

# MELMERBY PARISH COUNCIL

## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023, 7 p.m. at Melmerby Village Hall.**

Parish Councillors Chris Jones, David Bardsley, Gary Fletcher and Bill Burford were in attendance (apologies were received from Cllr Dougie Bell). Claire Rankin, interim Parish Clerk was also in attendance. Cllrs Michael Hanley and Cllr Mary Robinson, EDC were present along with 5 members of the public and Stan Jenkins from B4RN.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Cllr Chris Jones welcomed all those present to the Annual Parish Meeting for Melmerby. Chris thanked Stan Jenkins and the Eden District Councillors for their attendance.

### **Information update from Melmerby Parish Council**

Cllr Chris Jones explained that Cllr Bill Burford and Cllr Dougie Bell had been elected to the Parish Council during 2022/23 following the resignation of two Parish Councillors. Chris also explained that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting in 2021 were missing and that the Annual Parish Meeting in 2022 had not taken place. Chris also circulated the financial summary for Melmerby Parish Council for 2021/22.

### **B4RN Rural Broadband Project**

Stan Jenkins, B4RN gave those present an update on the project. The current proposal was to provide a broadband route through Melmerby to Gamblesby. Similar projects are underway in Kirkoswald and Great Salkeld. A few properties are already connected to B4RN in Melmerby. A group of volunteers has been set up in Melmerby to try to increase the number of people interested and willing to sign up to an expression of interest in the project. 40 households have expressed an interest so far but this number needs to increase by at least another 30 to make the project economically viable. There is a possibility that others can join the project at a later date. Once critical numbers have been reached and the funding secured, the build time can be as little as 6-8 weeks.

At present there is no intention to extend the line through Ousby as another provider has already established an interest in that area. B4RN is currently investigating other areas of the Eden Valley for example Stainmore, Brough, Warcop, Ravenstonedale, Murton and Hilton.

### **Westmorland and Furness Council update**

Cllr Michael Hanley gave an update on the new Westmorland and Furness Council including the background to the formation of the 2 new unitary authorities which will replace Cumbria County Council and the 6 district authorities. The new unitary authorities will result in about one third of the number of elected councillors for the area and ensure a single authority will deal with all services for that area. It is envisaged there will be cost savings but these are not likely for at least 5-10 years. At present the new Westmorland and Furness Council has approximately £20 million deficit in the budget. The staff from the previous authorities have transferred to one of the 2 new unitary authorities and approximately 81% of the positions have been filled. There will be an increase in council tax of approximately 4.5% (£65 for an average Band D property). The majority of this increase will be for the fire and rescue service.

## **Traffic issues**

Ruth Beaumont was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written update on the traffic and speeding issues within the village. Cllr Bill Burford spoke to the item and updated the meeting on the progress made with the extension of the speed limits in the village and the work of the Speedwatch Group. All those present welcomed the extension of the speed limits and the introduction of the 40mph buffer zones at each side of the village on the A686. These should be in place by the end of April. There were a number of issues raised by those present including looking at a 20mph limit along the "top road" and the possibility of gritting the top road from the bakery end to the bungalows by the church. The 20mph speed limit will be added to the agenda for the May meeting of the Parish Council. Cllr Mary Robinson outlined the current policy in terms of gritting.

## **Matters of interest from the public**

Cllr Chris Jones proposed that renovation work is needed on the bench at the top of Gale Hall lanning (known as Celia's bench). This item will be included on the May meeting of the Parish Council.

Cllr Bill Burford proposed investigating the removal of redundant telegraph poles in the village.

Bridget Renvoize raised the issue of play provision in the village. There are currently 50 children of school age in the village and apart from the swings on the village green and the play area for under 5s at the village hall, there is very little play provision in the village. The Parish Council agreed to discuss the issue at the May meeting and also to write to Ann Rowley as the landowner of the village green. Cllr Mary Robinson also highlighted the 0-19 grants available. Bridget, Rachel Simpson and Sarah Hinkley are leading the group looking into the issue.

Cllr David Bardsley highlighted the poor state of repair of the footpath over the stream leading to the village green. It was agreed to contact Ann Rowley as the landowner.

Alison Smith raised the issue of the secondary school bus stopping at the junction near the New Inn. It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to the school transport team to raise the issue.

Graham Walker gave an update on the activities and changes to provision at Ravenstone Manor.

The meeting closed at 8.17 p.m.