

Kirkby Ireleth Parish Council

CHAIRMAN: Mr. H.R. Saunders, 'Hill Farm', Grizebeck, Kirkby-in-Furness. Cumbria.

ACHIEVING INFLUENCE BY WORKING TOGETHER 29TH MARCH 2008

The Course opened with a welcome address from the Chairman of CALC Cllr. Winston Collinge.

Guy Richardson, Chief Officer of CALC, spoke on the theme of Achieving Influence. It was the Government's intention to give all Communities influence but there were difficulties in organisation. Some parish Councils were very active whilst others were not. There was a need for a change in culture. Things are not working at the moment therefore change was seen as a way of improving the situation. To further this end boundaries have been drawn up by the County Council to enable communications and therefore influence to be much more stream lined. If Parish Councils worked together there would be:

- More influence.
- Efficiency savings
- Joint projects and services
- Less duplication of tasks

There followed four talks on the subject of Councils working together.

The Five Rivers

This partnership of Parish Councils in the west of the county comprising of Drigg, Carleton, Eskdale came together to discuss and further common issues that were not being addressed by the County or District. They have produced a Composite Action Plan concerning Housing, Environment, Highways, Community Issues and Policing. They meet once a month.

Kirkby Stephen

This group based on Kirkby Stephen takes in up to seventeen Parish Councils. It works for the good of the market town and its immediate hinterland. They hope that by banding together to give local residents the opportunity to influence what happens in their community. They have produced a Community Action Plan for the future of the whole area but as yet they are not certain of whom it is going to influence. Putting together the plan was not difficult implementing it will be!

Grange-over-Sands Community Board

This Community Board was set up by the County Council in response to the Unitary Authority bid. It is centred on Grange and incorporates small Parish Councils nearby including Colton. Expectation was high that this was a way forward when it was introduced. There would be a better flow of information, shared experiences, an opportunity for power at a local level (more finance)

and opportunities for joint actions. But it has led to more paper work; more time wasting, more confusion, more duplication, some trivia, lack of tact (focus upon Grange and not surrounding areas), slow progress and an uncertain future.

Keswick Community Board and Market Towns Initiative.

This is known as the Keswick Area Partnership and came about partly because of the Foot and Mouth Epidemic. They had high hopes that more power and therefore finance would have been devolved to it but it has not come about. They had hoped also that County and District Councillors and officers of the Councils would attend but that has not always been the case. It has been very difficult to get all organisations to talk to each other. The representative emphasised, on being questioned, that Keswick did not dominate or exert undue influence.

In the morning discussion groups it was generally thought that a joining up of Councils could be of benefit if they came together on a voluntary basis to further common issues. If all are speaking in unison then perhaps some one will listen. But many of the problems highlighted in the presentations were mentioned.

The afternoon session informed us of the groupings that the County Council intends to impose on the County subject to consultation. All rural areas of Cumbria are to be centred on a Market Town. Ours will be Ulverston. The councils to join together include:

Aldingham Urswick, Pennington, Mansrigg, Egton, Lowick, Satterthwaite, Dunnerdale Broughton West, Kirkby Ireleth, Angerton, Osmotherly, Torver and Coniston and of course Ulverston. (I think that is all!).

The conclusions I drew from the meeting were:

- The present system of Parish Councils is not working for a variety of reasons.
- The County has to find a way to communicate more efficiently
- Local people are to be encouraged to influence their communities
- Some form of grouping is inevitable whether we like it or not.

Cllr. M. McPherson
31 March 2008