

**Minutes of the meeting of Kaber Parish Council Meeting held on
Monday 23 November 2015 at 19.00 in Kaber Village Hall**

Present: Mary Leathes
Stuart Hird
Sam Fisher
Julie Reeves
Steven Hastwell
Mike Walker Clerk & RFO

Libby Bateman Cumbria County Councillor
Valerie Kendall Eden District Councillor

Mike Slack / Jim Bradley / David Leathes / John Dowson / Norman Capstick

- 1. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence:** Apologies had been received from Eden District Councillor Trevor Ladhams and Gordon Dent, the Parish Council nominee to the Kaber School Trustees.
- 2. To approve the minutes of the October 2015 meeting:** The minutes had been circulated by e-mail and hard copies were available for Councillors at the meeting. Stuart Hird proposed and Julie Reeves seconded that the minutes be adopted and the Chairman signed them.
- 3. To hear reports on actions from the previous minutes:**

The Clerk thanked Highways for the work done on the roadside near to Kaber Cross and had suggested that attention was needed on the north side. Problems at Duckintree were reported, but a burst water main had occurred and the problems rectified.

Julie Reeves has enquired of Lonsdale regarding Broadband in the parish with no response. She was encouraged to continue trying to contact them.

Although bushes have been pruned at the village end of Popping Lane, there is now a fairly deep lagoon. The Clerk was asked to report this to Highways as it is probably a blocked drain.

The Chairman and Clerk produced a letter asking for interest in the position of Parish Clerk. No response has been received. It was also disappointing that there was no response to the request for e-mail addresses.

Although a decision has been made to register with NEST for a pension scheme, the Clerk had deferred taking action until the position of Clerk and RFO was clarified.

The Chairman had attended the A685 meeting regarding the Appleby Horse Fair. The feeling was that use of posts had improved the situation, although there were similar numbers of trailers. If funding is available similar measures should be put in place in 2016.

4. **Declarations of Interest on items on the agenda:** As there was an item on the agenda which some of the Councillors had an interest, the Clerk had circulated a brief summary of the requirements on prejudicial interest and the Chairman outlined the responsibility of Councillors to declare their interests, and if they felt they would be considered prejudicial, leave the meeting for the particular item. The following declarations of interest were made by Councillors:

Agenda item 9: To consider concerns regarding the future of Kaber Village Hall

Sam Fisher, as he is a Trustee of the Kaber School Trust, owners of the hall
Mary Leathes, as her husband is Chairman of the Village Hall Committee
Steven Hastwell, as his father is a Trustee of the Kaber School Trust

These Councillors believed that they could take an unbiased view in discussion at the Parish Council and were allowed to remain for the discussions

5. **To consider and decide on Requests for Dispensations:** There were no further requests for dispensation, as none of the Councillors had pecuniary interests in items on the agenda, except for that of determining the precept, for which all Councillors already had dispensation.
6. **Public Participation:** David Leathes, Jim Bradley and John Dowson asked to join the discussion under item 9 and this was permitted.
7. **To consider and comment on planning applications if submitted before the meeting:** No planning applications have been received.
8. **To review the position on a replacement Clerk for 2016:** A letter had been sent out to all houses in Kaber, and no response had been made regarding the position of Clerk. An approach has been made to the new Clerk of an adjacent parish, but she is no longer interested. A third option of using someone who regards clerking as a career may be possible, although the remuneration needs may be substantial. There is a possible candidate acting as Clerk to two Parish Councils in the area.

It was agreed that the Parish should advertise locally and via CALC, for a Clerk to cover 60 hours per year at a salary to be negotiated.

9. **To consider concerns regarding the future of Kaber Village Hall:** In the absence of Gordon Dent, no feedback was available from the Parish nominee to the Kaber School Trust.

David Leathes outlined his concerns about the hall from the position of the Village Hall Committee. The hall has assets of around £4000, and needs around £1200 per annum to keep it going. The Parish Council has recently agreed to provide a donation of £100 per year, plus rents for meetings at £20 per evening. Income is received from the recycling and use as a polling station. There is a significant shortfall and events have to be run to meet the difference, with the burden falling on a few people in the

community. He questioned whether the Kaber School Trust should be changed, to allow its income to be used in support of the hall, which it owns, rather than as donations for children, who now get free education up to the age of 18. Concerns were expressed that the Charity was working on a document dating back to 1896 and times had changed considerably since then. David explained that the Village Hall building was important to the community, as a meeting place for the Parish Council, for community events and as a polling station. He has made suggestions to the Trustees and has been concerned about the lack of a response.

Considerable discussion took place about the accountability of the Trustees, and methods of appointment, with a request for clarification.

Sam Fisher, as a Trustee, stated that the Trustees do want the Village hall to continue as a village amenity and requested that communications to the Trust should be made via the Clerk to the Trust, and not to individual trustees. He also stated that the Trust were considering changes to their outgoings, as University education costs were now becoming significant to older children, and the Trust might favour donations to them rather than to all village children.

