

Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held in the Richard III Room at Middleham Key Centre on Wednesday 9 February 2022 at 6.30 pm. (SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT NEXT COUNCIL MEETING)

Present

Chairman Cllr Mrs S Fairhurst, Cllr Mrs H Byford, Cllr Mr G Fortune, Cllr Mr N Hopper, Cllr Mr S Mashford, Cllr Mr S Wheeler.

Member of the public: Mrs R Thompson.

Clerk Mr D Keep.

Action

1. Introduction and Apologies.

The Chairman declared the meeting open.

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs L Skelton (business commitment outside area). County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick had forwarded an apology.

2. Open Forum.

No public or press were present.

3. Declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda.

Cllr Byford declared an additional interest in agenda item 10.2.6 planning application at Ure View, as an adjacent neighbour. No further 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 meetings held on the following dates as a true and accurate record to be signed by the Chairman of that meeting:

- 24 November 2021 (including the confidential minute)
- 15 December 2021

4.2 The schedule of agreed actions. Noted. The drop-box for meeting papers and other documents had been set up but some Councillors had been unable to access them; the Clerk and Cllr Fortune would investigate..

**Clerk / Cllr
Fortune**

5. Confidential and Urgent Items. There were no other urgent matters. One matter was discussed and is recorded in the confidential minute book.

6. Town Council - Information/Decision Required

6.1 Councillors' report of meetings attended, and actions undertaken

(standing item). Cllr Fortune had attended the Wensleydale Business Group, which had been informative and interesting, although nothing specific to report on this occasion. There were no other meetings attended other than as reported elsewhere in these minutes.

6.2 Matters of local interest and concern as reported to Councillors or on the Residents' Facebook page.

6.2.1 Cllr Fairhurst would look at the source of an apparent water leak on the Busks near Meadow View. No other matters reported.

6.2.2 The bins that RDC supplied to householders for recyclable waste were deemed

**Cllr
Fairhurst**

inadequate as contents were easily blown away. Before writing to RDC to request that a wheelie bin be provided, it was agreed to seek feedback from County Cllr Sedgwick and other smaller councils via YLCA as a collective approach might be more effective.

6.3 Post Coronavirus Update - Volunteer coordination and support to the vulnerable.

It was agreed that as support requests and volunteer activity had significantly tailed off, the Leyburn CSO report noted would no longer be submitted to Council meetings. Lessons learned by the CSO hub during lockdown would be gleaned so that Middleham could update its own response procedures.

6.4 Land Management Issues (standing item).

6.4.1 Storm drains on Council Lands. No matters reported.

6.5 Police Matters. Monthly Activity Report from Neighbourhood Team

(standing item). Noted. The Clerk would suggest that, as well as incidents of recorded crime, future editions could also report successful actions undertaken following such incidents and community engagement activity. The Clerk would seek confirmation from Inspector Gee regarding manning levels and progress with recruitment of PCSOs.

6.6 Middleham Herald. Cllr Byford proposed to edit and distribute a Herald before the start of the Easter holidays.

6.7 Housing matters. No matters reported.

6.8 Funding Opportunities. Consideration was given to establishing a coordinated approach to fundraising between community groups in Middleham to make joint funding applications. It was noted that successful applications required skill and that training might be helpful. It was agreed that there should be an initial focus on identifying projects for which funding be sought, rather than the other way around. It was not felt however that there as a clear benefit from combining efforts. The Clerk would add additional local groups to the circulation list to receive copies of funding bulletins.

6.9 Supporting the Community:

6.9.1 Drug Issues: The meeting held on 1 December 2021 was considered disappointing as the Police representatives had played down the widely held local perception that insufficient attention was given to drugs; nor was it reassuring to hear that problems were apparently worse elsewhere. Notwithstanding this disappointment, it was agreed not to seek feedback from the other participants.

The Headteacher of Wensleydale School, Mrs Polley, had undertaken to lead a small working group to hold a community awareness event, although the local inspector had offered lukewarm enthusiasm. The Clerk would obtain an update from Mrs Polley.

The Clerk had provided feedback from the above meeting to the YLCA's Richmondshire Branch meeting on 3 February which prompted other councils to share their own experiences where it was felt that local police had not fully appreciated their concerns. YLCA had been unsuccessful in attempts to arrange a meeting of local councils with the recently appointed Police Fire and Crime Commissioner to meet with local councils. The Clerk would suggest to YLCA that the meeting, when agreed, should be face to face, rather than virtual.

