

Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held in the Garden Room at Middleham Key Centre on Wednesday 23 March 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 Mrs L Skelton.

Member of the public: Mrs R Thompson, Mr R Fletcher.

Clerk Mr D Keep.

Action

1. Introduction and Apologies.

The Chairman declared the meeting open.

An apology was received from Cllr Mr S Wheeler (illness). County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick had forwarded an apology as she was on holiday.

2. Open Forum.

No matters raised.

3. Declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda.

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

Following amendment **IT WAS RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Council meetings held on 9 February 2022 (including the confidential minute) as a true and accurate record to be signed by the Chairman of that meeting:**

4.2 The schedule of agreed actions. Noted.

5. Confidential and Urgent Items. There were no other urgent matters. Two matters were discussed and are recorded in the confidential minute book.

6. Town Council - Information/Decision Required

6.1 Councillors' report of meetings attended, and actions undertaken (standing item). 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. None raised.

6.3 Council Elections. These will be held on 5 May 2022. Current appointments would cease on 9 May 2022. The Clerk outlined the procedure and timetable and distributed nomination forms, requesting completion and return by 4 April for return to RDC in good time.

All / Clerk

6.4 Land Management Issues (standing item).

6.4.1 Storm drains on Council Lands. No matters reported.

6.4.2 Direction Signs to amenities. Cllr Mashford reported that many visitors asked for directions to the public toilets and the castle and other attractions and facilities. Following discussion, Cllr Fairhurst agreed to review direction signs generally within Middleham, English Heritage would be asked to improve signage to the castle and Cllr

**Cllr
Fairhurst /
Clerk**

Wheeler would be asked to repair and replace the sign in the market square planter damaged by vehicle collision.

Action
Cllr
Wheeler

6.5 Police Matters.

6.5.1 Monthly Activity Report from Neighbourhood Team (standing item). Noted. A positive response had been received from PC Hankin to Council's suggestions for additional content, particularly actions undertaken following incidents and community engagement activity.

6.5.2 North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner virtual meeting with YLCA branches on 26 May 2022. Cllr Fairhurst agreed to participate. The Clerk would precis the scope of the Council's own meeting with Police with its focus on drugs in rural areas.

Cllr
Fairhurst
Clerk

6.6 Middleham Herald. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Herald be published quarterly and, following end of the major impact of Covid, be shortened to reduce printing costs.

6.7 Housing matters. Recorded in confidential minute book.

6.8 Funding Opportunities. No actions agreed.

6.9 Annual Town Meeting 18 May 2022: It was agreed to invite talks from County Cllr Mrs Sedgwick and PSCO Helenor Gwatkin, a member of the local police licensing team, and had recently met with Cllr Mashford whilst visiting licensed premises in Middleham

Clerk

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

6.11 Consultation on proposed new map of constituencies: 2023 Boundary Review. It was unclear what this further consultation comprised; so Councillors could ascertain its potential impact upon Middleham, the Clerk would forward a weblink to Councillors to consider responding.

Clerk

6.12 Website Revised website design. This matter was further considered as the Councillor preferences were inconclusive. The Clerk would request the appearance suggested by Cllr Fortune. Cllr Fortune would add tags to the website to make visitor searches easier.

Clerk
Cllr
Fortune

Councillors were encouraged to familiarise themselves with current content and suggest useful additional information.

All

6.13 Local Transport Options; Ride Tandem. Cllr Mashford had investigated this scheme offering flexible transport across local routes at set times. Whilst it had potential benefit to Middleham, in terms of additional public transport, reduced parking demand and less pollution, it required ongoing subsidy to make up any shortfall in ticket receipts. The Clerk would forward details to NYCC.

Clerk

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

7.1 Play Areas Inspection reports. Received. No new matters reported. Cllrs Hopper and Fortune would look at the lifting panels on the skate park and consult with RDC's inspector if clarification of the repair was required.

Cllr Hopper
/ Cllr
Fortune

Guidance received from YLCA for avoiding potential problems from dogs accessing play areas was received; it was not considered that fouling in play areas was a problem. There did however appear to be a problem elsewhere; to discourage this, it was agreed to publish an article in the forthcoming Herald. The scheme provided by RDC to try and confront offenders was noted but was not felt to be effective or practical as it was often difficult to obtain sufficient information to take action.

Cllr Byford

7.2 Roads and paths.

Action

7.2.1 Surfaces concerns. Council's recent request for pressure-treatment of roads from ton to the Moors and near Spigot Lodge had been undertaken by NYCC. This had improved the grip for horses, although less noticeably so in the Spigot Lodge area as the surface was more badly worn.

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

Clerk

7.2.3 Don't Lose Your Way - Deadline Abolished. DEFRA had announced that it will repeal the 2026 cut-off date for recording historic rights of way, to allow more time for paths to be identified and added to the public rights of way network. This was welcomed as it reduced the risk of paths being lost forever.

7.2.4 Parking issues. Copies of letters to residents most recently sent in 2019 were deemed to still be relevant and would be reissued to reaffirm Council's policy on parking on the Wastes.

