

Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held in the Garden Room at Middleham Key Centre on Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 6.30 pm. (SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT NEXT COUNCIL MEETING)

Present

Chairman Cllr Mrs S Fairhurst, Cllr Mrs H Byford, Cllr Mr S Mashford, Cllr Mr D Palethorpe, Cllr Mrs L Skelton.

No members of the public were present.

Clerk Mr D Keep.

Action

1. Open Forum.

No matters raised:

2. Introduction and Apologies.

2.1 Apologies. The Chairman declared the meeting open. Apologies were received from Cllr Watson (holiday absence) and Cllr Fortune. County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick was unavailable as she was attending another parish council meeting.

2.2 Declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda. Cllrs Byford, Skelton and Mashford declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6.5 as trustees of Middleham Key Centre Limited. Cllr Fairhurst announced her intention to resign as a Key Centre Trustee, with immediate effect. No further interests other than those previously notified were declared in matters on the agenda.

The Clerk advised that he was seeking advice from the Yorkshire Local Council's Association regarding whether dispensations could be granted to Councillors enabling them to take part and vote on a matter in which they had declared a non-pecuniary interest as the position was unclear. It had been referred to NALC's legal team and a reply was awaited.

Clerk

3. Minutes.

3.1 Minutes of the previous meetings

3.1.1 IT WAS RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 September 2022 as a true and accurate record to be signed by the Chairman of that meeting:

3.2 The schedule of agreed actions. Noted.

3.3 Confidential and Urgent Items. There were no other urgent matters, although additional matters were agreed for discussion and recorded in the confidential minute book. Due to duration of most recent meetings, it was agreed to have a brief break at 8pm and seek to complete business by 9pm

4. Town Council - Information/Decision Required

4.1 Councillors' report of meetings attended, and actions undertaken (standing item). No other meetings were attended other than as reported elsewhere in these minutes.

4.2 Matters of local interest and concern as reported to Councillors or on the Residents' Facebook page. None raised.

4.3 Council Matters:

4.3.1 HM Queen Elizabeth Funeral. The Civic Service arranged by Council had been well-attended.

Action

4.3.2 Civility and Respect Pledge for Smaller Councils. This initiative, promoted by local and national county associations and the Society of Local Council Clerks was noted to be in response to a national trend of worsening behaviour within councils and encouraged councils to sign up to the pledge, thereby demonstrating commitment to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

It Was Resolved to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge by affirming the following statements:

Clerk

- Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.
- Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors
- Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.
- Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.
- Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when if and when it happens.
- Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme
- Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.

4.4 Land Management Issues (standing item).

4.4.1 Storm drains on Council Lands. It was noted that Area 1 had reduced the height of roadside verges leading from Town to the Low Moor which was considered likely to improve flows of water.

4.4.2 Trees

4.4.2.1 Trees behind 9 St Alkelda's Road – request for topping to improve light falling on proposed roof-mounted solar panels. Council considered correspondence received from the householder; the Clerk's report of an inspection he had attended with Mr Stockdale, of Yorkshire Tree Specialists, which carries out tree maintenance works, in part attended by the householder. Advice from Mr Stockdale was strongly against topping trees as it was likely to result in 'shock growth' requiring regular ongoing maintenance for the estimated remainder of the trees lives (estimated at 60 years) and also detracted from the appearance of the trees and might be unpopular with residents. Council agreed to decline the request.

Clerk

4.4.2.2 Care of Trees along the Busks. The Clerk had met with Mr Stockdale to inspect the trees. Mr Stockdale advocated going further than the works recommended in Mr Kalkowski's tree safety report as a number of trees had expanded to cover the width of the Busks, so were difficult for walkers to pass and killed off the grass beneath. He also recommended additional work to improve the appearance of certain trees. An estimate likely to exceed the remaining tree maintenance budget, was awaited and the Clerk would chase.

Clerk

4.4.2.3 Hedges on 'no-man's land' Park Lane. This was agreed to look unsightly and also partly blocked visibility. It had in the past been tidied by Council, at its own expense. It was agreed to seek a costing from Robertsons' Garden Services.

Clerk

4.4.2.4 Trees in Churchyard. Concerns were expressed about the safety of trees in the burial ground of St Alkelda's, a closed burial ground now maintained by RDC. The Clerk had previously asked RDC to share its tree safety report; if this was not forthcoming, he would ask Mr Stockdale for an informal opinion.

