

Kaber Parish Council

Meeting of the Annual Meeting of Local Government Electors held in Kaber Village Hall on 21 March 2016 at 19.30

Present: Mary Leathes Chairman
Sam Fisher
Stuart Hird
Steven Hastwell
Rachel Bell

Mike Walker Clerk

Trevor Ladhams Eden District Council

Electors: Christine Dowson, David Leathes, Mike Bidgway, James Hastwell, Keith Walton, Malcolm Hutchinson, Jean Bradley, Jim Bradley

The Chairman welcomed all present.

- 1. Apologies:** Apologies had been received from Libby Bateman and Valerie Kendall
- 2. Minutes of last meeting:** The minutes of the previous Annual Meeting of Local Government Electors were distributed by the Clerk, and after a period to allow them to be read, were signed by the Chairman on the proposal of Sam Fisher, seconded by Mike Bidgway, and agreed unanimously.
- 3. To hear reports on actions from the previous minutes:** Most issues referred to in the minutes were included in the Chairman's report or on the agenda.
- 4. Chairman's Report:**
The Chairman thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and noted that almost exactly 100 years ago, Kaber was a Parish Meeting, but around 1915 the Parish sought and gained approval to change its governance to a Parish Council. As you will see from item 6 on the agenda we are poised on the threshold of a similar process but in the opposite direction.

The present Council comprises myself, Stuart Hird, Steven Hastwell, Sam Fisher and Rachel Bell who has just been co-opted onto the Council to fill the vacancy left when Julie Reeves moved away. Rachel is a recent arrival in the Parish and we look forward to her objectivity and fresh approach to our discussions and decisions. The Council would like to note our thanks to Julie and to Matthew Staley for their faithful service and support. Thanks also to John and Christine Dowson for their regular mowing and horticultural expertise around the monument, and to Malcolm Hutchinson who continues to represent the parish on the Kirkby Stephen Burial Board.

Mike Bidgway continues to serve as Kaber's doughty watchdog on Broadband issues. Mike deserves a dual purpose medal – for long service and long suffering. It now seems likely that Kaber will be included in phase 2 of Connect Cumbria.

The Rookby Beck could not cope with the excesses of Storm Desmond and its successors and Rookby suffered several episodes of flooding during that season. Road edges and surfaces throughout the parish have been eroded by the force of water. We hope that Highways will undertake the necessary remedial work in due course, but in view of the extreme challenges faced by other areas in the county, the Council has felt it inappropriate to press for urgent action. Residents of Heggarscale are indebted to Stuart for keeping the steep access passable in snow and ice.

The slow cooking issue of drainage to Clay lane was completed in February. The site is quite raw in the aftermath but hopefully the work will prove worthwhile and nature will make good the damage in due course.. It is to be hoped that Nature will be assisted and supported by a practical concern for the whole, landscape of the future in Kaber, with active conservation measures and tree planting to benefit the next generation growing up amongst us.

Thanks are due to Sam once again for fortifying the central green areas of Kaber with posts against possible encampments during the Appleby Fair Season. Once again Kaber's only visitors were a handful of tethered ponies. Numbers of vehicles camping along the A685 verges were almost the same as in 2015 but their stay was shorter and the positions were more regulated due to the substantial deployment of posts. Similar measures can be expected this year providing that the necessary funding appears.

Once again Brough Show in Kaber was an August highlight and the Parish is grateful to Sam and Stuart for looking after our interests on the day. I stepped down from the local team of first responders in August and currently there is no replacement within the parish. A Community Defibrillator remains a possibility.

The main issue before this meeting is the future governance of the parish – Council, or Meeting. The Council believes that the time has come to make a formal request to Eden District Council for a Review of Governance. In support of this request a petition was circulated in January seeking the necessary 50% support of the electorate – substantially over this figure were given. Our Clerk, Mike Walker, has held preliminary discussions with CALC and EDC and you will see that item 6 on the agenda is top ask for your formal support in our approach to Eden District Council.

Over the past five years I have repeatedly drawn your attention to the increasing burden of administration falling upon us due to our status as a Paris Council. I have reiterated our reliance on Mike Walker to bear the brunt of of these demands and to guide us through them. Once again our thanks are due to

Mike. These complexities will only increase. Two years ago Mike gave us notice of his intention to resign at the end of this June. Despite extensive enquiry, advertisements and canvassing no replacement clerk has been identified. Kaber Parish is within three months of losing its experienced and skilful pilot.

