

## **ST BEES PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 15 May 2017 at 6.30pm in St Bees Village Hall**

**PRESENT:** Cllr D Sim (in the Chair), N Bettinson, Rev B Gibbs, G Gilmour, J Haile, Ian Hill, T Kelly, J Lockie, J Mellor, D Millington, H Monaghan, A Oldham, M Riley and P Argyle (latter part of the meeting only)

**In attendance:** Cllr C Whiteside (County Councillor for Egremont North/St Bees Division)  
Mr M Starkie, Mayor of Copeland

#### **2017/1 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly welcomed Rev Becky Gibbs who had recently moved to the village as Curate in Charge. He explained that the monthly meeting of the parish council would take place immediately after the annual parish meeting and everyone was invited to stay for that meeting if they wished.

#### **2017/2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies for absence were received from Gus Kennedy and Chris Robson.

#### **2017/3 MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 16 May 2016 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **2017/4 UPDATE ON CURRENT ISSUES**

The Chairman welcomed Mike Starkie, Mayor of Copeland, and invited him to address the meeting on current issues.

Mr Starkie began by reflecting on his first two full years in office. At the time of his election CBC was facing serious financial difficulties with significant reductions in funding from central government. Since then there had been a comprehensive overhaul of the council's organisational structures which had resolved the issues without any compulsory redundancies. The problems with the council's accounts had been well publicised but the second year's accounts were now ready to be signed off. This year 34 new staff had been recruited and there was now much less reliance on consultants. There had been no cuts to front line services in the last two budgets and this year's budget allowed for investment in IT and waste management services. There continued to be reductions in central government funding but the council was developing other sources of funding by offering services on a commercial basis.

Mr Starkie explained that he supported devolution but was disappointed that other councils in Cumbria did not share his view. CBC had held discussions independently with the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government to request that CBC be included in the pilot study of the new rates scheme which would allow the council to retain NNDR paid by local companies.

Mr Starkie went on to talk about Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership. He was critical of the current model of governance which he felt was bureaucratic and expensive and was preventing LEP from being an effective force in achieving investment in Cumbria. He had pressed for a review of the current structure and this was now underway. Although he was no longer on the Board of LEP, he would continue to press for changes. Copeland had received nothing in Growth Deals 1 & 2 but was due to receive major funding in round 3 for development of the harbour area. In answer to questions he agreed that there was a real issue of lack of transparency and lack of accountability. He had visited other areas where Local Enterprise Partnerships were working very successfully and he believed that greater involvement of local businesses would provide more impetus to achieve results.

Cllr Whiteside agreed with Mr Starkie's view that Cumbria LEP was not fit for purpose and more effort was needed to achieve major infrastructure improvements such as changes to the A595. The Transport Secretary had indicated that funding was available for road improvements but it was vital to have schemes worked up ready to take advantage of funding opportunities.

In conclusion Mr Starkie expressed the view that initiatives such as the Future Opportunities Group, bringing together the Chief Executives of all the major businesses in the area, was giving the council credibility with local business and after two years in office he was even more optimistic about the future of Copeland than at the time of his election.

### **2017/5 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Chairman gave a brief report on Parish Council activities for 2016/17. The full report and summary of the accounts would be published in the parish magazine and would also be available on the web-site.

The Chairman explained that this had again been a very busy year with progress on several developments affecting the parish.

- West Cumbria Mining's plans to open a new mine to extract coking coal was moving ahead. The coal would be moved north by rail and a new railway siding would be constructed within the parish. This would not increase the frequency of trains using the level crossing, although this might be the case if the Moorside development went ahead.
- Nu-Gen's project to build a new nuclear power station at Moorside was now more uncertain following the withdrawal of Toshiba from the consortium. Plans were currently on hold but it seemed likely that a new power station would eventually be built on the site.
- The parish council had continued to maintain links with the Trustees of St Bees School and welcomed the news that the School would reopen in September 2018.
- The parish council was continuing to work on a major project to develop a cycle track link between St Bees and Whitehaven. Sustrans had been commissioned to produce a feasibility report with funding from the Parish Council, Copeland Community Fund and Whitehaven Town Council. The report had identified a preferred route and the Project Team was continuing discussions with land owners and stakeholders. The project would require significant funding and the team would be investigating possible sources of funding.
- The Parish Council had been active in trying to secure improvements to the A595 to make the route through St Bees less attractive to Sellafeld traffic. A representative of Highways England had recently attended a meeting with parish councillors.
- The closure of St Bees School in 2015 had resulted in the parish being without a vicar and the appointment of Rev Becky Gibbs as Curate in Charge was a welcome achievement for the village.

### **2017/6 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MOTIONS**

No motions had been received.

### **2017/7 FORUM ON PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**

As no issues were raised for discussion, the Chairman declared the meeting closed.

SIGNED.....

DATE.....