

CROSTHWAITE AND LYTH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 22 April 2024 at 7.30 p.m.

(held in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972)

Present: Cllrs. Angela Dobson (Chair of the Meeting), 5 Parish Council Members; Westmorland and Furness Councillor Steve Bavin; Martin Curry (Clerk to the Parish Council) and 14 members of the public.

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Matthew Jessop, the Rev. Michael Woodcock, John Holmes, Jordan Perry and Malcolm Richardson (Responsible Finance Officer)

2. Welcome by the Chair of the Parish Council:

Cllr. Dobson welcomed fellow Councillors, Cllr Steve Bavin of W&FC and parishioners to the Annual Parish Meeting of Crosthwaite and Lyth, the Agenda for which made provision for reports, updates from village organisations and contributions from members of the public.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in 2023:

the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15 May 2023, having been circulated were approved and signed by the Chairman of the meeting as a correct record.

4. Report from the Chair of the Parish Council:

Cllr. Dobson advised Parishioners that she had been elected Chair of the Parish Council in October 2023 following the resignation of ex-Councillor Andrew Metcalfe and she expressed her thanks to Andrew on behalf of the Parish Council for his time as its Chair.

She went on to say that 2024 was an election year for Parish Councils and that the nomination period had now closed. Councillors M. Dobson, Harkness and Sykes had opted not to stand for election and again Cllr. Dobson extended her thanks and appreciation for the service to the community contributed by these long serving members of the Council.

She, together with existing Councillors Edward Sharp and Heather Young had submitted nomination papers which had been accepted, and Mr. Jordan Perry had also submitted papers which had likewise been accepted.

Therefore, at the closure of the nomination period there were four nominations for the seven places on the Parish Council and as a result, Westmorland and Furness Council had, on 10 April, issued a Notice of Uncontested Election. The four nominated Councillors would take up their new terms of office on 7th May and Cllr. Dobson welcomed Jordan Perry as a new Councillor.

There are now 3 vacancies on the Parish Council and Cllr Dobson invited any member of the community with an interest in promoting local initiatives and serving the community to consider joining the Council.

Cllr. Dobson also thanked Martin Curry (Parish Clerk), Malcolm Richardson (Responsible Finance Officer) for their support to the administration of the Parish Council.

She then reflected on a busy year for the Parish Council during which it had worked on a wide range of issues and projects. These have included engagement with applications for planning consent and giving feedback to the planning authority as appropriate; the consideration of speed restrictions in the village which remains work ongoing; the installation of a bench at Hubbersty Head in memory of the late Queen Elizabeth the Second, the continued development of an Emergency Plan for the village; the management of its own land and roadside verges, hedges and trees where appropriate. Mary Harkness had once again organised a successful annual litter pick and thanks were offered to her, the volunteers who assisted her and Westmorland and Furness Councillor Steve Bavin who had provided resources to the Team. The Parish Council had also been pleased to note the establishment of the Crosthwaite and Lyth Eco Action Network (CLEAN) in May 2023 and to have supported its activities during the year. The Neighbourhood Development Plan continues to evolve, and the Parish Council has been working closely with Louise Kirkup of Kirkwells Consultancy to produce updated information for successive drafts. It is hoped that a first public draft can be published in the not-too-distant future. Administratively the Parish Council remains in a satisfactory position with Malcolm Richardson maintaining a sound financial framework and Martin

Curry organising other aspects of its management. She once again thanked all who had worked with the Council during the previous year and looked forward to hearing from village groups later in the meeting.