Clerk

<p>4.4.3 <u>Refurbished benches</u>. Disappointment was expressed at the rapid appearance of rust following repainting earlier in the year. A brief written report was received from Cllr Watson following his discussions with the contractor who had agreed to carry out remedial works to both benches in-situ, to paint all areas where rust is coming through due to lack of initial coverage, including the joint areas which would be wire brushed and hand painted. This proposal was agreed. Cllr Watson would sign off the works undertaken.</p>	Action
<p>4.4.4 <u>Priorities for Land Management Contract 2023-24</u>. The Clerk had suggested that the areas of grass cutting on the Buses, significantly increased from 2019 onwards, should be reconsidered as a potential cost-cutting measure in light of potential budgetary constraints (to be covered later on the agenda) and in recognition that fuel costs were likely to increase. Following consideration, it was agreed to keep to the same specification which was popular with residents and created a very favourable impression to all visitors approaching from Leyburn.</p>	Clerk/ Cllr Watson
<p>4.5 Police Matters.</p>	
<p>4.5.1 <u>Monthly Activity Report from Neighbourhood Team</u> (standing item). Content noted.</p>	
<p>4.5.2 <u>Council meeting with PFCC 8 September</u>. It was agreed that the meeting with the Commissioner at the Key Centre, attended by all Councillors, County Cllr Sedgwick and the Wensleydale School headteacher, had been useful and reassuring, however, feedback from Councillors and residents when reporting incidents indicated that reality was different, and some residents were put off reporting. It was agreed to write a formal letter to the Commissioner, that the Clerk would draft.</p>	Clerk
<p>4.5.3 <u>Virtual Meeting with PFCC on Wednesday 29 November at 6:45pm</u>. The rescheduled date of this meeting, organised by YLCA, was noted. Topics for discussion to be submitted by 14 November.</p>	
<p>4.6 Update on Unitary Authority.</p>	
<p>4.6.1 <u>Feedback from attendance at online briefings</u>. None given.</p>	
<p>4.6.2 <u>'Let's Talk North Yorkshire - a new Council'</u>. A short presentation was received from Sue White, Business and Community Manager at Richmondshire District Council. Copies of the consultation documents and stamped addressed envelopes would be left in the Key Centre reception and Council would publicise the consultation within Middleham. Following Ms White's departure, some concerns were expressed that North Yorkshire was a larger area than others that had successfully transferred to a unitary authority and the reduced accountability due to smaller number of County Councillors.</p>	Clerk
<p>5. Review of Health & Safety and Environmental Matters (standing item).</p>	
<p>5.1 Play Areas Inspection reports. Cllr Palethorpe had looked at the items raised in recent reports. Disappointingly a contractor that had earlier indicated that it might be able to supply a replacement scramble board had now declined. The Clerk would ask RDC inspectors whether they would sign off a locally made replacement part.</p>	Clerk
<p>5.2 Roads and paths.</p>	
<p>5.2.1 <u>Responses from Area 1 Highways on recent matters</u>. A reply from Area 1 to trainers following their letter to Rishi Sunak MP was felt to be comprehensive and constructive.</p>	
<p>5.2.2 <u>Recent incidents of horse falls on roads and role for Council to raise and support concerns raised by Middleham's trainers to NYCC Highways</u>. It was agreed that Council need not take any further action at the current time to support the lobbying undertaken by MTA.</p>	
<p>5.2.3 <u>Street Lighting</u>. It was reported that, 12 months after being reported, light 039 in Park Lane was now working. An update on installation of the new light requested in Park Lane had not been received.</p>	
<p>5.2.4 <u>Jubilee Light</u>. It was agreed to proceed with installation and find a new contractor willing to do the work at a reasonable price.</p>	Clerk
<p>5.3 Environmental Matters. None at the current time</p>	
<p>6. Project Updates:</p>	

