

Introduction & Report by Julian Thursz, Chair, to Ennerdale & Kinniside Annual Parish Meeting on 28 May 2024.

I would like to welcome you all to the Annual Parish Meeting and introduce myself as Julian Thursz, the Chair of the Parish Council. Last week I was re-elected as the Chair.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the external speakers who have come this evening to give you details of their areas of responsibility and I hope we make you very welcome

To ensure that you can put faces to names of the other councillors all of whom were elected by you last May, may I re-introduce:

Steve Parker (who has been re-elected the Vice Chair)

Paul Rowson

Nancy Rowson

Beth Wright

Ric Outhwiate

Sandra Guise

And Richard Maxwell.

I would also like to thank those new candidates who put themselves for election but were unsuccessful, namely Simon Lowes and Robert Benn and to those outgoing councillors who have given so much of their time and energy to the Council: Daniel Young, Kevin Park and Richard Taylor. The Council relies upon the free time, efforts and considerable good will of its Councillors and so I thank you all for making the machine work.

I am also joined by our steadfast and all-knowing Clerk, Jane Coltman, who keeps us on the straight and narrow as our Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer.

I have asked Jane to cover briefly the rules of play for this Meeting so that everyone can engage at the right time and in the right manner. Regrettably the events of recent Council meetings suggests that we need to be reminded of such guidelines.

First, some good news. Last year Ric Outhwaite explained that the Council's financial reserves had been managed down to an appropriate level and there was no subsidy for the precept last year. I am pleased to report that we have remained mindful of the cost of living which affects us all but have managed to reduce the precept by 5.4% despite delivering on some important projects. Those requesting grants have, I am afraid, felt some of the pain but we have sought to focus on the core activities and outputs of the Parish at the expense of things we might otherwise like to do. Clearly, we are unlikely to reduce the precept year on year.

That said, our Clerk has applied for our first VAT refund and that may bring approx. £2300 into the coffers. A significant windfall to a small council. Potentially some 18+% of our precept.

We have given grants to the Lamplugh Sports and the Church, and had the hedges cut after an inability to select a contractor last season. We will soon receive a new speed indicator device for the road outside Ehen Garth; replaced by a combination of insurance claim and Parish funds after someone stole the last one. £3000 + we could well have done without finding.

We have added a defibrillator in Croasdale so I would like to thank Gill Greggain for agreeing to host the box on her property, the Vickers Family for supporting the project in memory of David Vickers and to Cllr Nancy Rowson for her tireless efforts in pulling the project together. On the subject of defibrillators, I would like to thank the Shepherds' Arms for continuing to host our other defibrillator and to the Vicar, Ian Parker, for his conscientious checking of them. You should be aware of at least 2 other defibrillators in the Parish, outside the Gather and at the Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre. We hope not to need them but I commend to you the training offered by Chris Abbott, a founder member of Arlecdon and District First Responders. More to follow on that.

Turning to Council internal activity. We hold Council meetings every 2 months, to which you are all welcome. We normally here in the Gather, and have managed to avoid any Extraordinary General Meetings thus far, so seeking to keep the operating costs of the Council to a minimum. We have had some non-discretionary expenditure in handling Freedom of Information requests and complaints both requiring additional resource in terms of the Clerk's time. She has handled approximately a dozen complaints, about 1/2 of which are from one household and about half that number of Freedom of Information

requests, with again about ½ from one household at a cost to the Parish of approx. £600. About 5% of our annual budget.

We have needed to spend (to me) a disproportionate scale of council time refreshing policies and have felt the need to introduce an Unacceptable Behaviour Policy to cope with how a minority challenge the smooth conduct of the Council's business. We have recently added a Document Retention Policy in response to an external challenge.

We have increased the flexibility of the way in which we respond as a consultee to planning applications, introducing a system of delegation for the Clerk to respond to applications which might otherwise time out between council meetings. We have used this on a number of occasions. We have opposed some applications and supported some applications – all of which are on public record and we welcome parishioner input at our meetings to ensure that we get this right. We are, however, concerned that the Lake District National Park may not always take our objections into consideration with the weight we would like and I am writing to them to that effect.

We are, however missing a key document, the Ennerdale and Kinniside Community Led Plan 2018 to 2023 is in need of a refresh or re-write and we need to tap into the expertise and skills of our parishioners and their networks to achieve this. This will not be a modest undertaking and is certainly beyond the capacity of routine parish council business. I invite you all to engage with this task and bring your ideas and focus to Steve Parker as the Council point of contact.

In a similar vein, I am delighted to observe that the community gets on with bettering the life of the Parish with some truly great initiatives. The Council seeks to grease the wheels where we can but it is very much down to the commendable village spirit that drives the good deeds. Some that leap out are the summer and Christmas gatherings pulled together by Diana Stewart and her cohort of contacts and helpers; also the litter pickers, gardeners, hedge trimmers, bramble hackers, carol singers and bird feeding grafters who have helped, quietly turning out to clear, upkeep and improve the footpaths, bye ways, churchyard and quality of life of the Parish. You know who you are and I will save embarrassing myself by attempting to list you but risk missing someone the deserves our recognition but not court it. My thanks also to unnamed person who has sponsored the replanting of the village flower planters.

Returning to the Council, we have challenged Forestry England on their very unpopular introduction of parking charges at Bowness Knott and continue to seek to find a way to have the road to Bleach Green adopted by Cumberland Council. We are pleased that United Utilities have done some repairs to this road but expect it to continue to be a challenge.

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The Council has sought to continue, re-kindle and foster relations with our key neighbours from councils to engagement in the National Park, Wild Ennerdale and others. Hopefully you all managed to come to the United Utilities engagement regarding the future of the weir at the lake and more to follow on this in due course. You will no doubt have seen the activities of the Fibrus project and more to follow tonight.

Many of you will have seen the placement of new Parish funded benches on the Jubilee Way and Broadmoor trails and our thanks to the Lake District National Park for proposing to fund a further bench. We will hear more on the Coast to Coast project in due course too.

I would like to close by again thanking the parishioners and councillors for their support and also to thank those who have come tonight to add some welcome detail to their activities in the Parish.

I will take questions on the ground I have covered here with any new issues being introduced at item 7 on the agenda. Please identify yourself so we can get back to you if required.