5. Update from Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC)

Cllr. Steve Bavin thanked the Chair for his welcome and was pleased to report back on the first year of W&FC as a unitary authority replacing the previous District Councils. As a result of the 'Shadow' Council working with the District Councils in the year before its inception, the new Council has had a good start and is working hard to amalgamate the functions from the old structure. He thanked ex-Councillors John Holmes and Jim Bland for their assistance at the time of the changeover. Although finances are tight, it has produced a balanced budget for 2024-25 and in serving its area W&FC aims to demonstrate a less corporate and more human face. At a local level, attention to highways matters is a priority and Cllr. Bavin acknowledged the work to be done to repair potholes. He apologised for any disruption caused by the current closure of the A5074 for necessary repairs. He is part of the A590 Working Group and is working to secure improvements to local stretches of the road particularly at Gilpin Bridge. He asked all present to communicate with him and let him know what other matters he could assist with.

6. A Presentation from Mary Harkness on the experiences and role of a Parish Councillor

As previously announced by the Chair, Mary confirmed that after many years on the Council, she had not stood for re-election for the new term and had been pleased to accept an offer to reflect on her time on the Council. In a compelling presentation she suggested that the key to being an effective Councillor was to know the geography, the features and the people of the Parish. She described some of those features and said that in a changing global and local environment it was important to recognise and accommodate change where appropriate, but also to retain and nurture the rural traditions that characterise the area. Occasionally that means resisting developments and said that courage was one of the necessary attributes of being a good Councillor. On the whole however she felt that the Parish Council was doing well in addressing new challenges and commended its work and the work of individual Councillors as valuable and satisfying.

The Chair thanked Mary for her presentation and once again for her service to the community.

7. Updates from other Organisations within the Parish

- a) St Mary's Church – Dorothy Grace represented the local church network which is now larger than before with three lay-ministers working in rotation between Crosthwaite and Winster. The Church is very active, and ecclesiastical events are celebrated throughout the year with Christmas services particularly popular. Its 'Messy Church' (activities for families) is well supported as are study sessions during Lent and other discussion forums.
- b) The Recreation Field – David Stott reported on improvements including to the tennis court and plans for the children's playgrounds. He thanked volunteers who have helped maintain the grounds and surrounding hedges. He also thanked the Landowners of Crosthwaite and Lyth and the Parish Council for their financial support which is supplemented by ongoing fund-raising events.
- c) The Snooker Club – David Stott reported that whilst the number of members has dropped, the Club continues to meet regularly twice a week throughout the year. New members and visitors are always welcome, and the Club thanked the Parish Council for allowing the use of the Parish Room for these meetings.
- d) First Responders – As Secretary and Administrator, John Holmes gave a detailed update of activity over the precious year. There are currently 6 responders in local villages who have their own full kit and defibrillators. Their skills and knowledge are assessed annually, and they attend regular monthly training sessions. The Team conducted a series of CPR training sessions for groups within the valley. Due to changes in the procedure, Responders now receive callouts over a larger area and sat-nav is used to direct them to the scene of the incident. 30 callouts were attended in 2023. The Group is supported by the North West Ambulance Service. New Members are always welcome.
- e) Argles Memorial Hall – From a written report: The Argles Memorial Hall continues to play a very important part in village life and its surrounding areas. The Hall committee consists of representatives from each village organisation, together with co-opted members. The Hall is a facility available for hire to individuals and groups for regular meetings and one-off events. The scale of charges reflects the priority given to ensuring that local groups and individuals benefit most from the facility. The Hall raises its income through regular lettings, and also through fundraising events held throughout the year such as the Pantomime, Christmas Fair and a variety of social events including quizzes, dances, music and film nights. The Hall Committee welcome any ideas from individuals or groups for new

events and activities which reflect their interests and encourages people to stage their events in the hall.