There was discussion regarding the level of service that rural communities should expect from their contribution to the police precept, without reaching a conclusion.

6.10 Update on Unitary Authority. An update on the move to a unitary authority as received.

6.11 Website Revised website design. Netwise, Council's website provider, had recommended updating the website to ensure that it remains compliant from a technical as well as statutory / regulatory standpoint, at the same time offering a choice of 3 new website designs. MTC would be required to pay £199, a similar cost was expected to be incurred every 3 to 4 years. The Clerk would confirm the preferred

Action

Clerk

Clerk

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Clerk

Cllr Byford

Clerk

Clerk

Clerk

design.

**Action
Clerk
Cllr
Fortune**

Cllr Fortune would deputise for the Clerk with ongoing updates to the website.

6.12 Social Media. It was agreed not to take up the offer of a social media audit as the Council's profile was low. It was agreed that the Council's Facebook page would be useful for general communicating and enquiries as well as potential future development. For a reason which was not understood, the Council's Facebook page had been taken down as it apparently breached Facebook's criteria for acceptable organisations. Cllr Fortune kindly agreed to try and restore access to the page.

**Cllr
Fortune**

It was agreed that from time to time the Residents Facebook page was a useful channel for information but whenever Councillors posted on behalf of Council, comments on the topic should be switched off to avoid negative discussions.

All

6.13 Civility & Respect and Handling Intimidation. Available guidance for what was a growing problem nationally was noted.

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

7.1 Play Areas Inspection reports. Received. The Clerk reported that RDC had informed him that it replaced damaged rubber surfaces on its own play parks with perforated rubber mats, through which natural grass grew, which was less expensive and equally safe. He would obtain a specification. There were no new matters to note from the inspections.

Clerk

7.2 Roads and paths.

7.2.1 Surfaces concerns. Cllr Byford had reported that following recent dry weather the road surface was again a concern for riders. Although NYCC intended to resurface, funds permitting, she had recommended that NYCC be lobbied to carry out an urgent retexturing with the jet water treatment. This was agreed and Cllr Byford would contact NYCC.

Cllr Byford

The Clerk had circulated an extract from the Land Registry's index map that showed the top part of Canaan's Lane as unregistered i.e. 'no-man's land'. There might be agreements in place between various properties along the lane however it was agreed to seek advice from Scott's whether it would be a viable solution if Council registered the land so that it could improve the surface and reduce risk of injury from the broken surface.

Clerk

7.2.2 Street Lighting. The Clerk was chasing an update on light repairs and progress with installation of the requested additional lamp on Park Lane.

7.2.3 Road Safety: Speed Limits. Objectives of the "20's plenty" campaign were noted. It was not thought necessary for Middleham to join as current experience was that speeding was infrequent and a lower limit was not justified. Speeds within the town were in part influenced by the road layout. It was also considered unlikely that NYCC would support implementation.

7.3 Environmental Matters. No matters raised.

8. Project Updates:

8.1 Burial Ground.

8.1.1 Rules. The Clerk had previously received final comments from Councillors however having subsequently received a copy of Leyburn's updated rules felt these contained relevant additional information. These amendments were agreed. Having been proposed by Cllr Hopper and seconded by Cllr Wheeler **It was resolved to adopt the Burial Ground rules, a copy of which is attached to and forms part of these minutes.**

Action

8.1.2 Scale of charges. Having been proposed by Cllr Fairhurst and seconded by Cllr Byford **It was Resolved to adopt the scale of charges, as recommended by the Burial Ground sub-committee. A copy of the charges is attached to and forms part of these minutes.**

Clerk

A revised copy of the statutory grave plan was being prepared and the application form for the exclusive right to burial would be published. Otherwise, the burial ground was ready for use. The Clerk would ask Robertsons for a quotation to reseed the bare ground alongside the new path.

8.2 MSCWA.

8.2.1 Update on storage shed, petanque court, fencing by skate park. The snagging list on the storage shed was incomplete. Funding was being sought for the petanque court. No other matters were reported.

8.2.2 It was agreed that the netting for the new cricket nets should be black, rather than the rather vivid green previously requested.

