

Lorton Parish Council

Minutes of the parish council meeting held on Wednesday 3rd Jan' 2024.

The chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs, Chris Poate(chair) Peter Deeks (vice-chair), Garan Comley, Zindzi Cresswell. Glenis Postlethwaite.

Cllr Jill Perry, Cumberland Councillor.

Clerk, Mike Milner. 3 members of the public.

Apologies, Cllr Tanya St Pierre (LPC).

657.00 Apologies for absence, as noted above.

658.00 Declaration of Interest. none

659.00 To approve and accept the minutes of the last Lorton Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st Nov' 2023, as a true record.

659.01 Councillors unanimously resolved to approve the minutes.

660.00 Crummock Water weir removal update.

660.01 Clerk read brief update from Cllr H F-D chair of Buttermere. No change since November.

661.00 Public participation. Approx. 15 mins.

661.01 member of the public who owns land bordering the village Pound, pointed out that recent work involving the EA with replanting of recycled Christmas Trees and willow cuttings had in parts of the beck through the village proved very beneficial for preventing bank erosion. The EA were keen to continue the project and had lined up a TV slot on the BBC One Show for 4th January 2024, including material from Lorton and its pound.

661.02 The EA require written confirmation from the parish council indicating that it was fully supportive of the continuation of the scheme in the parish Pound along its bank. Clerk will make the appropriate email contact with Mike Farrell, Environment Agency, to confirm the parish council's support.

662.00 Interpretation Boards, current position, final project timeline and costing update. Use of QR codes and how and where hosted.

662.01 Former Cllr Pam Jaques was present and she detailed the current position. Two boards planned AO size on YTH and A1 in Low Lorton by the bus stop. P J had circulated details of the historical board for the YTH installation. It would be fixed to the YTH wall to left of the main door and it would have a black powder coated frame surround. To match the current window frame colour would be an additional £650 charge and a near match £150, so standard black and it would not look out of place and would not be affected by any future YTH colour scheme changes.

662.02 There was an option to produce an 8 or 12 page A5 booklet which would cost less than £1 each, which could be then sold in the local shop. P J to clarify the conditions of sale price. Clerk would prefer the booklets were paid for by PC and then handed to shop, FOC, with no further return of monetary funds to the parish council. The shop was then reimbursed for their storage and sales promotion and it would hopefully drive additional footfall into the local shop.

663.03 The question of QR codes on both noticeboards was being resolved and even if Melbreak Community change web host the QR can be easily transferred. P J has been in touch with S G Builders about the installation of the boards. The only issue to be resolved was a common acknowledgement shared on both boards for board content material sources and funding support for the project.

663.04 Cllr G P raised the issue of the text colour for the YTH historical board, currently white, should it not be black, easier to read. That to be reappraised. Chair thanked P J for her attendance and input.

664.00 Police Matters.

664.01 Clerk advised he had circulated the police e-newsletters, no other report. Clerk enquired if local school had any interaction with PCSOs as at other parishes he clerked for they did and it was a backdoor access to getting issues brought to the police's attention.

665.00 Applications for development.

665.01 clerk confirmed application 7/2023/2198 Fold End previously considered, has been approved by planning.

666.00 Matters concerning Cumberland Councillor.

666.01 Cllr J P confirmed there was to be boundary review, to consider a requirement for more Cllrs and should that mean smaller wards, or more Cllrs within the existing boundaries. This review would be completed by Oct' 2025 and implemented by 2026. There is a problem with not enough Cllrs to fill committee positions.

666.02 The Community Partnership meeting panel are looking to Co-opt 3 members of the public, to assist with the drawing up of the community plan. The co-optees will be voluntary positions, no remuneration package or voting rights, but travel expenses will be paid. The first batch of grant applications had been awarded. No firm details yet of next Network event, but expected shortly. Chair thanked Cllr J P for her report and invited her to stay.

667.00 Confirm the Lorton parish precept request for financial year 2024/25 revised budget document circulated prior to the meeting. Annual RPI announced in December 3.9%.

667.01 clerk circulated a revised budget form and confirmed that he had, after consultation with chair and Cllr T St P, renegotiated the expired grounds maintenance contract with Bigfoot and explained new figures and that was how he had arrived at the budgeted figure for the coming year.

667.02 clerk then explained that his last salary increase was September 2022, which was for delayed period, covering 2020/21 due to Covid, rate agreed then at all parishes he clerked for was £13.48/hr. He had seen over Christmas that NALC had finally on 6th Nov' 2023 agreed a new pay scale for his pay level, £15.48/hr and back dated to 1st April 2023. Cllrs agreed that parish council would adopt that figure from April 2023. Clerk not seeking older arrears.

667.03 Clerk also advised with reference to earlier comment about QR codes, parish councils using the Melbreak Community's website should pay an annual £50 hosting fee and he had contacted all 4 parishes. Lorton, Loweswater and Buttermere chair had all agreed to that proposal. He was awaiting response from Blind Bothel. Room hire in the budget was £180 which reflected the £15/hr figured volunteered at the November meeting.

667.04 Clerk had contacted Cllr P D about the tennis clubs rent review and the lease renewal. The figure for rent would be a minimum of £221 per year from April 2024 and Cllr P D would bring the revised rental agreement and the lease extension to the next meeting. Clerk to ensure it is an agenda item in March 2024.

