

**Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held as a virtual meeting through Zoom on Wednesday, 28 October 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 N Hopper, Cllr Mrs L Skelton and Cllr Mr S Wheeler (not present for the discussion recorded under 8.1.1)

County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick, PSCO Lucy Osborn (item 6.6 only) Clerk Mr D Keep,

Members of public: None present.

**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 Fortune. All other Councillors were present.

**2. Open Forum.**

No matters raised.

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

No interests other than those previously notified were declared in matters on the agenda. Cllr Wheeler was interested in the burial ground contracts as an employee of R A Wheeler Ltd and would not be present for that item.

**4. Minutes.**

**4.1 Minutes of the previous council meetings**

**IT WAS RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Council meetings held on 30 September 2020 as a true and accurate record to be signed by the Chairman.**

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

**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).** Meetings and other actions are reported elsewhere in these minutes.

**6.2 Matters of local interest and concern as reported to Councillors or on Residents' Facebook page.** None.

**6.3 Coronavirus Update**

**6.3.1 Coordination of volunteers and support to the vulnerable.** The Clerk had emailed all registered volunteers informing them that they may be required and to remain available. Only one volunteer was no longer available.

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

**6.4.1 Dog Fouling.** The Clerk reported that RDC could not place the new bins at the suggested locations as land ownership of the verges was unclear and dialogue was ongoing to identify alternative locations. He was arranging a sign close to the start of Canaan's Lane indicating where the current bin was. Cllr Wheeler would shortly erect the dog bag dispensers.

**Clerk**

	<b>Action</b>
6.4.2 <u>Ragwort on Local Fields</u> . Council had received a response from the land agent and no further action was required at the current time; the position would be kept under observation. Agricultural vehicles operated by the farmer had spread mud on Leyburn Road, apparently causing one car to spin, fortunately without harm or damage. The Clerk had reported this incident to the land agent.	
6.4.3 <u>Plantations</u> : The Clerk had met with two residents facing the larger Plantation and their comments and suggestions were noted. Cllr Hopper offered to take forward the consultation on future maintenance plans and formation of a friends' group.	<b>Cllr Hopper</b>
6.4.4 <u>Waste Bins</u> . It was noted with disappointment that RDC would not replace the bin by the skate park as they did not own the playing fields and that it had only been emptied in the past in error, which would now cease. They would only supply and empty a replacement bin at the Town Council's expense. Cllr Fairhurst would take the matter up with RDC. The bin by the barn would be replaced by RDC.	<b>Cllr Fairhurst</b>
<b>6.5 Consultations</b>	
6.5.1 <u>Devolution and unitary council for York and North Yorkshire</u> . A response drafted by Cllr Byford had been circulated prior to the meeting and submitted.	
6.5.2 <u>Central Government Consultation on Planning</u> .. Cllr Byford would review the potential implications and circulate a suggested response	<b>Cllr Byford</b>
<b>6.6 Police Report (standing item)</b> . The report for October was noted. PCSO Osborn reported that enquiries regarding the arson attack on a car in the Springs could not be progressed due to lack of information. PSCO Osborn emphasised that it was never too late for potential witnesses to come forward so investigation could recommence. This incident was agreed to be very unsettling to nearby residents and it was fortunate that wider damage had not occurred.	
Regarding incidents of antisocial behaviour, allegedly by children throwing items at residents' windows during early evenings, there had not been sufficient information to take action. The Police had circulated advice via social media.	
In response to Councillors' questioning, PCSO Osborn felt that direct approaches were inadvisable unless the individuals or their parents were personally known, and the incidents observed in person. Affected householders should dial 999 straightaway rather than call Police mobile numbers, to enable a rapid Police deployment.	
<b>6.7 Middleham Herald</b> . A Halloween edition had been edited by Cllr Byford and was available for distribution, which some Councillors with work commitments might find difficult within the short timescale. Future content and timings would be reviewed.	
<b>6.8 Middleham Online website</b> . The site no longer received funding from hospitality businesses. Cllr Skelton was interested in taking over operation, after receiving some training, and would discuss this with the Clerk.	<b>Cllr Skelton</b>
<b>6.9 Affordable Housing</b> . Cllr Fairhurst was awaiting a return call from Mrs Madden to discuss Middleham's chapel. She would also enquire through District Councillor Peacock regarding progress with the other redundant chapels in the area. It would be a lost opportunity if these sites were not used for community housing.	<b>Cllr Fairhurst</b>
<b>7. Review of Health &amp; Safety and Environmental Matters (standing item)</b>	
<b>7.1 Play Area inspection reports</b> . Reports from RDC were received. The spare parts had been delivered and would be fitted by Mr Burren, when convenient.	
<b>7.2 Emergency plan</b> : Ongoing; requiring revision to anticipate future epidemics.	
<b>7.3 Traffic and Parking Issues</b>	
7.3.1 <u>One Way traffic between the Springs and St Alkelda's Road</u> . A very positive response from Area 1 Highways offering to install larger road signs, an additional sign and a painted sign on the road was welcomed. The Clerk would accept.	<b>Clerk</b>
7.3.2 <u>Parking in Grove Terrace</u> . Polite notices placed on cars carelessly parked and blocking access had led to an improvement. It was noted that NYCC would not permit additional signs on their post at the entrance to Grove Terrace; it appeared that this was	

**Action**

not needed in any case.

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

8.1.1 Tender for burial ground works. Three tender submissions had been received from R A Wheeler Ltd, Gavin Smith Ltd and Paul Young and were summarised on a spreadsheet from the Clerk.