- Action**
- Clerk**
- 6.1 Burial Ground.** The first burial would take place on 8 November. Now that the burial ground would be in use it was agreed to place a 'dogs must be on leashes' sign in the noticeboard. 4 exclusive rights of burial had been purchased.
- 6.2 Funding for Benches.** Council had successfully applied to the Lower Wensleydale Area Partnership and received a grant of £953.75 from RDC being 75% part-funding towards 2 new wrought iron benches. The Clerk would circulate details of the Wessex 4-seater bench so Councillors could agree the colour and finish. The locations were agreed to be on the grassed area by the junction of Park Lane and The Springs and at the eastern end of the Busks. **It was Resolved to approve a contribution from Council of £317.92.**
- 6.3 MSCWA.** A report of the first competitive match by the reformed Middleham Football Club was received.
- 6.4 Affordable Housing.** Of the £20,000 grant received from Richmondshire District Council to investigate feasibility for conversion of part of the Key Centre, a balance of £17,130 remained. No further activity was being undertaken at the present time.
- 6.5 Key Centre.** Part of this minute was discussed in closed session and is recorded in the confidential minute book.
- 6.5.1 Trustees' Reports**
- 6.5.1.1 Outcomes of business review and cost reductions. The report and recommendations were not yet finalised.
- 6.5.1.2 Suggested potential options for future operation. An outline proposal had been received from Racing Welfare for conversion for part use as a welfare and fitness centre.
- 6.5.2 Evaluation of Options.**
- 6.5.2.1 Suggested assessment criteria. Received from the Clerk. Noted but not discussed.
- 6.5.2.2 Set timescale for completion of enquiries regarding future options, noting that MTCL Lease terminates on 31 March 2023. To be discussed when the Trustee report and recommendations were received.
- 6.5.3 Community engagement:** There was discussion about the role of community participation in the decision-making process and whether this should provide a binding mandate. There were differing means of contacting all members of the community, for example questionnaires, a public meeting and mailing all addresses.
- 7. Events in Middleham (standing item).**
- 7.1.1 Community Harvest Celebration in the Community Gardens. Reports had been received of a well-attended event.
- 7.1.2 Oktoberfest. Cllr Mashford reported that the event had been well attended and participating licencees had a successful day. The event would be repeated.
- 7.1.3 Remembrance Sunday 13 November 2022. A wreath had been received. **It Was Resolved to approve a donation of £105 to Royal British Legion under s137 Local Government Act.**
- 7.1.4 Christmas light switching on ceremony and carol service Friday 2 December 2022. **It Was Resolved to approve costs of light repair and switching on (£737), unmetered electrical supply (£155) and purchase of tree (£200), each item under s137 Local Government Act 1972.** Cllr Fairhurst would select a suitable tree from Low Lane Trees.
- 7.1.5 Children's Christmas Party 10 December 2022. **It Was Resolved to approve a contribution of £350 under s137 Local Government Act.** Cllr Fairhurst and Cllr Skelton had volunteered to run the event, invitations would be restricted to a maximum of 30 children aged 9 or under that lived in Middleham.
- 7.1.6 Senior's Christmas lunch 15 December 2022. The event would be self-funding.
- 8. Planning**
- 8.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting:**
- Cllr Fairhurst**
- Cllrs Fairhurst and Skelton**

Action

8.1.1 Full Planning Permission for Erection of a Portal Frame Building to House Livestock and Machinery at The Dante Yard, Canaan Lane, Middleham, North Yorkshire 22/00538/Full – **withdrawn by applicant**. Although the reasons for withdrawal were not known, Councillors were aware that the nationwide shortage of planning staff affected RDC, and the absence of the usual pre-planning advice service was causing difficulties for applicants.

8.1.2 Full Planning Permission to Erect a Double Garage and Plant Room at Fieldside Barn, East Witton Road, Middleham DL8 4PT 22/00051 **Granted**

8.2 Planning Applications.

8.2.1 Full Planning Permission for Single Storey Flat Roof Extension with Parapet Wall at Ferndale House, Market Place, Middleham DL8 4NU 22/00597/FULL **Ratified no objection submitted between meetings.**

8.3 Potential Planning Enforcement Issues.

8.3.1 Barn at Manor Farm, West End Middleham. The Clerk had report this to RDC's planning enforcement team and, for information, Historic England.

9. Finance – Information/Decision required

9.1 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.

9.2 Specific expenditure approvals: It Was Resolved to approve the following items:

9.2.1 Purchase of replacement laptop for use by Clerk £649.96 (including VAT)

9.2.2 Refurbishment of laptop donated by MKCL for general use by Councillors £165.00 (including VAT)

9.2.3 A donation of £200 to Citizens Advice Bureau to support its work in Middleham under s137 Local Government Act.

9.3 Budget for 2023-24. The Clerk outlined underlying assumptions for the budget setting process for completion at the next meeting, briefly summarising areas where costs might be saved.

9.4 Annual Accounts to 31 March 2022; A certificate Completion of external Audit had been received. One matter had been raised regarding the bank reconciliation that the Clerk would address. The statutory external audit fee of £240 inclusive of VAT was now payable to PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Clerk**10. Suggested items for the next agenda.**

10.1 Second home policy – to consider lobbying unitary authority to adopt. It was agreed that this was a priority issue and could be pursued at the current time without further discussion; Cllr Fairhurst would liaise with District Cllr Yvonne Peacock regarding best way to raise with the new County Council

**Cllr
Fairhurst**

10.2 Local Councils and Climate Change. This would be deferred to a later meeting.

The next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday 7 December 2022. If required, a further meeting might be convened on Wednesday 14 December 2022 to confirm the precept for 2023-24.

There being no further business the chair declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm

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