

This press report is published to give readers a flavour of the meeting whilst the minutes are being prepared.

FROM YOUR ON THE SPOT PARISH COUNCIL REPORTER

The meeting started with the Annual Report which the chairman summarised as copies had been distributed and it is on the website and notice board. Cllr Stuart Ibbs has resigned from the council and this vacancy can be filled by election (if enough voters demand one) or by co-option - much more likely.

Much of the council's business this year has centred on traffic and highways. The council has continued to focus on safety measures for the A65 and Natland Rd and later in the meeting we learned of further developments. W&F council has received a lengthy petition from residents of Catlesteads and residents of other dwellings asking for a pedestrian crossing of the A65 and a bus shelter.

Traffic problems in the centre of the village have been exacerbated because of the road works but still remain an unsolved problem. St Mark's school has submitted a planning application to expand its nursery and concern was expressed that this could only cause further traffic and parking problems. And of course this leads to driving and parking on the village green. The state of the green, the flooding by the church and the state of the associated pavement were described, quite justly, as an eyesore and a disgrace. Action on the flooding and a request to repair the road and pavement have all been reported many times to W&F. The two W&F cllrs present at the meeting were left in no doubt about the frustration of the parish council and residents. The parish council is taking action to get the village green repaired.

The Interim Accounts for the year were presented. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) stands at £23,332 and £5,000 has already been granted to improve the school playground. The council had thought to keep the CIL money for use against the cost of making a footpath along Natland Rd, but is always open to suggestions from residents for its other use.

The W&F Countryside Access Officer then gave a presentation about the Canal Towpath Trail which was both interesting and informative. Still in its design stage this project aims to make an accessible footpath with a surface of triple pressed limestone and metal fencing where necessary along the line of the canal towpath. As a footpath it will not be for use by cyclists and this gave rise to some comment. Disappointingly, funding has not yet been secured for this initiative.

W&F Cllr J Brook explained a little about the Mayor of Cumbria and the Combined Authority. The 'pro' side of this organisation is that extra funding and powers should be devolved from central government. No points were made against but I assume there will be extra costs and I think some confusion. W&F and Cumberland councils will continue to deliver the services and the new boys will have strategic responsibilities – that's all very clear then. Election for the Mayor and for W&F cllrs will be in May 2027. Cllr D Rathbone gave us a bit more of the day to day stuff. Our request for a new street light is being looked at, a road sweep of Natland will be asked for and various points about monitoring or policing the new speed limits were made.

Cllr Rathbone also mentioned the Land Allocations system which is ongoing. The chairman's report mentioned the 4 sites in Natland which are vulnerable to development. They are above Long Meadow Lane, behind Charnley Fold, land at Watercrook and of course the proposed Story Homes development between Natland and Burton Rds. You may be affected by these proposals.

The various village institutions and groups then made report of their activities. The vicar of Natland now has four parishes, Crosscrake having been added to Natland and the two Huttons. The village hall will be closed for Jun and July for renovation and may have limited opening in August. The WI continues to thrive and has an intention of enhancing the look of the village green with plants this summer – lets hope it doesn't still look like a rugby field in places. Reports were also heard from the editor of the Natland Blog, the Monday Club and the Age UK Natland Lunch Club.

The Open Forum at the end raised no new concerns or proposals