667.05 Finally the Cllrs considered the precept figure and Cllr P D proposed a revised increase of 3.9% to a new figure of £7356 which was seconded by the chair and approved unanimously.

668.00 Wildlife Action Plan, Cllr Tanya St Pierre.

668.01 Due to the Cllrs unavoidable absence this item to be on March agenda.

669.00 Parish plan update and consideration of questionnaire for circulation, its completion and methods of submission.

669.01 The parish council spent some considerable time discussing the questions that were currently on the circulated draft questionnaire. It was eventually agreed that there was no urgency to circulate the questionnaire in the immediate form. Cllr G C would provide an aerial image of Lorton. Cllr G P would furnish details of clubs/societies not currently mentioned on the 4-page hard copy questionnaire. It would then be redistributed to all Cllrs for consideration and further comment and presented again at the 6th March meeting. The aim was to circulate with the Easter newsletter and that there would be no Winter newsletter this time.

669.02 The discussions were very informative, all present understood the challenge of attempting to compile, distribute by various means and also accept returns by multiple options and that the form could be completed by more than one resident at the property, also an Easter circulation may encourage feedback from second home owners and even perhaps visitors staying in a holiday home. The hard copy would be distributed prior to Easter and a completion date of 8th April was agreed.

670.00 Winter Parish Council magazine, content and deadline for printing.

670.01 as noted in above minute, Winter edition cancelled, it will now be the Easter edition and it was agreed all copy to clerk for 15th March, so he could compile and submit to the printer 17th March. Cllr P D would be responsible for the "Chairs Jottings" for this addition.

671.00 Parish Council Vacancy.

671.01 Clerk to put appropriate notice in the parish noticeboard and Chair C P to seek an insertion in the next edition of the Link magazine.

672.00 Progress reports, clerk.

672.01 clerk reported on the attendance of the Fibrus customer manager, Libby Bateman, at Buttermere in December. It had been an informative meeting, it appeared that Buttermere could have Fibre to The Property, FTTP, by summer 2024. It will come in initially from Keswick side and then the Cockermouth side. Clerk had circulated a list of the Lorton addresses that would benefit from the option. At Buttermere clerk had identified with residents' certain black hole areas, properties, which he was currently challenging both Fibrus and also Connecting Cumbria team about rectifying.

672.02 as already mentioned earlier in minutes Cllr P D is in the process of providing appropriate paperwork to both extend the tennis club lease on their facility adjacent to the Parish Field and also a set the new annual rental charge from April 2024.

672.03 a tree has been pollarded in the Parish Field; work undertaken by Bigfoot contractor at request of the school.

672.04 clerk raised the issue of the ongoing issue of signage about Private Property boundaries either side of the pound. Wording and position of fixing holes agreed and clerk to organise.

672.05 clerk pointed out that checking the HSBC banking mandate, Cllrs C P and G P were the 2 signatures but he would like 4 any 2 to sign. Cllrs Z C and G C were duly approved.

674.00 Cllrs reports.

674.01 It appeared that apart from Cllr G P who advised of a Melbreak coffee morning in February and Cllr G C who pointed out that there was now a successful pool team in the Wheatsheaf, using the pool table that had been in the YTH for the past few months, no other reports.

675.00 Correspondence.

675.02 email received from YTH chair thanking parish council for agreeing a voluntary hall hire rate of £15/hr, greater than requested. A much-appreciated gesture.

675.03 Local resident Steve Irlam had contacted the clerk about emergency shelters, across the Melbreak Valley. Clerk had responded, not Old School Room Buttermere, but, The Bridge Hotel, Buttermere Court Hotel (formerly Fish) and perhaps the church. In Lorton YTH, the school, tennis club, school building and even the church. In Loweswater there is Loweswater Village Hall, perhaps folk in Mockerkin would be closer to Ullock village hall. Lorton Cllrs agreed a comprehensive selection.

675.04 clerk circulated North Area Distintive District newsletter from Peter Walter.

675.05 clerk reported a rise of spam emails seeking invoice payments, all reported to relevant authority and deleted.

675.06 Discussions with Melbreak Community about use of website for QR codes.

675.07 annual letter from Great North Air Ambulance seeking a donation. Last year £250, Cllrs unanimously agreed a similar donation for this year.

675.08 HSBC have been enquiring if the bank account holds "clients" funds or "currency accounts". Answer is no clerk to respond accordingly.

676.00 Payments for approval.

M Milner Intpay179, £161.80, salary December, no expenses.

HMRC PAYE Intpay180, Clerks tax £40.40 December PAYE

The above payments made to conform with new HMRC reporting and payment legislation.

HSBC Bank a/c charges £8.00 December.

M Milner Intpay181, £429.95, salary January £401.60, expenses £28.35.

Payment includes back dated pay increase from April to December 2023

HMRC PAYE Intpay182, Clerks tax £100.60, January, includes tax on back dated salary.

Great North Air Ambulance, Intpay 183, £250.00 annual donation.

Direct charge by HSBC £8 monthly account charge January 2024.

All Payments approved.

Meeting closed 9.35pm.

677.00 Date and time of next meeting Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 7.30pm, the meeting will be held in Yew Tree Hall. It will include the Village AGM meeting where local societies and clubs can make a report.