

Colton Parish Council (CPC) Chair's report 2022-2023

Introduction

2022- 2023 has been a period of recovery and change, following the disruptions of 2022 and 2021 caused by Covid and Storm Arwen, and the Government decision to split Cumbria into two unitary authorities.

The new Westmoreland and Furness Council came into being at the beginning of April 2023. Although there are some familiar faces, there are also new structures, Councillors and Officers to work with. We would like to thank County Cllr Matt Brereton, and District Cllr and Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) member Cllr Wharton for their work with CPC over recent years.

Councillors

There are currently seven Parish Councillors and two vacancies. The Council has seen several changes during 2022-23. I would like to thank all my colleagues for giving their time and energy over the last year. In particular:

- Ken Dean, who continued as Chair until September 2022, despite his expressed wish to stand down. Ken continues to work extremely hard as a Councillor, but we extend our thanks to him for his years of service in the role of the Chair.
- David Hoyle retired from the Parish Council following many years of service, including as Vice Chair. We thank him for all his contributions but, in particular, Colton Link, which is a highly valued communication channel that has greatly benefited our communities.
- Bob Henson, who joined the Council in 2019 and stood down earlier this year. During his time with CPC he contributed, amongst other things, to the Council's work on highways issues and the Greening project, and we would like to send our thanks to him as well.
- Thanks also to Marion Brown for stepping into the role of Vice Chair, for her support, and particularly her energy in driving forward our ongoing work on Community consultation.

Clerk

We would like to thank Julie Hendry, CPC Clerk, for her ongoing guidance, support and work ensuring the smooth running and necessary compliance in all the Council does.

Last year the Chair's Report identified three Priorities for 2022/2023

- Community Plan review and update
- Increase Public Participation
- Recruitment of councillors

We have taken steps towards addressing each of these but there is still more to do.

Community Plan review and Update

We are committed to reviewing and updating the 2015 Community Plan, building on the extensive work done at that time. The 2023 version will focus on new priorities for the coming years, given the impact of Covid, Storm Arwen and climate change.

2022/2023 has seen preparation and planning. We have been successful in applications for grant funding for our consultation activities and producing our plan.

We extend our thanks to the Esmé Fairbairn Foundation for a grant of £3,500 and ACT for a grant of £1000. We are also grateful for the ongoing support of the ACT team.

Increasing Public Participation

Public attendance at CPC meetings continues to be relatively low. Overall, there were 20 public attendances at CPC meetings noted in the minutes 2022-2023. This does not mean that 20 individuals attended, as the same person may have attended more than 1 meeting.

Cllr John Taylor supported community engagement in Finsthwaite and Lakeside with a meeting to discuss the LDNPA West Windermere Trail, which was opened to the Public earlier this year. This was well attended and appreciated by the local community.

The Open Meeting planned for 20th May 2023 has been designed to help address the issue of increasing public participation.

Recruitment of Councillors

Craig Hodgson has joined the Council and is taking an active role in Highways issues, but there are still vacancies and CPC needs to continue with a proactive approach to recruiting Councillors.

Other Council Activities 2022/2023

Finance

The PC agreed to receive the recommendations of the Finance Working Group, to accept the budget for 2023/24 (display board and grant/donations) and to request a precept of £14,420 from SLDC.

We have appointed new auditors: Moore as the external auditor for the next five years and Charlene Iredale as internal auditor for the period 2022/23

Planning

Since our last Annual Parish Meeting, we have considered 30 planning applications. We attended the LDNPA Development Committee on one occasion.

Of those planning applications that went to LDNPA for a decision, CPC objected to 7, was neutral on 14 and supported 9. One was a barn that was put to CPC for information only. LDNPA approved 25, refused 1 and 6 were withdrawn by the applicant (NB decisions reported by LDNPA may refer to planning applications that came to CPC in the 2021-2022)

Highways

Concerns about potholes, poor road surfaces, safety issues, wall repairs and drainage have been raised by both Councillors and members of the public both at CPC meetings and using the electronic reporting mechanism, HIAMS.