8.3 Key Centre.

8.3.1 Audited accounts for the year to 31 March 2021. A copy of the accounts was received for information.

The Clerk had circulated an extract from the Land Registry's index map that showed the top part of Canaan's Lane as unregistered i.e. 'no-man's land'. There might be agreements in place between various properties along the lane however it was agreed to seek advice from Scott's whether it would be a viable solution if Council registered the land so that it could improve the surface and reduce risk of injury from the broken surface.

All

The Clerk had reviewed the Community First January funding bulletin and shortlisted suitable funding opportunities to apply for in the near future, with a focus on grants offering support towards running costs.

Clerk

Cllr Byford and the Clerk had attended separate virtual meetings of the Richmondshire branch of the Village Halls Network, which was a useful potential source of relevant information and shared concerns.

8.4 Play Area Improvements:

8.4.1 Construction start date and ongoing reporting to funders. Council had received an indicative start date of mid-March, construction to be completed over a 2-week period.

8.4.2 Opening ceremony: Mrs Wheeler had suggested possible activities for an opening day event which could be considered further.

8.4.3 Next steps - volunteer participation, events, planting plans. Extracts from the three external funding applications regarding possible ongoing volunteer engagement and development of the play areas were reviewed. Mrs Wheeler would be asked for an article in the next Middleham Herald.

8.5 Moving and restoring bench seats. It was agreed that purchase of benches be investigated, of similar appearance to existing metalwork benches that Council was looking into relocating. As well as looking into 3rd party funders, it might be possible to obtain sponsorship. A bench to commemorate the life of Mrs Waudby would be considered.

8.6 Additional Christmas Lights. An application from the new householder at the Old School House was received. The Clerk would seek confirmation that they were prepared to cover the cost of installation before obtaining costs.

Clerk

8.7 Jubilee Light – replacement lantern. Cllr Byford had investigated indicative prices for original or reproduction lanterns for the Market Square and circulated suggested designs and likely costs. It was agreed to investigate further and Cllr Byford would liaise with Cllr Wheeler regarding installation and connection to the

**Cllr Byford
/ Cllr**

Action
Wheeler

power supply.

9. Events in Middleham (standing item).

9.1 To agree participation in the following.

9.1.1 Spring Clean 2022. It was agreed to participate, on a date to be agreed.

9.1.2 Platinum Jubilee bank holiday Thursday 2 June and Friday 3 June 2022. This would not coincide with the current plans for Feast Day which would again be held over the August Bank Holiday weekend. A listing of suggested events, including a Jubilee lunch proposed by Cllr Fairhurst, and funding sources was received. Cllr Byford would contact other local groups to gauge interest in forming a working group a coordinated approach. Mr Archibald had kindly volunteered to light the beacon at the castle.

9.1.3 Stables Open Day. Good Friday 15 April 2022. A formal request to erect signs on Council land was approved. Consent to park cars on the Busks and Low Moor had not been received but would be offered as this had always been used in previous years.

9.1.4 Publicising Events. It was agreed to circulate details of the free 'Whatson' service publishing information about events and activities open to the public, to local groups and societies in Middleham to ensure they secured maximum publicity for their events.

Cllr
Fairhurst /
Cllr
Skelton

Cllr Byford

Clerk

Clerk

10. Planning

10.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting:

10.1.1 FPP for a Slurry Lagoon at Land Between Middleham and Wensley, South of The River Ure, Middleham 21/000287 **Granted**

10.2 Planning Applications.

10.2.1 FPP ('FPP') to Convert Existing Barn into a Two Storey, Two Bedroom Residential Property, Barn at West End Middleham 21/01011/FULL. Concern as expressed at car parking provision and window openings. Cllr Byford would draft an objection for agreement by email circulation **Objection**.

10.2.2 FPP for Conversion of Existing Methodist Chapel to Create a 3 Bedroom Dwelling with Demolition of Existing Modern Extensions and Install Solar Panels, Park Lane, Middleham, DL8 4PX 21/01084/FULL. **No objection but commented upon lack of detail regarding materials for the new window frames and location of the proposed solar panels.**

10.2.3 FPP single storey extension rear 48 Park Lane, Middleham, DL8 4QT 21/01060. **No objection.**

10.2.4 FPP for Introduction of Three Roof Lights Meeting Conservation Criteria, Removal of Ceiling in Principal Bedroom and Ensuite, Insulation and Plasterboard to Underside of Roof, Cast Iron Railings to Kirkgate Garden Wall, Height in Keeping with Adjacent Properties, Gates Height Aligned with Wall Railings, Introduction of Ornamental Koi Pond to Rear Courtyard at Waterford House, 19 Kirkgate, Middleham, DL8 4PG 22/00004/FULL. **No objection**