As a Parish Meeting the most burdensome complexities would immediately disappear. Of course the Council would go at the same time to be replaced by a Chairman and Clerk and a minimum of two public meetings a year at which there would be equal opportunity for all to contribute. It is not certain that EDC's recommendation from the review would be to form a Parish Meeting but it is the opinion of the Council that it is the most likely outcome.

I intend to resign as Chairman of the Council at the Annual Meeting in May.

It is the agreed opinion of the Council and the advice of the Clerk that Kaber should seek this review and that if that is confirmed by a vote in favour of Item 6, then Mike has agreed to remain as Clerk to the Council for the duration of the process and I will remain as a Councillor for the same period – probably a year.

There will be opportunity for discussion and questions when we come to item six.

5. **Financial Report:** The Clerk circulated the financial report for 2015-2016 with the following comments:
 - a. **Precept.** Council agreed to raise the precept for 2015-6 to £1350 in the light of potential election costs in 2015. It was agreed to accept the Council Tax Support Grant of £33 in addition to this, bringing the total income from EDC to £1383. A more substantial increase has been requested for the next financial year in the light of uncertainties about what will be needed to pay a new Clerk and Training costs
 - b. **KS Burial Board Precept.** This has increased significantly over the years but will only rise by a small amount to £133 for the next financial year.
 - c. **Insurance.** This cost rose to £224.47 for 2014-2015 and again £250 has been budgeted for the next year. Note this is still only 60% of the costs incurred in 2005-9
 - d. **External Audit Fee.** This was reduced to zero and will remain so although future changes may raise internal audit costs.
 - e. **Community & Council Centre:** Kaber continues to make a small donation to the Community and Council Centre in Kirkby Stephen, available to all residents of the area.

- f. **Upper Eden Visitor Centre.** No donation was given in 2015-2016
- g. **CALC Clerk's Forum.** CALC charge for regular meetings of Clerks at £5 per session. The Council have agreed to pay this to enable the Clerk to liaise with others for the benefit of Kaber
- h. **Election Expenses.** The 2015 election did not include a Parish Election, and the costs incurred were limited to the £70 admin. cost.
- i. **Village Hall rental.** It was agreed that the Parish Council should pay rental for use of the village hall, and also make a donation of £100 per year for its support. The Council wishes to support it as a village amenity.
- j. **Balance carried forward.** The Parish will carry forward £1377.43 into the new financial year. Finances are healthy and there is money to make occasional donations, as well as for the routine operations of the Parish.
- k. **External Audit.** The external audit process is changing and one outcome is the need for data transparency. Beginning on 1 July 2015 it has been necessary to publish financial data, agendas and minutes of meetings on a web-site open to the public. CALC has provided this facility but has already indicated that they will cease to offer hosting of data during 2016. Alternatives are being investigated.

6. To decide whether to proceed with a formal request to Eden District Council for a Governance Review of Kaber Parish: The Clerk outlined the discussion he had held with CALC and EDC, pointing out the pros and cons of various options, remain as a Council, convert to a Parish Meeting, merge with an adjacent parish or become unparished. It was felt that the most likely outcome of any review would be to convert Kaber to a Parish Meeting. Any change would have to begin at the start of a new financial year and optimistically could be achieved by 1 April 2017. The start point might be delayed as Paul Foote of EDC has just retired and his replacement does not start for a couple of months. There are statutory consultation periods, and a need for the issue to be considered at full council meetings, held every two months, but it is not impossible for the review to be complete in time for 2017. The Chairman asked if the meeting supported formally requesting a review of governance. Mike Bidgway proposed and David Leathes seconded that we go ahead with the request to EDC and there were no objections. The Clerk will now forward the petitions formally to EDC with a request to begin a review.

7. To appoint a representative for Winton & Kaber Common: Stuart Hird proposed that Malcolm Hutchinson continue in the position of Kaber's representative on Winton and Kaber Common. This was seconded by James Hastwell and with no further nominations, Malcolm Hutchinson was confirmed as representative.

8. To encourage further nominations for co-option to the Parish Council:

In the light of Rachel Bell's co-option and Mary Leathes' agreement to stay on, this agenda item is now redundant.

9. Public Participation:

Broadband: Mike Bidgway explained that the position of Kaber under the Connecting Cumbria project is still ill defined and may be in phase 2. Subsidised satellite connections are available, detailed on the Connecting Cumbria website. Mike also pointed out that it was possible to get 30Mb from a 3 dongle in parts of the parish.

10. Other business to be raised at future Parish Council Meetings: There were no requests for issues to be raised at future Parish Council meetings.

The meeting closed at 20.20