APPLEBY-IN-WESTMORLAND TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of Extraordinary Parish Meeting

Wednesday, 4th December at 6.30pm
Appleby Public Hall

Present:

- 10 Appleby residents
- 2 non-Appleby residents
- 1 member of Cumbria Constabulary
- 3 members of Westmorland & Furness Council
- 5 members of Appleby Town Council
- 1 member of the press

The meeting was called following receipt of an email to Appleby Town Council from 74 residents via the Appleby Fair Communities Group Facebook page. The emails received stated ***they did not want Fair Hill (or any other parish land) to be used for the purpose of Appleby Fair and that Appleby Town Council should distance themselves from Horse Fair, with a request that a Parish Meeting be called to discuss these issues***.

Cllr Pamela Davidson, Chair of Appleby Town Council chaired the meeting. She reminded attendees that the meeting had been called specifically about the use of Fair Hill during Horse Fair and was not an opportunity to discuss other general Horse Fair issues. Non-Appleby electors were welcomed as observers but couldn't contribute to discussions.

Cllr Davidson asked Detective Superintendent Dan St Quentin, Police Gold Commander for the Horse Fair to open the meeting (presentation slides attached). He explained that he had been the police Gold Commander for this year's fair and will continue in this role for next year, and his strategy for 2025 will be similar to this year. He outlined the serious consequences of closing Fair Hill from a policing point of view, including that if caravans weren't allowed on to Fair, they would still come and have nowhere to park Hill (it was estimated that Fair Hill had 358 caravans, plus accompanying vehicles occupied the field this year). He also highlighted that he would be unable to prevent the public gaining access to Fair Hill and that private security and fencing would need to be organised by Appleby Town Council to prevent this from happening.

Steph Cordon, Chair of MASCG reported that this year people moved to Appleby much earlier than in previous years due to the lack of stopping places, which resulted in issues in some of the surrounding villages. One of the aims next year is to have more effective engagement and communication with communities and neighbouring police forces.

Cllr Davidson opened the meeting up to the 10 residents in attendance.

A resident asked how the Council was planning to change the arrangements for Fair Hill.
It was explained that the Council had no plans to change the arrangements for Fair Hill, that wasn't why the meeting had been called. The meeting had been called by 74 residents via an email request to the Council setup by the Appleby Fair Communities Group.

A resident asked where the money taken for camping on Fair Hill goes.
The licensee charges people to camp on Fair Hill, just like other landowners who open their fields for camping during the Fair. The licensee pays all the additional costs incurred for the period of use, including the provision of toilets, skips, security and policing, as well as the cleanup. Appleby Council pay no additional costs for Fair Hill during Horse Fair.

A resident gave their opinion that the amount of rent being paid for the use of Fair Hill during the Fair was too low and it should be increased so Appleby residents benefited more from its use.
The licensee was charged £2,500 this year, which has increased annually over the last 3 years. The Council reviews the rent paid for the use of Fair Hill every year and feels that it is a reasonable amount.
The resident asked if the Council could review the amount of rent charged.
Action: The Clerk will take this request to the Council.

A resident commented that from the aerial drone image, it looked like caravans were very cramped in places and not spaced evenly, which in their opinion suggested that the licensee was not managing Fair Hill properly or safely and surely it was a potential fire hazard.
Steph Cordon explained that Westmorland & Furness Council and the Fire Service conduct risk assessments of all the camping sites, including Fair Hill, and they all sites are inspected and monitored over the course of Horse Fair by officers. Some areas of Fair Hill are not suitable for putting caravans on and this year the ground had been very boggy in places, which would have contributed to why the site spacing looks a bit haphazard, with caravans more concentrated in some areas.

Action: Steph Cordon agreed to discuss these concerns with the Fire Service and Environmental Health team.

A resident raised concerns that there isn't one place to tell you who to contact with issues encountered during the Fair.
Both Appleby's Council office and the Tourist Information Centre is open throughout the Fair. The office has a police walkie talkie which can be used in emergencies to contact the police directly. There are daily morning meetings of MASCG to discuss any issues from the previous day and how they were dealt with, and what improvements or adjustments can be made. As well as being able to ring 101, the online reporting CAG forms are also discussed at these meetings, so if any residents have particular issues, they can submit them online.

A resident asked if the licensee has a lease for the Hill, and if so, why isn't is advertised like other Council owned properties?
A licence is issued to cover the period from the Wednesday before Horse Fair to the Wednesday after. This is not advertised, as it has been a historical arrangement for many years and the Council is happy that the field is managed well by the current licensee. That being said, if someone came forward to indicate they would like to be considered, then the Council would be happy to consider this, as long as they could demonstrate they would be able to manage the site effectively and safely.

A resident remarked that they didn't believe the Council had the safety of the residents in mind. The Fair has grown and grown to now include the market fields. Is there a current or historical legal obligation to keep the Hill free for the week of Horse Fair?
It is unknown about any historical agreements, but there is currently no legal agreement or obligation in place. The Hill was opened in 1966 as a solution to the growing problem of people parking on the roadside verges and this arrangement has continued since then.

A resident asked if the police break down the costs of how long they spent in each area, and if so, do they know how much time is spent on Fair Hill as opposed to other areas?
It is impossible to give a breakdown as the police cover all areas, moving around constantly.

A resident asked if there is a site plan of what Fair Hill should look like when all caravans are parked? If there isn't, why not?
Appleby Town Council do not have a site plan, it is up to the licensee to organise the placement of the caravans and other vehicles on the site, in conjunction with the conditions of the camping licence issued by Westmorland & Furness Council.

A resident commented that the drop-in sessions to speak to Westmorland & Furness Councillors are all during working hours and people who work cannot attend them.
Action: Westmorland & Furness will look into having some evening drop-ins so they are more accessible to all.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

At the Council Meeting held on **Wednesday 18th December 2024**, the Chairman of this meeting was authorised by the Council to sign these minutes, to confirm they are a true and accurate record:

Cllr Pamela Davidson
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