

**Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held as a virtual meeting through Zoom on Wednesday, 29 July 2020 at 7.00 pm. (SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT NEXT COUNCIL MEETING)**

**Present**

Chairman Mrs S Fairhurst, Cllr Mrs H Byford, Cllr Mr M Cade, Cllr Mr G Fortune, Cllr Mr N Hopper and Cllr Mrs L Skelton

County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick, Clerk Mr D Keep,

Members of public: Mr R Fletcher. Present for public forum only: Mr N Mabbott, Dr D Green, Mrs B Adey, Mrs C Horner.

**Action**

**1. Introduction and Apologies.**

Having checked that all present could hear and be heard, the Chairman welcomed everyone and declared the meeting open. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Wheeler. All other Councillors were present.

**2. Open Forum.**

Mrs Horner raised concerns regarding potential dangers to health for humans and animals arising from 5G, the installation of which was proposed in Wensleydale. She referred to available evidence and advocated that future Wi-Fi improvements should be via landlines which would not only be safer, but faster. Some local authorities worldwide had suspended roll-out.

The Chair proposed, as this topic was an agenda item, to introduce Mr Mabbott at this point. Mr Mabbott was a resident with an understanding of the issues and talked to a presentation that he had written at Council's request. Mr Mabbott shared his screen so that all participants could view. His overall conclusion, based upon his research, was that there was no scientific evidence available from authoritative sources and subject to proper scrutiny and review that 5G was harmful to health.

Mr Abbott responded to further statements and questions from members of the public in an open discussion.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close as the allotted time had finished. She referred to the limited scope for a Town Council to input its view on matters determined at a higher level. Council could however object to any planning applications for infrastructure installations and would need to consult residents before forming a view.

**3. Declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda.**

No interests other than those previously notified were declared in matters on the agenda.

**4. Minutes.**

**4.1 Minutes of the previous council meetings**

**IT WAS RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 June 2020 as a true and accurate record to be signed by the Chairman.**

**4.2 The schedule of agreed actions. Noted.**

**Action**

**5. Confidential and Urgent Items.** There were no urgent or confidential matters for consideration at the current meeting that required recording in the confidential minute.

**6. Town Council - Information/Decision Required**

**6.1 Councillors' report of meetings attended, and actions undertaken (standing item).** None reported in addition to those recorded elsewhere in these minutes.

**6.2 Matters of local interest and concern as reported to Councillors or on Residents' Facebook page.** This was noted as a new agenda item to pick up any concerns raised by residents. Cllr Byford reported that a number of matters had been resolved quickly, after having been raised in this manner.

**6.3 Coronavirus Update**

**6.3.1 Coordination of volunteers and support to the vulnerable.** Cllr Byford reported that arrangements were still in place and that all requests for response had been fulfilled.

**6.4 Land Management Issues (standing item)**

**6.4.1 Tender Process for Green Gates.** One tender had been received, from Mrs Slee for £170. This was the same as previously paid by Mrs Slee and was accepted.

**Clerk**

Cllr Fairhurst and Cllr Byford had inspected the area, considering it rather unkempt, and questioned its value to the community. It was agreed that possible disposal should be considered at a future meeting. It was not to be part of the manorial lands.

**6.4.2 Cobbles inspection.** Images of the areas requiring attention had been circulated. There was further damage in front of the RIII Hotel and images of these were expected from the landlord. Noting that Council was in the process of selecting a panel of potential contractors, it was agreed on this occasion only to seek a quotation from RA Wheeler in order to expedite matching repairs.

**Clerk****Clerk**

**6.4.3 Walls and fences on Council / Charity land.** It was agreed to forward images and seek a quotation from Harrisons for repair of the damaged fence alongside the Spring's Play area.

**6.4.4 Dog Fouling.** The Clerk reported that the intended location of dog waste dispensers and the wording of an application to RDC to consider requesting an additional bin and to relocate existing bins were in hand.

**6.4.5 Plantations:** Cllr Hopper and Cllr Fortune reported upon their meeting with Mr Hastie, the grounds contractor, and his costings to substantially cut down the hedges and clear roots from within had been circulated. The ongoing maintenance costs would be within the existing contractual costs but there was not currently a budget for the improvement costs totalling £2,316 (inclusive of non-reclaimable VAT). Cllr Hopper and Cllr Fortune advocated that a 'Friends of the Plantations' group could be established for ongoing maintenance, but the initial task required professional assistance. It was suggested that Mr Stockdale be consulted regarding condition of the trees and appropriate cutting back. Following discussion, there was agreement that the Plantations should be improved, and residents' views sought; Cllr Fortune had discussed arrangements for a community survey with RDC, which would also ask for views on the Pinkers' Pond tree planting project.

