

# MURTON PARISH COUNCIL

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## MINUTES OF PARISH MEETING OF MURTON PARISH COUNCIL 22 August 2022

**Present:** Councillors Alastair Bell, Jack Caldwell, Jim Hardman, Tina Longstaff and John McDarren (Chairman), twenty members of the public including three residents of other parishes.

**69/22 Apologies for Absence** – Apologies had been received from Cllrs Barbara Govan and Anne King.

**70/22 Introduction**

The Chairman gave the background to the calling of the Parish Meeting. In recent weeks there had been a great deal of discussion in Appleby, Kirkby Stephen and some local parishes regarding the management of the Appleby Horse Fair. At the Appleby Town Meeting it had been agreed that the residents wanted a parish poll and questions were drafted and submitted to Eden District Council (EDC) for approval (as per legislation). These questions had been rejected and EDC has engaged consultants to address the following questions:

- Do you feel that public safety is compromised during Appleby fair?
- Should the costs associated with Appleby fair be covered by the fair itself?
- Should Appleby fair be considered as an organised event and comply with statutory regulation?

At its meeting on 1 August Murton Parish Council discussed the request it had received for Murton to hold a parish poll on this subject. It had therefore been agreed that this Parish Meeting should be arranged to provide an opportunity for residents to voice their views about the fair. It was noted that only Murton parish residents could vote on any proposal made at the Parish Meeting.

**71/22 Issues Raised** - The following issues were raised. These have been grouped under topic headings and usually represent more than one comment made about an issue:

**Policing the Fair** - Murton residents had personal experience of police deliberately choosing to take no action during incidents that would usually demand police intervention. EDC erect fencing posts and no parking signs along the verges near the Flakebridge road. These posts are removed, and the no parking signs ignored. There is no enforcement.

**Avoiding Appleby during the Fair** - Many Murton residents felt that the fair limited their movement around their own community. They avoided going into Appleby or made only essential visits.

The main reasons were feeling intimidated and threatened by the large number of people gathered in the town.

Some residents had been threatened by those camping on the verge near the Flakebridge road end. They invade the road and sometimes harass drivers.

Some parents had kept children away from school and in 2022 the school had taken the decision to close for two days to keep pupils safe.

Signature  
Chairman, Murton Parish Council



Date of meeting  
07.11.2022

Murton residents shop and use services elsewhere during the fair. At least one supermarket refuses to deliver to Murton because goods have been stolen from the vans.

**Thefts and Damage** - Some residents reported thefts and damage to property.

**Compacency** - Although seventeen residents attended the meeting, it was noted that many residents took the attitude that the fair is what it is, the management and policing are unlikely to change and they therefore tolerate the inconvenience.

**72/22 General Issues about the Management of the Fair** - The following queries were raised:

- Regarding the build-up of caravans on the verges prior to the fair, a discussion about extending the period of the fair, eg bringing the opening of Fair Hill forward a week took place. A show of hands showed the majority of those present thought this was a good idea. However it was noted that some travellers opt to camp on the verges to avoid paying Fair Hill fees.
- Licences - the sale of horses causes congestion - is the sale of horses licensed? Are there street trading licenses and alcohol licenses in place for the Fair Hill? How are these licenses enforced?
- It was noted Appleby Town Council (ATC) owns the Fair Hill and receives rental income for the fair.
- A Freedom of Information request by one resident had led to the comment that the publicised cost of the fairs should be interrogated more closely, as the true cost may not have been fully publicised.
- If costs are currently distributed across Cumbria County Council taxpayers in Cumbria, will the residents of the new Westmorland and Furness Council be willing to cover the costs?
- Is there an economic benefit to the area? Many shops and services are choosing to close during the fair. ATC has a financial interest in the fair as it stands.
- The fair is a legal entity which can rent a field and apply for licences, but when it comes to organising and managing the event, no-one will take responsibility.
- Large influxes of visitors over short spaces of time take place throughout the UK, eg Glastonbury. Can lessons be learned?

**73/22 Policing the Fair** - Comments about policing the fair were numerous and personal experience of the following was reported:

- Police officers refusing to intervene in an incident which would normally be pursued.
- No enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Order in Appleby.
- Residents don't bother reporting incidents as they do not feel they will receive a response. However this lack of reporting affects the statistics reported post fair. It was agreed that reporting incidents to the Police and AT should be encouraged.

**74/22 Parish Poll** - The proposal that this Parish Meeting would not hold a parish poll was made by the Chairman.

**Resolved:** that Murton Parish Council would not hold a parish poll. There were 16 votes for this proposal, one abstention.

The Chairman will write to ATC, EDC, CCC and the Cumbria police expressing the concerns raised by Murton residents.

**75/22 Date of next Meeting** - Ordinary Meeting – Monday 7 November 2022 at 7.30 pm

**The meeting closed at 8.30 pm**

