes which met monthly he was on an open contract and he booked all hours worked per month which could range from 18 hours to 33 hours.

263.04 Clerk broke his hours down as 13 hours for a month where there was a meeting plus an additional 8 hours across the year for the quarterly, half yearly and then end of year accounts. Basically, he required 60 hours to do the statutory legislative requirement which left him 36 hours per year, or 3 hours per month to do the normal work of addressing potholes, planning applications, traffic issues and deal with all other correspondence. During the Covid lockdowns he had had to set up and overseen the running of the Zoom meetings. Basically, the clerk's hours were probably agreed back in 1970 and have never been considered for adjustment as modern technology and modern world communicates systems developed. The clerk pointed out the parish laptop on the desk, that required regular updates and back up procedures. All the banking is now via internet.

263.05 Cllrs L K and JT said that the clerk should be paid for the hours he worked and that the precept request should match the new figure estimated budget figure for 2022/23 financial year. Clerk pointed out that on the agenda his salary and hours worked were not mentioned, however the chair pointed out that to arrive at a fair precept figure, such matters were a significant part of the discussion. It was agreed that clerk's hours should be increased to 10 hours per month from April 2022, the estimated budget figure for 2022/23 was increased to £2222 which meant an increase of 45% in the precept from the current £1530 to £2200. Parish councils are not capped with their precept increases.

263.06 Cllr H F D requested that the minutes, in their content, contained a detailed account as to how the precept increase was arrived at. Councillors unanimously agreed that a precept of £2220 would be requested for the financial year 2022/23. The increase was to cover the clerk's increased hours and avoid continuing to run a deficit which would erode the parish's existing limited reserves.

265.00 HSBC Banking position update.

265.01 Clerk confirmed that the savings account funds £722.07 had been transferred to the parish's current HSBC. He asked if Cllr L K had been a bank signatory in the past, which was not the case, so clerk would submit the forms to the HSBC and request account's closure.

266.00 Broadband update.

266.01 Cllr H F D had requested clerk to circulate her proposed broadband submission to Dame Melanie Dawes, the Chief Executive of Ofcom, on behalf of the parish council, prior to the meeting to enable the councillors to confirm that the content met with personal and business users' requirements.

266.02 Councillors all agreed the proposed letter more than adequately detailed the broadband issues and hopefully the Chief Executive would be able to bring the issues in front of people who could rectify the appalling service. Cllr H F D would provide clerk with final version the next day clerk who would submit it on behalf of the parish council. Chair thanked Cllr HFD for her efforts since September.

267.00 Dark Skies update.

267.01 Chair Y K reported that she had spoken to a manager from the hotel, formerly known as The Fish, in Buttermere. On Sunday 12th December the manager, if not the owners, would meet with a Dark Skies project engineer, to discuss the options about how the lighting could be managed to meet both the hotel's insurance company's requirements and the acknowledged excellent Dark Skies that Buttermere is renowned for, which draws many visitors.

268.00 Unitary council, present position.

268.01 Chair Y K had heroically sat through 2 ½ hours of a Windows Team meeting to discover that apart from now knowing it would be an east west council split of Cumbria into 2 unitary councils, the rest of the proposals are still in the melting pot.

268.02 Just prior to the meeting the clerk had circulated an email which contained a link to the full meeting, but it did also have a PowerPoint presentation of 7 pages which the chair advised all councillors to view as it was as comprehensive in the detail as was currently available. Clerk confirmed that when Cllrs got to the page with **Questions** on, exit the presentation.

269.00 Progress reports, clerk.

269.01 with reference to minute 252.01 and the mobile catering van(s) at Cinderdale parking area at Rannerdale, clerk had written to Jane Saxon the NT area manager. Clerk had received a phone call from J S on Monday morning, she confirmed that she should have advised various bodies about the decision to licence The Moon & Sixpence from Cockermouth to operate at that location including the parish council and apologised for not doing so. It was agreed that J S would attend the March Buttermere parish council meeting to provide details of what was planned for the 2022 summer as another busy "staycation" was envisaged.

269.02 J S requested the clerk to advise that the larch tree diseased felling that NT was legally duty bound to undertake at Holme Wood, Loweswater and Burtness Wood, Buttermere scheduled for late January had been delayed due to Storm Arwen, contractors were busy with post storm work, new dates would be agreed, but mindful of wildlife and nesting birds.

269.03 clerk asked if the gorse at the road sides as minute 252.02 had been had been cut? No was the simple answer so he would contact NT as it is on their land.

269.04 The raised manholes, by the grit bin down into Buttermere from Lorton direction, that were supposed to have been completed last week by United Utilities are still not resolved and flush with the road surface. Clerk to chase UU.

269.05 Clerk was able to confirm that after many exchanges of emails and phone conversation with UU and then Highways, the big dip in the road at the entrance to the Bridge Hotel from the gateway on the opposite side of the road has been successfully resurfaced.

270.00 Buttermere Councillors reports,

270.01 Chair Y K advised that the Buttermere hydroelectric scheme has been awarded a further grant of £74,300 to continue with the development work. One of the outstanding issues that the committee has is with obtaining wayleave agreements with land owners for pipework across the land owners' ground.

270.02 No other reports.

271.00 Correspondence

271.01 Clerk had received an email from Honister Slate Mine, which he had circulated last week to councillors, in which the facility was requesting support for "Honister Green Energy Plans." The email as councillors pointed out was excellent with intent, but the content on how the proposals would be achieved were not expanded upon. Clerk to respond to the company, advising in principle the idea was fine, but due to the lack of detail as to what was actually being proposed by Honister, at this moment Buttermere Parish Council could not support something not clearly defined.

271.02 Clerk had received notification that the Chief Officer of Calc Samantha Bagshaw was standing down at the end of January.

271.03 Invoice from Simone Morgan for year end 20/21 audit fee and 21/22 half year audit fee.

271.04 Calc had advised of training courses for councillors during early 2022 and would councillors be interested. All via virtual meeting process.

271.05 Great North Air Ambulance had written requesting a contribution for their charity. Cllr H F D asked if the parish council made any charity donations, which was no. Councillors all agreed that following the discussion about the precept at minute 263.00 any charitable donation would be contrary to their agreed budget and precept decision.

272.00 Payments for Approval

Intpay62, Simone Morgan, £60 internal audit fees of £30, 20/21 end of year and 21/22 half yearly audit.

Approved

273.00 Date and time of the next meeting. Tuesday 1st March at 7.30pm at Old School Room, Buttermere.

Meeting closed 8.28pm