Clerk

A kind offer from a resident to contribute towards creation of additional parking spaces in the central green space in Park Lane was appreciated. It was understood that the works would be very expensive and additional external funding was unlikely to be forthcoming. The Clerk would ask RDC if they were able to undertake the work; depending upon the response, Council would look into the costs of construction.

Clerk

7.2.5 Canaan's Lane – section of no man's land. Advice from Scotts Solicitors was received and it was agreed not to pursue possible adoption by Council. The Clerk would circulate a document received from a resident regarding ownership. It was reported that some maintenance of the Lane appeared to have been undertaken.

Clerk**7.3 Environmental Matters.**

7.3.1 New Bin in Park Lane: Options for differing sizes and design had been received from RDC. Previous discussion had favoured a combined recycling / general bin and accordingly the 4-compartment design was selected. **Having been proposed by Cllr Fairhurst and seconded by Cllr Byford it was Resolved to purchase a 4-compartment bin costing £747 inclusive of installation but excluding VAT**

Clerk

Prior to the meeting Council had been informed that the dog waste bin at the play area end of the Park Lane open space would be relocated by RDC following an apparent accident, precise details unknown, by a bin vehicle reversing up the track. Having investigated, RDC intended to move the bin to within 4 metres of the highway in accordance with its policy, although Councillors, supported by feedback from residents, had lobbied strongly that this was an unnecessary expense which would move the bin from its most convenient location to encourage dog walkers to pick up. Council would continue to advocate that the bin remains in its current location.

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

8.1.1 Statutory Grave Plan. A draft plan was received. The Clerk confirmed that it was correct, albeit the numbering order for the plots needed to be changed. It was agreed to adopt this plan to be published along with the rules and form for purchase of exclusive rights of burial.

Clerk

8.1.2 Retrospective Planning Approval. The Clerk explained that, with hindsight, adoption of the contractor's sensible suggestion immediately prior to construction that the height of the southern part of the new wall should gradually reduce to mirror the existing wall should have prompted an amended application to RDC to formally vary the approved plan. A complaint had also been made to planners that the wall was not, as recommended for legitimate safety reasons, a true dry stone wall as mortar had been used internally; furthermore the wall's width had in places exceeded the approval width by 1 centimetre. Council agreed that a retrospective application should be made but that, alongside other current priorities and the staff shortages at RDC, this should be deferred. Positive feedback continued to be received regarding the appearance of the wall.

Clerk

Action**8.2 MSCWA.**

8.2.1 Update on storage shed, petanque court, fencing by skate park. Mr Fletcher was secretary reported that as the snagging list on the storage shed remained incomplete options for completion would be investigated. The petanque court had been measured and indicative costs obtained of £1.5k for which funding would be sought.

Mr Fletcher and Cllr Hopper were speaking to youngsters who had recently excavated holes in the playing field.

Councillors raised concerns that parts of the community garden were looking unkempt and might cause slips and trips and requested that this be looked at.

**Cllr Hopper
/ MSWCA**

8.3 Key Centre.

8.3.1 Report from New Trustees. Cllr Byford, as chair, reported that Cllr Fairhurst had been appointed secretary and Cllrs Skelton, Mashford and Hopper as trustees, on an interim basis, whilst a business review of similar scope to that undertaken 5 years ago was repeated. The Covid pandemic appeared to have irreversibly changed demand for business lettings as working patterns had changed. Some useful archive documents had been located in the attic.

8.3.2 Vote of thanks to retiring Trustees. Gratitude was expressed to all retiring trustees and in particular Mike and Lesley Sweeting. A letter of thanks would be sent to Dr and Mrs Sweeting and an article in the Herald.

**Cllrs
Fairhurst /
Byford**

8.4 Play Area Improvements:

8.4.1 Construction was almost complete. The Clerk was liaising with the contractor regarding handover and transfer of risk / insurance cover, anticipated later in the week. The Clerk would now submit final reports and funding requests.

Clerk

It was agreed that the old swing frame could not be easily relocated and reused. Mr Fletcher kindly agreed to arrange removal.

Mr Fletcher

The Clerk reported upon very satisfactory communication with Streetscape which he felt boded well for ongoing support for the installation.

Some concern as expressed at the uneven surface of the Safa mat rubber mesh / grass matting and whether the edging constituted a trip hazard. Although this was not mentioned by the independent assessor, the Clerk would raise this with RDC's play area inspector. The independent assessor had recommended installation of an additional area of Safa matting, which was beyond applicable requirements, which Streetscape would instal at its own cost

Clerk

Communication from the immediately adjacent householder regarding the impact of the new installation upon her privacy and enjoyment as received. Cllr Skelton had also met her. Issues raised were reasonable and understandable; with hindsight, it was accepted that direct consultation should have been undertaken prior to construction starting.

8.4.2 Next Steps. The plans included planting and bug 'hotels'. It was agreed to request a planting plan from the Committee which could be considered for formal approval.

Clerk

8.5 NALC Smaller Councils Committee. Formation of a committee specific to the role of smaller councils and intended areas of focus, was noted.