Alan Harker, the Clerk to the Trustees, had written to the Parish Council outlining that certain matters had been referred to the Charities Commission for clarification and the Trustees would advise the Council when their reply had been received and considered by the Trustees.

Mike Walker, Clerk to the Parish Council, was asked to explain the possibility of listing the hall as a Community Asset, should the trustees ever consider selling it. This would give limited protection and allow the village time to raise money for its purchase.

The Chairman proposed a community meeting to consider the various options, with the Parish Clerk in the Chair as a neutral person, not resident in the Parish. There were concerns expressed about how manageable such a meeting would be, and she then amended her proposal to a meeting of the Kaber School Trustees and the Village Hall Committee, to be held in early 2016, and chaired by the Parish Clerk. The objective would be to plan a sustainable future for Kaber Village Hall. Julie Reeves seconded this proposal, the Council agreed and the Clerk was asked to make the necessary arrangements.

10. To Agree a budget for 2016 to 2017: The Clerk had circulated a draft budget for 2016-2017 and made the following comments:

- The budget includes minor increases due to inflation.
- The election costs in 2015 were less than budgeted as the election was uncontested and further expenditure is unlikely until 2020. This leaves a reasonable cushion for the future.
- The greatest uncertainty is with costs associated with a new clerk, the salary needed to attract a replacement, possible overlap with two clerks in

post, and training costs. I have suggested a figure of £600 for 2016 to 2017, but this may need to be increased. I have used gross figures as the tax position is unknown.

- In addition there is uncertainty regarding the village hall, and although the Council agreed to donate £100 per annum plus £20 per meeting to the village hall, if the trustees wish to levy commercial rents, this may need to be reviewed.
- There is sufficient flexibility to allow for small unforeseen one-off charges.

It was agreed that the sums projected for payments to the village hall were acceptable. The biggest issue was the salary of a new Clerk. It was pointed out that a major budget increase would be seen as an unacceptable rise in precept, and that as we had budgeted for £600 election expenses, which was only charged at £70, it would be difficult to justify adding a contingency fund of £300-500.

The continuing rise in the Burial Board precept was questioned and Stuart Hird agreed to raise this with Malcolm Hutchinson and report back to the Council.

Stuart Hird proposed, and Steven Hastwell seconded that the budget be accepted and Council agreed.

The Clerk has received a communication from CALC that the facilities for compliance with data transparency legislation will be withdrawn during 2016. The Clerk has challenged this robustly, but provision may need to be made for costs of a web-site sometime during the next financial year.

- 11. To Fix the Precept for 2016:** On the basis of the budget discussions Sam Fisher proposed, and Stuart Hird seconded that the precept be held at £1350. However, as the deadline for submission of the precept is not until the end of January 2016, the Council has the opportunity to review this at the next meeting.
- 12. To agree payment of 2015 election expenses (£70.00):** The costs of the 2015 election were low due to the Parish Council election being uncontested. Sam Fisher proposed and Stuart Hird seconded that the payment be made and the Clerk arranged for a cheque to be signed.
- 13. To decide if the Council wishes to opt out of the Sector Led Body Audit Scheme:** The Council has an opportunity to opt out of a sectoral audit scheme but such action would bring additional work. Mary Leathes proposed and Julie Reeves seconded that Kaber Parish Council would not opt out.
- 14. Consideration of future issues in Kaber:** There were a number of matters which need to be considered by the Council:
 - CALC have warned that their facility for publishing parish's data will be withdrawn in 2016 and this might mean setting up an alternative web-site for this purpose.

- Julie Reeves is moving away in mid-February and the Council needs to find a replacement Councillor and Bank signatory.
- With all the bureaucratic needs outweighing discussion on Parish issues, the Council may need to consider asking for a Review of Governance. The Clerk agreed to make some preliminary enquiries about the procedure and potential difficulties.

15. To hear input from Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council:

Libby Bateman told the Council of the Cumbria budget Consultation which is looking for efficiencies, and fire station closure. There is also a move towards devolution of Westminster powers to local government and a combined authority of County and District Councils are being considered. This appears to be an extra layer of local government and will require an elected mayor to gain powers from Westminster.

Valerie Kendall advised the Parish Council that there are similar problems in Eden District Council with a need to cut costs, and consider local delivery of services.

16. To review Sundry Correspondence and agree any action:

A letter has been received asking about the possibility of placing a defibrillator in the phone box. The Clerk responded that Kaber has agreed to rely on First Responders rather than a defibrillator.

The Great North Air Ambulance is requesting donations towards its operation.

Eden District Council has circulated its Local Plan for discussion. This has limited impact on Kaber.

The CALC circular was received and circulated to Councillors

17. To consider any items to be raised at the next Council meeting: It was agreed that the following items should be included in the next Council meeting:

- To follow up actions to identify a new Parish Clerk
- To consider possible options for a new Councillor
- To review adequacy of budget and precept before submission
- To consider whether Kaber PC should request a review of governance
- To approve payment of the Parish Clerk for 2015-2016

18. To decide a date for the next Parish Council Meeting: The next meeting of Kaber Parish Council will be held on Monday 18 January 2016 at 1900 in Kaber Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 21.34