**Cllr  
Hopper/Cllr  
Fortune****Cllr  
Fortune**

**6.4.6 Sign for Council Offices outside MKC.** Details of the sign, which would match the new sign recently erected by MKC listing the other organisations operating from there, were reviewed. It was agreed to proceed, total cost of purchase and installation would be £118.80 (including recoverable VAT).

**Clerk**

**6.4.7 Replacement for white markers on East Witton Road.** Cllr Byford reported upon

her meeting with NYCC Highways, also attended by County Cllr Sedgwick. NYCC was unable to commit to a like-for-like replacement at the current time. There was uncertainty regarding what was under the grass verge, possibly a culvert, and cones had been placed over depressions to deter parking. The Clerk would raise with Mr Hastie a report received that contractors had damaged the existing posts with strimmers and not to cut grass in front of Meadow View, which was outside the contractual area.

Action

Clerk

### **6.5 Forthcoming devolution and unitary council for York and North Yorkshire.**

Details of the proposed response by NYCC to a government request for proposals for reorganising local government that would result in larger unitary authority dispensing with District Councils, and RDC's opposition to such a move, were reported by District Cllr Fairhurst. Her immediate thoughts were that smaller rural communities would be disadvantaged as there appeared to be a focus upon larger settlements, such as the Garrison. RDC had issued a press release regarding a series of 'asks' to be sent to central government regarding the proposals. County Cllr Sedgwick advised that the driver for change was reduced administration and enhanced local control of expenditure and she explained how the NYCC proposal would work. She would forward presentations received on how similar schemes had worked in other areas. It was agreed to monitor the matter and input local views.

Cllr  
Sedgwick

All

**6.6 Police Report (standing item).** The report was noted.

**6.7 Middleham Herald.** Potential content of an edition to be published in August were discussed. Cllr Byford would prepare an initial draft.

Cllr Byford

**6.8 Review of Funding Opportunities.** Deferred to the next meeting.

**6.9 Consultation on a new Model Code of Conduct.** Councillors were disappointed that this important consultation was held during the summer at a time when many local councils were focused on Covid19 and requested that this be fed back.

Clerk

### **6.10 Richmondshire District Council press release re 'excellent performance'.**

This was noted to compare performance by the authority against its plans and key targets, all of which were on target and showing underspends in certain areas.

## **7. Review of Health & Safety and Environmental Matters (standing item).**

**7.1 Play Area inspection reports.** None received from RDC during the period. Cllr Fairhurst and Cllr Skelton had inspected but were unable to locate the defect in the earlier report.

**7.2 Emergency plan:** Ongoing, will need revision to anticipate future epidemics.

Clerk

### **7.3 G5 Network installation.**

**7.3.1 Risks to health:** The earlier discussion during the public forum during which Mr Mabbott's presentation was received was noted. Thanks were expressed to Mr Mabbott for his report. It was felt that within documents received to date by opponents there was little substantive evidence that had been subjected to peer review and acceptable standards of scientific scrutiny.

**7.3.2 Mobile Access North Yorkshire (MANY).** This was noted to be part of a wider 4G/5G national trial and Coverdale had been identified as an area that would benefit from improved coverage. The project was seeking local partners and, as at the current time there was no conclusive proof that 5G was harmful and the scheme would be beneficial to residents and local business, it was agreed to engage with the project.

Clerk

**7.4 One Way traffic between the Springs and St Alkelda's Road.** No further reports or action taken.

### **7.5 Flood prevention.**

**7.5.1 Meeting with RDC re-run off from churchyard.** Councillors had met with Gary Hudson, RDC's Open Spaces and Amenities Manager on 22 July. RDC did not feel that alteration to the stone stile would alleviate the problem which arose from run off from the Moors; Mr Hudson had subsequently forwarded details of water retention schemes elsewhere in Richmondshire which the Clerk would look into.

Clerk

**Action**

7.5.2 Professional advice on water run-off issues. Correspondence with the hydrogeologist who had previously advised Council on the burial ground regarding his possible involvement carrying out research into methods of controlling water run-off from the Moors was noted. Concern was expressed that any retention system might still overflow into the Town, possibly down the hillside rather than the road. Earlier in the meeting it was noted that Mr Hudson had recommended speaking to Yorkshire Water, The Environment Agency and NYCC about the issue. It was agreed that initially some research into landowner's rights and responsibilities should be obtained, before paying for professional advice.

**Clerk****8. Project Updates:****8.1 Burial Ground.**

8.1.1 Construction works. Draft specifications for walls, path and gateway, tender documents and suggested contractors were noted and approved. The Clerk would forward requests to the contractors.