**Clerk**

In discussion it was noted that the submissions each significantly exceeded the indicative costs received several years before. The consensus was that, as a detailed specification for the works had been prepared, which sought advice received from the guild of stone wallers and required the paved path to match the existing path in the Church burial ground, and there was a broad convergence between the costs, the works should proceed rather than seek to change the specification and reduce costs by re-tendering. There was acknowledgement that the project had already been delayed by a number of factors and should proceed as quickly as possible.

It was agreed to appoint Gavin Smith.

It was agreed that Cllr Hopper would work alongside the Clerk on this project.

8.1.2 Costings for drains redirection. The Clerk would seek an updated indicative cost for this work.

**8.2 MSCWA.** The annual accounts to 31 March 2020 were received. MSCWA's Treasurer had confirmed that the finance procedures in section 8 of the MSCWA constitution had been compiled with during the year.

Cllr Wheeler apologised that a quantity of sorted soil and paving slabs had been delivered to the playing fields without prior notification. The material had become available free of charge and was suitable for creating a larger levelled area adjacent to the pavilion to accommodate the proposed storage shed, rather than creating a large concrete base. The slabs would provide additional paving. If plans for the shed did not proceed, he would remove the materials.

Following brief description of the proposed shed, a plan showing dimensions and construction details was requested by Council prior to granting formal approval. It was suggested that these should also be displayed in the pavilion window.

Cllr Hopper reported local interest in creating a boule / petanque court on the old tennis court area and an outline plan had been circulated.

**8.3 Key Centre.** A brief written report from the Trustees was received. Unfortunately Anderson's Takeaway would shortly vacate the kitchen area.

**8.4 Option agreement.** A revised copy of the plan of the land over which the Option would be granted had been circulated.

**8.5 Safer Roads Project.** Cllr Byford reported that disruption caused by Covid restrictions had halted activity at the education institutes for the time being.

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

**8.7 Tree Planting.** Lower Wensleydale Biodiversity Action Group (LWBAG) had contributed details to the Herald seek volunteers for the scheme. The trees would be delivered in January.

**9. Events in Middleham (standing item).** The Mayor would place a wreath at the Remembrance Service which was being held on a smaller scale than usual due to Covid19.

**Action****10. Planning**

**10.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting:** Full Planning Permission for Side Extension to Create an Additional Bedroom and Small Porch Area at Ulshaw View, East Witton Road, Middleham, DL8 4SG ref 20/00644. **Approved.**

**10.2 Planning Applications.** None received prior to the Notice of Meeting. An application had subsequently been received for Full Planning Permission for a Double Garage and Car Port Attached to Side of Existing Property, The Hall West End Middleham DL8 4QQ ref 20/00729/FULL. The Clerk was seeking an extension so that it may be reviewed at the next meeting..

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

**10.4 Other Planning Matters:.** RDC had clarified the procedure for works undertaken in the conservation area under permitted development rules. Where a building was Listed then Listed Building Consent would be required for a new window, even if it was like for like in every respect. However, for other buildings, if the details of the new window were exactly the same as the existing window then planning permission would not be needed. In practice, it was not always easy to achieve exact matches, so often planning permission would be required.

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

**11.1** The cash book with a full bank reconciliation as at the end of September 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.**

**11.2 Review of Interest Rates.** A summary of current balances and interest rates and, where known, future rates were reviewed. It was noted that the Council and Charity had adopted reserves policies. As interest rates had dropped significantly, a future meeting would review options for holding cash reserves, possibly in secure longer-term deposits, after the budget was finalised and final costs of the burial ground were known.

**Clerk**

**11.3 Budget.** A draft budget prepared by the Clerk was reviewed. The draft budget assumed 'business as usual', only including known recurring income and expenditure with some adjustments. The Clerk highlighted the following:

- The key assumption was to adopt a more pessimistic outlook, reflecting uncertain times.
- As in previous years, a combined projection for the Town Council and Inhabitant Householders was prepared from which income and expenditure estimates for each was derived.
- No expenditure was currently earmarked for the following: additional work on the Plantations beyond routine maintenance; Mrs Strickland's tree planting proposal; taking over the Middleham online website
- It was deemed prudent to assume that income from the Moors would be lower than in previous years
- Bank income would significantly reduce as interest rates were likely to be minimal or even nil.
- Street furniture income was assumed to be zero. The Clerk was requested to ask Leyburn Town Council whether it continued to waive fees.
- A general inflation assumption of 2.0 % has been adopted, being the rate used by RDC.
- Clerk salary. There is a contractual link to the NJC rates for inflationary increases. Next year's increase, if any, cannot be predicted. An additional 3.5

**Clerk**

**Action**

- hours per week was provided for to cover burial ground duties.
- Although MKC costs were likely to be reduced as virtual meetings might continue beyond May 2021, any savings might be offset by increased costs of printing should the larger Middleham Herald continue on a more regular basis.
- Less expensive Christmas trees could now be purchased, however the annual cost of repair and switching on the lights remained high – estimated at £700. Cllr Wheeler explained that the previous year's costs were exceptionally high as several timers were life-expired and required replacement. He anticipated that future years should be less expensive.
- Land maintenance fees would remain unchanged from the current year, based upon tenders received.

The overall projection from the draft budget was that it should be possible to retain the current level of precept, £12k, however the charity was projecting a deficit of £11k. This would require a significant transfer from reserves so Council, as trustee, would need to consider generating additional income or reduce expenditure. The Clerk reported that there appeared little scope to reduce known expenditure and create additional income.

The budget would be finalised at the next meeting.

**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 and local government reorganisation had been circulated.

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

**13.1** Annual planner for agenda items; to note forthcoming business.

**13.2** Items for next agenda:

13.2.1 Amendments to Clerk's contract of employment (private session)

**14. Future Meetings**

**The following Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 December 2020.**

**There being no further business the declared the meeting closed at 8.32pm**

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