9. Events in Middleham (standing item).**9.1 To agree participation in the following.**

9.1.1 Spring Clean 27 February 2022. Cllr Skelton and Cllr Fairhurst reported upon

Action

another successful event. Much of the rubbish collected appeared to be windblown items from recycling boxes, an additional reason to be cited to RDC when raising concerns about the inadequacy of the containers. Unfortunately, no other YLCA member councils in Richmondshire had expressed similar concerns with the boxes. A supply of replacement lids would be obtained.

Clerk

9.1.2 Platinum Jubilee bank holiday Thursday 2 June and Friday 3 June 2022. Cllr Fairhurst reported that the RDC funding application process had been very time consuming; she was pleased to confirm that £2k had been received. An outline of events was provided; MSCA were asked to organise some games on the playing fields.

Cllr Byford reported that central government regulations no longer permitted road closure applications other than by fully certified companies and individual operatives who have undertaken the correct training and been assessed to do so. Accordingly, from now on an additional cost would be incurred for closing the short section of access road in front of the Wensleydale Hotel.

It was agreed to approve a financial contribution of up to £1k to the event as a contingency to cover additional expenditure, such expenditure to be pursuant to s137 Local Government Act.

9.1.3 Stables Open Day. Good Friday 15 April 2022. No update on arrangements received from the organisers. Trooper Middleham would be present.

10. Planning

10.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting:

10.1.1 Full planning permission for single storey extension to the rear 48, Park Lane, Middleham, DL8 4QT 21/01060 **Granted**

10.1.2 FPP to Replace an Existing oil Tank with a Larger Tank to Better Serve the Property at The Hall, West End, Middleham, DL8 4QQ 21/00893/FULL. **Granted**

10.1.3 FPP for erection of stables to provide 12 stable boxes and equipment/storage room at Thorngill House, Racing stables, Coverham, DL8 4TJ - R/60/8G **Granted**

10.1.4 FPP for Replacement of Existing Glazed Screen to Rear Extension with Stone Cavity Wall with New Door and Sash Window, Extension of Roof to Rear Extension to Form Small Canopy etc.at Hepple House, Kirkgate, Middleham, DL8 4PG 21/00947/FULL **Granted**

10.2 Planning Applications.

10.2.1 Variation of Condition 2 Attached to Listed Building Consent 21/00732/LBC - The Approved Lintel Replacement to the Front Elevation at Laundry Cottage, West End, Middleham, DL8 4QL 22/00107/VAR **No objection**

10.2.2 Section 73 Application for variation of Condition 6 of R/60/30 and App/C9499/C/99/1031206 The Forbidden Corner, Tupgill Park, DL8 4TJ R/60/30U Cllr Byford confirmed that she had run the proposal past the trainers, ho had no concerns.

No objection

10.2.3 FPP for erection of stables etc. at Manor House Farm - 21/00285/FULL. Further changes to details, door and window specifications, overall heights on some buildings, removal of large double doors. To note applicant's report on the underpass. **No objection**

10.2.4 Full Planning Permission to Erect a Double Garage and Plant Room at Fieldside Barn, East Witton Road, Middleham DL8 4PT 22/00051/FULL **No objection**

10.3 **Potential Planning Enforcement Issues.** It was questioned whether the appropriate roofing materials were being used on a barn near the castle believed to be rented by Ben Haslam's yard. Images would be taken for forwarding to RDC.

11. Finance – Information/Decision required

Clerk

11.1 **IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the schedule of direct debits and internet**

Action

bank transfers to approve and ratify all payments since the last Meeting as set out on the payments schedule.

The Clerk apologised that cash books, bank statements and bank reconciliations at the end of months ending January and February 2022 were unavailable.

11.2 Outsourcing of Bookkeeping. Cllr Fairhurst, Cllr Byford and the Clerk had met with Kim Duke, to discuss transfer for the coming financial year. The costs had been advised as follows:

Initial set up	£200.00
Monthly processing £50	600.00
Sage licence fees (monthly)	£446.40
MTC (including payroll)	£19 + VAT
IH	£12 + VAT

NB if Sage purchased prior to 1 April, 3 months licence fee would be free of charge

Total – first year costs £1,046.40

Transfer-out would reduce demands on clerk's time and ensure accurate financial management through engagement of a competent bookkeeper using well-established software. It was agreed to seek further assurance that the Clerk would not be involved in posting items to Sage. Subject to receiving that assurance and, having been proposed by Cllr Byford and seconded by Cllr Skelton **IT WAS RESOLVED to engage Kim Duke Accounting Services as bookkeeper from 1 April 2022 and for her to make necessary arrangements to procure Sage.**

Clerk

11.3 Clerk's contract of employment. Recorded in confidential minute book.

12. Suggested items for the next agenda.

12.1 Operation London Bridge. To approve local plans.

12.2 What Councils can do on Climate Change

12.3 Consider change of bankers

All

13. Future Meetings

The next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 May 2022.

The Annual Town Meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 May 2022.

There being no further business the declared the meeting closed at 9.10pm

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