10.2.5 FPP for Redevelopment of Existing Racing Yard to Include Demolition of Farmhouse etc. Change in Description and Inclusion of an Underpass at the Point where the Linear Gallop would Cross Footpath Ref: 20.45.26/4) at Manor House Farm, Middleham, DL8 4RH, 21/00285/FULL. There as noted to be strong local opposition to the revised application to include an underpass. The proposal would spoil views and considered a disproportionate response to other concerns. Cllr Byford would draft an objection for agreement by email circulation. **Objection.**

10.2.6 FPP for Single Storey Garden Room, Porch Extensions, Alterations to Access Gateway at Ure View, Back Lane, Middleham, DL8 4PA 22/00037 **No objection.**

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

11. Finance – Information/Decision required

Clerk

Action

11.1 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.

Monthly cash books, bank statements and bank reconciliations at the end of months ending May to December 2021 were received.

11.2 Risk Assessment and Review of Internal Controls. A briefing note from YLCA summarising levels of internal control appropriate for smaller councils was noted. Cllr Hopper and Cllr Mashford agreed to review and complete the Internal Audit Controls Form, which assigns responsibility to Councillors and the internal auditor, by no later than 31 March 2022.

**Cllr Hopper
/ Cllr
Mashford**

The Clerk had updated the risk assessment review which Councillors would review and update the current form prior to the year end. The Clerk would look into a different form for future use. Council would also update its business continuity planning and a suggested pro-forma document for this purpose was received.

Clerk

11.3 Transfer of Reserves.

A paper was received from the Clerk summarising transfers of Funds required between Council and IH.

Revenue

Separate annual accounts for each entity are prepared and inspected by Kim Duke. However the published accounts were prepared net of transfers between each entity, although in practice the moneys have not been moved. These mostly relate to office costs and other items towards which IH pays a 50% contribution and also some receipts by TC or items due to IH. As at 31 March 2021 £11,123.40 was due from IH to TC and various reconciliations, which had been reviewed by the internal auditor, were available to confirm this sum.

Capital

The minutes of the Council meeting on 22 February 2021 had agreed that a balance of £87,862 arising from the sale of the town hall in 2011 be transferred from TC to IH.

Actions required

Offsetting £11,123.40 due from IH to TC against the return of the capital reserve from TC to IH £87,862 required a balance of £76,738.18 to be transferred from TC to IH.

Having been Proposed by Cllr Fairhurst and Seconded by Cllr Byford, **It was Resolved**

11.3.1 To approve the transfer of 76,738.18 from TC to IH.

11.3.2 Authorise the Clerk and those Councillors who are authorised signatories to transfer between bank accounts and to close accounts as required.

Clerk

The Clerk would prepare an updated assets schedule at 31 March 2022

11.4 Outsourcing of Bookkeeping. The Clerk and Kim Duke, the Internal Auditor, had raised concerns about the suitability of maintaining MTC and IH accounting records on spreadsheets. As well as potential inaccuracy, additional manual checks had been required by the Clerk and Ms Duke at recent year-ends. Due to these concerns, the Clerk had requested an indicative cost from Kim Duke for transferring

Action

the Council and Charity accounts to a recognised accounting programme, Sage, to be maintained by her, providing month end reports and a bank reconciliation. The Clerk would however continue to make payments by BACS, operate payroll and raise invoices.

The Clerk considered that the likely costs would be offset by improved financial control and releasing him to complete other actions in a timely manner.

Council agreed to seek further information from Ms Duke for consideration at the next meeting. If it was agreed to proceed, this would apply to accounts for the coming financial year.

Clerk

11.5 Clerk’s contract of employment. Recorded in confidential minute book.

12. Suggested items for the next agenda.

12.1 To consider establishing a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. This suggested item prompted discussion at the current meeting. Longer-serving Councillors recalled that there had been a scheme some years ago, however feedback on its effectiveness as mixed. It also required volunteers to come forward. In wider discussion it was felt that Middleham was a relatively small and cohesive community where residents already tended to look out for each other without needing a set procedure and appointment of scheme coordinators. Accordingly it as agreed not to consider further at the next meeting.

All

13. Future Meetings

The next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 March 2022. .

There being no further business the declared the meeting closed at 10.07pm

Signed.....Date.....