



Colton Parish Council

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Chairman's Annual Report for 2012/2013

Changes to the Council

2012 was an election year. We were sorry to lose two of our Councillors during the year: Cllr Brenda Fishwick who decided not to stand for re-election due to other work commitments and Cllr Ian Cunliffe who resigned in August after more than 20 years service. This left two vacancies in west ward. Katherine Patterson from High Ickenthaite Farm was co-opted in September, and John Milburn from Stock Farm, Nibthwaite, co-opted in December.

Activities of the Council

Perennial Issues.

Maintenance of local Highways remains the most visited item on our agendas. The new Better Highways initiative has proved to be something of a mixed blessing with periods of good work and prompt attention interspersed with what feels like total neglect. Some road markings have been replaced, the worst of the pot-holes attended to and salt bins filled. Gritting of priority routes was frequent although parsimonious. Our Parish Lengthsman, Tony Atkinson, continues to do great work although currently sidelined with back problems. Our programme of repairing and replacing notice boards was complemented by a particularly beautiful example being provided by Cumbria Community Transport.

Progress with current projects

After nearly five years planning, we are pleased to see that work has started on two of the green lanes in the parish; thanks are due to Highways and to Cllr Rod Wilson. The problems associated with a the 'field of pigs' near Finsthwaite have not been resolved but associated flooding has been addressed by Highways. The current Community-led Plan is nearing completion; a first draft will be circulated to Councillors shortly.

New Issues

Thanks to the Cllrs Champion and Hoyle, bids have been made to create a much-needed footpath between Newby Bridge and Lakeside. Following problems during the winter, residents in Finsthwaite are exploring the idea of 'community resilience planning'; we await developments with interest. We are very pleased to see the enormous effort made by the Bouth Village Green Voluntary Committee in renewing the boundary fence and hedge of the green/playground.

Liaison and consultation

The Council has produced two editions of its own newsletter this year, hand-delivered to every member of the community. We have also contributed to the three local newsletters every month, and has maintained a parish website thanks to the voluntary efforts of the Clerk.

We continue to be involved with the High Furness Local Area Partnership (LAP) and regularly attend the High Furness Neighbourhood Forum.

Covering topics ranging from dog control orders to the building of the Radioactive Waste Repository in West Cumbria, the Council has received 15 formal consultations this year. It responded to 9 of these which were felt to have particular relevance to Colton Parish.

Planning

This year the Council reviewed 29 planning applications. We raised objections to two of these, expressed concerns about four others. Of the two objections, one was granted permission and the other was withdrawn. One application to which the Council did not object, was refused. We

requested conditions be attached to three applications, two of which were applied and we are awaiting outcome of third. This information can be viewed on the Parish Council website.

At a request from the Lake District Parishes Forum, the National Park held a special meeting on Planning to clarify some of the confusion that existed about procedures and policy. The National Park agreed to improve information flow to parishes, for example to inform them when applications were to be referred to Development Control Committee for a decision by members.

Meetings

The Council held nine scheduled meetings during the year and member attendance averaged 82%. We are very grateful to County Cllr Rod Wilson for his help and support and for helping to get things done. This is the first full year of Cllr David Fletcher attendance and we are pleased to receive the information that he passes on. Most meetings have also been attended by representatives from Cumbria Police and we are appreciative of the information they share, and their continued attendance in difficult times.

Budget for the coming year

Our Finance Working Group has continued to oversee our formal budgeting procedures and has recommended a precept increase of 10% which the full Council has approved. A number of key factors led to the decision to make this increase: i) changes to the way council tax is calculated means that parishes now carry some of the cost of council tax benefits, ii) severe budget cuts within the principal authorities have led to a gradual withdrawal of some services along with an (informal) expectation that parishes pick up the reins, and iii) the government are exploring the possibility of capping parish precepts in future. To ensure that we are able to cover the projected costs in future years in, for example, maintaining our Lengthsman, this increase was felt to be necessary. A summary of accounts is attached.

Chairman's thanks

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their active involvement and much-needed support during the last year, and also those residents of the parish who have assisted the Council in its activities. As ever, we are indebted to the Bouth Village Green Voluntary Committee, John Osborne, David Hamer and Allan Lovegrove in particular, for their dedication and hard work in the up-keep of the Green and its playground.

It is with pleasure and relief that I am able to thank Mike Postle for taking over the role of Parish Broadband Champion and we look forward to hearing more from him at our next meeting. I would also like to thank Bobbie Dobson who continues to bring his expertise and knowledge to the important role of internal auditor.

Our Parish Clerk, Mandy Lane, has had to face new challenges this year, in the form of introducing a revised code of conduct and register of interests, at very short notice, and I would like to thank her for all her hard-work which, I know, is much appreciated by fellow councillors.

Finally, I would like to thank Cllr Rod Wilson for all his work for the parish over the last four years. Although he was successful in the recent County elections, our parish has been moved from his ward and we will miss his enthusiasm and commitment in the years ahead.

Cllr Colin Barr

May 2013

Officers of the Council 2012-2013

West Ward: Cllr Colin Barr (Chair); Cllr Ian Cunliffe (resigned July 2012);
Cllr Katherine Patterson (co-opted Sept 12); Cllr John Milburn (co-opted Dec 12)

East Ward: Cllr Chris Potts (Vice-chair); Cllr Vanessa Champion; Cllr David Hoyle

Central Ward: Cllr Anne Robinson; Cllr John Watson; Cllr Ken Dean

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Summary of Accounts 2012/2013

Balance brought forward	5353.65
RECEIPTS	
Annual Precept via SLDC	9759.00
Return of VAT from HMRC	373.98
High Furness LAP - Lengthsman grant	600.00
Action with Communities in Cumbria, grant for Community Planning	223.72
Rawdon-Smith trust, grant for boundary works on Bouth Village Green	1000.00
High Furness Neighbourhood Forum, grant for same	500.00
Total Income	17810.35
PAYMENTS - summary	
Insurance	515.51
Annual Fees for services:	
Audit Commission fee	162.00
Information Commissioner fee	35.00
CALC Subscription	198.00
Bouth Village Green & Playground:	
RoSPA H&S Annual Inspection	75.60
Maintenance	200.00
Clerk's salary	4939.37
Clerk's office expenses & allowances	335.94
Clerk's travel expenses	121.95
Councillors' travel expenses	273.13
Room hire	140.00
Training	45.00
Lengthsman services	3135.60
Newsletter publishing expenses	126.00
Phone box fixings	24.50
Community Plan events	85.00
Poppy wreath for Remembrance Service	17.00
Finsthwaite Clock Maintenance	174.00
Crake Valley Website - share of website maintenance	15.00
NW Air Ambulance grant	50.00
Total Payments	10668.60
BALANCE	
Total income	17810.35
Total payments	10668.60
To Carry Forward	<u>7141.75</u> *

* Note: The balance to carry forward of £7141.75 is considerably larger than the 10% contingency normally planned for. This is due to a number of factors: i) Grants received during FY 12/13 to be spent next year: £1500 for Bouth Village Green boundary hedge and £600 for the Lengthsman. ii) £1200 unpaid to Lengthsman during period of ill health. iii) Notice-board renewal/maintenance allocation of £900 deferred to next year as successfully bid for a free notice-board through Cumbria Community Transport. TOTAL unspent: £4200.