**Clerk**

8.1.2 Appointment of a Burial Ground Management Committee. With the additional responsibility of being a burial authority, it was agreed that a management committee might be useful, and the Clerk would draft terms of reference.

**Clerk****8.2 MSCWA.**

8.2.1 Maintenance matters. A verbal report was received from Cllr Hopper on maintenance issues. Mr Fletcher confirmed that the Association was currently in funds and that the goal posts had been purchased and would shortly be installed.

8.2.2 Proposal to build a storage shed. Council had been informed that a small wooden storage shed attached to the pavilion was under consideration and Cllr Wheeler was drafting a plan. Mr Fletcher was liaising with the Clerk whether planning permission might be required or, if the building was erected by Council and subject to certain limitations on size, under permitted development rights available to a council. Whichever route was followed, plans would be run past the Conservation Officer.

**Clerk**

**8.3 Key Centre.** No matters to update.

**8.4 Option agreement.** A final draft of the s106 agreement, outlining the developer's contribution to affordable housing and local amenities was noted. Whilst a party to the agreement, the Council was not involved in discussions. A financial contribution of £57,594 would be made towards the enhancement of existing nearby children's play areas in Middleham and the linked footpaths, prior to occupation of the 15th market dwelling. The Clerk would advise RDC and the promoter that this was in line with MTC's expectations.

**Clerk**

The meeting discussed whether play area improvements should be undertaken before this contribution became available at some future date. Whilst Mrs Wheeler, leader of the play area sub-committee, had opined that this contribution would not fully fund the desired facility, it was felt appropriate to await funding as it was designated solely for that purpose, within proximity of the development, and Council had to balance the with other priorities and equally benefit differing age groups. It was also felt that the existing play area and other facilities provided activity for children.

**8.5 Safer Roads Project.** Cllr Byford reported on the successful outcome from the meeting that she had convened with NYCC and trainers on 27 July 2020, where NYCC had announced actions to resurface or redress critical sections of the following roads: Common Lane, Pinkers Pond to Market Square (Moors Road) and Wensleydale to Agglethorpe. Dates for some of these works had subsequently been announced, weather permitting, for early August. Whilst accepting this was a very positive development, Cllr Hopper questioned the omission of certain sections on the Moors Road; Cllr Byford felt that trainers would use the available off road walks alongside these sections and they also accepted the need to improve them. She would summarise the improvements on the Residents' Facebook page.

**Cllr Byford**

**Action**

Unfortunately, the recently submitted joint funding bid had not been successful.

**8.6 Play area improvements committee:** No Matters to report.

**8.7 Tree Planting.** Following a meeting between Cllr Byford and Cllr Skelton with the Lower Wensleydale Biodiversity Action Group (LWBAG), the group had accepted the suggested amendments and their response on other matters was noted. After discussion, in which concerns were expressed regarding risks to the project, it was agreed to revert to LWBAG requesting that the project should only proceed on a staged basis to ensure that the planting was successful and that there was sufficient voluntary effort to carry out the work before proceeding to the next area.

**Clerk**

**9. Events in Middleham (standing item).** It was noted that the Great British September Clean would take place nationwide between 11-27 September 2020, in lieu of the cancelled event in the Spring. It was agreed to organise in Middleham, and Cllr Fairhurst would check her availability and confirm a date with the Clerk, ideally towards the end of September. A risk assessment would be undertaken to ensure social distancing, available of PPE etc. It was noted that shrubs and bushes collated wind-blown litter.

**Cllr  
Fairhurst /  
Clerk****10. Planning**

**10.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting:** None received

**10.2 Planning Applications.** None received.

**10.3 Potential Planning Enforcement Issues.** None raised.

**10.4 Other Planning Matters:** None raised.

**11. Finance – Information/Decision required**

**11.1** The cash book with a full bank reconciliation as at 30 June 2020 was received.

**IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the schedule of direct debits and internet bank transfers to approve and ratify all payments since the last Meeting as set out on the payments schedule.**

**12. Central & Local Government Communications: Documents that have been emailed or circulated to Cllrs since the last meeting.**

12.1.1 Between meetings a wide range of documents principally giving advice regarding Covid19 had been circulated.

**13. Shared information and suggested items for the next agenda**

13.1.1 Items for next agenda: Street lighting issues

**14. Future Meetings**

**A Council meeting shall be held on Wednesday 26 August at 7pm for the sole purpose of approving the Council's annual return for 2019-20. The following Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 September 2020.**

**There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending the Council's first virtual meeting and declared the meeting closed at 9.39pm**

**Signed.....Date.....**