We have continued to engage Archie Workman as our Lengthsman, and where appropriate, he has dealt with these problems promptly and efficiently. He has also proactively advised the CPC and Cumbria Highways Team about issues that he has identified himself or that local people have drawn to his attention. We would like to extend our thanks to Archie for his continued work, which helps to keep us all travelling safely around our local area.

Changes at Highways mean that Archie's previous close communication with the Highways' Team has been disrupted and in the coming year we will need to look at rebuilding those links for the benefit of all our communities.

In addition to those listed above, there are a number of outstanding Highways issues that need to be taken up with the new portfolio holder and officers for Highways, including traffic direction through minor/gated roads, and the use of minor, narrow lanes by large vehicles, which can result in damage.

Many other local Parish Councils have similar concerns, and this presents an opportunity for future partnership working.

Climate change

Following our declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, CPC has looked for opportunities to actively promote sustainability and action on climate change. We funded two Green Sparks events to help engage local residents. We have now agreed to adopt Green Sparks as a working group under the CPC umbrella, which will enable us to become more active on these issues.

Bouth Village Green

We have continued to delegate management of Bouth Village Green to the local community through the Bouth Village Green Committee. The Committee will provide its own update. We would like to thank the Committee and its volunteers for the work they do on behalf of CPC.

Village Halls

We have continued to support our local village halls by using them as our meeting venues, through the work of Councillors on village hall committees and with community grants.

Greening Project

The final report on our Greening Project was received at the CPC meeting 5th Dec 2022. In all £7000 was received from Cumbria County Council to support work to improve biodiversity through planting wildflowers in three locations and a hedgerow in a fourth location. The project was delivered in partnership with Rusland Horizons and with the involvement of volunteers from the local community.

Defibrillator

The Keswick to Barrow Committee have funded a new Defibrillator that will be sited on the exterior wall of the Water Park Outdoor Education Centre on the East of Lake Road. This will be accessible to residents and visitors in Nibthwaite and on east lake shore side of Coniston. We would like to thank the Keswick to Barrow Committee for their generosity.

B4RN

We have continued to support the B4RN project to improve access to Broadband.

Assets of Community Value

We have worked with local residents to renew three local listings of Assets of Community Value. These are the Manor House at Oxen Park, The White Hart in Bouth, and Stony Hazel Woods

Communication

We have continued to develop our communication channels to help us reach as many people across our communities as possible. For 2022-2023 we committed to providing both financial support and

content for local newsletters contributions to local newsletters. Our website is updated regularly with Council News and items of community interest. We continue to make active use of the noticeboards in our local area. We have purchased new display boards to enable CPC to have a more effective presence at local community events.

Community Grant

Following feedback from a member of the public the application form was reviewed in 2022.

The following grants were awarded:-

- Finsthwaite Resilience Group £500
- Oxen Park Reading Room £150
- Bouth Village Hall £298

Complaint

For reasons of confidentiality and due process it is not appropriate to include details in this report, but the following is noted due to its impact on CPC:

- CPC implemented its Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- Dealing with the issue itself and the associated correspondence have taken a disproportionate amount of time and energy for both the Clerk and the Councillors.

Policies adopted 2022-2023

- Revised Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Complex communications policy

Priorities 2023/2024

CPC identified priorities: -

- Consultation and the Community Plan Update
- Climate Change
- Community Resilience

There may be other issues/higher priorities identified through the consultation process.

Officers of the Council 2022/2023

- **West Ward:** John Milburn; Abigail Bennett (Chair), Craig Hodgson
- **East Ward:** Graham Jarvis; John Taylor, Vacancy
- **Central Ward:** Ken Dean; Marion Brown (Vice Chair), Vacancy
- **Parish Clerk:** Julie Hendry, email clerk@coltonparishcouncil.org.uk

Website: www.coltonparishcouncil.org.uk

Abigail Bennett 12/5/23 Chair Colton Parish Council