

Chairman's Annual Report for 2018/2019

The parish which is 100% located in the Lake District National Park is sparsely populated and is classed as open countryside and a quiet area in the current National Park Planning Policies. Whilst this has advantages in respect of natural landscape, the environment and restricting inappropriate development it also has the disadvantage of the current housing stock increasingly being purchased as holiday homes and holiday lets which are slowly eroding the vibrancy and permanent population of the communities. Whilst the Lake District National Park Authority in their publicity quote the need for vibrant local communities it appears to be only lip service as their latest proposed Policies for the next ten years continues to be focussed on tourism, with our area now not being recognised as quiet area and their drive to move tourism away from the hotspots into quieter areas such as ours. As a council we believe in the need for change but at present it all seems to be at the expense of local communities which we will continue to support.

Changes to the Council

For the first time for a number of years there were no changes to existing councillors. There are still two vacancies which we have been unable to fill during the year. The area of the parish we are under represented remains Finsthwaite and Lakeside.

Whilst we had no councillor changes our parish clerk Karen Birch resigned in October after two years in the role. I would like to thank Karen for her commitment and contribution. We welcome Suzanne Pender as her replacement.

Activities of the Council

With established councillors we have been able to make progress in a number of areas.

- We have continued with our plan to identify and nominate 'Assets of Community Value' resulting in Glass Knott Wood and Yewbarrow Woods being agreed and included on the register. With the support of the local community we will continue to identify other possible assets.
- Our lengthsman, Archie Workman, as usual has had a busy year with all the different weather conditions and in the year to December cleared 88 drains along with his various other activities. Positive comments from the community show how much his work is appreciated.
- Superfast Broadband is now available in Oxen Park which leaves Colton, Nibthwaite and parts of Rusland remaining in the parish with poor connectivity. A plan for Colton has now been agreed which will shortly be implemented and the same approach is being developed for Rusland. We must thank Mike Postle for his work in achieving this and his continuing efforts to achieve better connectivity in the remaining areas.
- Highways remains probably the most complained about topic by our residents and from a council point of view is the most frustrating. However we have made progress and we have resurrected our outstanding list, identified the five key priorities which change as each one is completed and have a direct link with staff at

Highways which is enabling items to be addressed quicker. We must thank councillor Brown and our lengthsman for achieving this.

- Community Plan. Following the re-allocation of portfolio holders we have made progress in a number of areas of the plan. Each portfolio holder has reported on the progress and actions achieved throughout the year and all planning requests are tested against the plan. The plan is almost five years old and a review has just started to update the plan to be relevant to any changes that have taken place. It is expected to be completed in 2020. Community grant awards of £1465 were made during the year.

Liaison and consultation

We continue to be a well connected and involved council and our clerk has brought a total of over 250 items of correspondence to our attention and we responded to a number of formal consultation.

The major consultation that will have the biggest impact on the parish for the next few years is the Lake District National Park Local Plan named 'Living Lakes'. The National Park published its draft plan for consultation which gave many concerns to the significant changes to the existing current plan and seemed to have completely ignored our input from last year. A working group was formed to respond to the consultation and a copy of our formal response can be found on the website. Councillors Brown and Jarvis met with the planners prior to the consultation deadline but received little satisfaction as questions were unanswered and they seemed more concerned with talking rather than listening. Both councillors also met Tim Farron our local MP on the subject and received a much more considered response. The revised version for final consultation will be published imminently.

The Colton Parish Link email facility continues to expand and we have well in excess of 100 subscribers. The website is a key communication tool and was replaced last year and whilst it remains an improvement on the last version we are looking for further ongoing upgrades. We also contribute to three local newsletters each month. Noticeboards remain a method of communication and all relevant information continues to be posted.

Planning

This year the council reviewed twenty seven planning applications. We supported nine, had a neutral view on twelve and objected to six. Three of the objections were rejected by the planners and they refused planning on two applications that we had a supported or had a neutral view.

Meetings

The council had nine scheduled meetings and one extraordinary meeting during the year. Member attendance averaged 88% which is the same as last year. We continue to receive support from Cumbria Police, representatives attended 2 meetings and sent reports to five more. Representation

from the principal authorities were three for the District Council and one from the County Council with reports for a further 3.

Budget for the coming year

Our Finance Working Group which oversees our formal budgeting procedures has recommended that there should be an increase in the 2019/2020 precept of 3%. This has been approved by the full council. A summary of the accounts for 2018/2019 is attached.

Chairman's thanks

Along with the people I have thanked above I would also like to thank David Hamer of the Bouth Village Green and Playground Committee for the good work in keeping the parish council's only open space in good order and finally I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their help and support over the year.

Cllr Ken Dean

May 2019

Officers of the Council 2018/2019

West Ward): Cllr John Milburn; Cllr Fiona Baxter

East Ward: Cllr David Hoyle (Vice- Chair); Cllr Graham Jarvis

Central Ward: Cllr Ken Dean (Chair); Cllr John Watson; Cllr Marion Brown

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