- f) The Art Club: Pat Howarth is the coordinator of the Club which currently has 10 members meeting on Monday afternoons for two 10-week terms. It is a friendly Group that caters for all levels of skill and works in various mediums and new members are always welcome. The Club would like to mount a display of Members' works but cost and other issues are preventing this for the moment.
- g) The Playgroup - Katie Smith reported that the Group meets twice per week and had had a fantastic year, rebounding well after Covid. It has engaged in lots of fund-raising activities, raising over £3,000 during the year. Volunteers are always welcome!
- h) Crosthwaite Exchange: Geraldine Wilson reported that the Exchange continues to be a valued local facility and operates twice per week. Regular tea and cake sessions, the country market selling fresh local produce and the book exchange are all well patronised. She stressed that it is not just a country market but an important facility for local people to meet and enjoy the company of others. New Committee members would be welcome as running the Exchange and particularly the lunches is hard work for the existing Team. There is information about the Exchange on the Village Website.
- i) Crosthwaite C E Primary School: Matthew Jessop had sent his apologies but submitted a written report. In it he paid tribute to the hard work of staff, governors, pupils and parents to produce another successful year for the school. He was pleased with the positive Ofsted report which means that the school can continue to embed its two core strands of technology and outdoor learning across all aspects of its curriculum. Reduced funding and cuts in public services are, however, having an impact and he thanked the Friends of Crosthwaite School for their work and funds raised for the school. He also thanked the Landowners of Crosthwaite and Lyth and local Parish Councils for their financial support. Pupil numbers remain high with 111 currently on the roll. Residential visits and activities continue including wild camping and a visit to the BETT Show in London. Ongoing development will aim to use the outdoor space more and he acknowledged the school's good fortune and gratitude in being able to rent 15 acres from a local landowner which is used to emphasise the importance and value of outdoor education. Finally, he paid tribute to the children of the school and their pride in the school building and outdoor environment.
- j) The Landowners of Crosthwaite and Lyth: For the Landowners, Martin Casson thanked the outgoing Councillors for their service to the community and wished incoming ones well in their work. The Landowners have bought 30 acres on Whitbarrow to be managed for conservation and are seeking grants for management work including fencing. Trail riders and 4x4 enthusiasts are supportive of this initiative. Total landholding now amounts to about 650 acres and Robert Sykes is arranging for the Landowners to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The Landowners have been pleased to support village initiatives including at the school and the playing fields.
- k) W.I. – Jean Sherratt reported on a wide range of activities embraced by the local group which meets on the third Wednesday of the month at the Argles Memorial Hall. It provided teas at the village show and other events; mounted competitions for Damson Day and submitted a good number of entries at the County Show. The Group also cleaned local road signs in and around the village.
- l) CLEAN – the Crosthwaite and Lyth Eco Action Network had been established to help efforts to achieve a net zero environment. Its aim is to work in a positive way with the local community to raise awareness of how small actions can have a positive impact. It has promoted lift-share, organised a series of talks and been involved in improving biodiversity around the Church through the establishment of wild-flower areas. It had secured 30 trees from the Woodland Trust. It has a future programme planned, including water quality testing in the River Gilpin, talks on low energy initiatives and recycling events.

8. Public Forum

The following observations were made:

- A question was raised as how the Parish Council is funded. The Chair replied that the bulk of its income comes from the Parish precept awarded by Westmorland and Furness Council and which is reflected in the annual Council Tax. Additional sums are raised from rents from land and investment income.
- There was a comment regretting that the Damson Fair no longer held in the Valley and asking whether the Parish Council has any involvement. The Chair responded that the event is organised by the Westmorland Damson Association and that the event had moved to Crooklands as the parking for such a large event was inadequate at its former location and there were no suitable alternatives

locally. Jean Sherratt added that although the latest event had not been as big as when it was last held in the Valley and that better and earlier publicity would improve attendance, the atmosphere was good and that the current arrangement is probably as good as can be achieved in the circumstances.

9. Closing Remarks from the Chair

Cllr. Dobson thanked everyone present for attending the meeting and for their support to the local community. She once again thanked those Councillors who are stepping down and confirmed that she was happy to be contacted about any matters relating to the Parish. She hoped that the meeting had provided all present with an indication of the breadth and depth of local activity.

The meeting closed at 8.57 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....