

Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held as a virtual meeting through Zoom on Wednesday, 9 December 2020 at 7.00 pm. (SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT NEXT COUNCIL MEETING)

Present

Deputy Chairman 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: 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. The Deputy Chair advised that NALC had recommended that council meetings consider the approval of reasons given for absence, which would be a standing heading on future agendas.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Fairhurst and Wheeler, each due to conflicting business commitments. 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.

4. Minutes.

4.1 Minutes of the previous council meetings

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

4.2 The schedule of agreed actions. The Deputy Chair commented that some actions were long-standing or required rescheduling or cancelling. It was agreed that a detailed review be undertaken by Cllr Fairhurst and Cllr Byford with the Clerk to provide greater focus on priority matters.

**Cllrs
Fairhurst
& Byford**

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). Cllr Byford reported upon proceedings of the Coverham and Agglethorpe Parish Meeting which received a presentation from Mr Sparrow, raising concerns about safety of 5G. As District Cllr Fairhurst was unavailable, Cllr Byford had attended on her behalf to counter a perception that MTC had in some way consented to 5G in Coverdale. This was not the case as Coverham and Agglethorpe, along with all other councils and parish meetings, had been approached by the MANY team. Although the Parish meeting had initially declined engagement with MANY, it would now receive a presentation.

	Action
On 5G generally, Cllr Byford had circulated a commentary to Council on Mr Sparrow's paper. There were no additional matters that prompted reappraisal of the Town Council's position.	
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 <u>Coordination of volunteers and support to the vulnerable.</u> Demand for support continued to be low. It was agreed to identify residents who might be alone over Christmas.	Clerk
6.3.2 <u>Council meeting Format.</u> Changes to the Law had enabled local government to meet virtually during Covid; these relaxations would apply until May 2021. NALC guidance on virtual meetings, which Council followed, was noted. It was felt that there were practical benefits from virtual meetings and possibly, if permitted in the longer term, from hybrid meetings. At the current time it was agreed that face to face meetings should not be held. It was agreed to explain this in the forthcoming Herald.	Clerk
6.4 Land Management Issues (standing item)	
6.4.1 <u>Dog Fouling.</u> The owner of Sharp Hill Farm had confirmed ownership of part of the verge alongside Park Lane and had consented to placement of a dog waste bin. The Clerk was liaising with RDC to agree the precise location.	Clerk
6.4.2 <u>Plantations:</u> Cllr Hopper had circulated a summary of residents' views and highlighted the areas where a broad consensus on hedge height, planting, usage and other matters existed. Approximately 8 respondents were interested in joining a 'friends' group' to carry out some maintenance tasks. The Clerk would draft a volunteer policy and risk assessment to ensure that any working parties would operate safely. Cllr Hopper considered that the project to create an agreed appearance might take 2 to 3 years and he would report further on the approach at a future meeting. Cllr Fortune would work with Cllr Hopper taking this forward.	Cllrs Hopper & Fortune
6.4.3 <u>Waste Bins.</u> Cllr Fairhurst was waiting a response from RDC regarding its decision to cease emptying the general waste bin on skate park. If RDC did not back down, it was agreed to coordinate with MSCWA to put black bags in the skate park bin for periodic transfer to the new bin that would be emptied by RDC. The Clerk would obtain suitable bags.	Clerk
6.4.4 <u>Tender for Sports Field Paddock.</u> The paddock would shortly be subject to its scheduled four-yearly open tender process and documents had been drafted by the Clerk. A belated application had been received from MSCWA to extend the community garden into the paddock. Council supported the application and it was agreed to defer the tender for a further 12 months. The Clerk would liaise with the current tenant seeking agreement to a relatively marginal reduction in the paddock. It was noted that a new stock-proof fence would be required, to be funded by MSCWA.	Clerk
6.4.5 <u>Replacement information board, Swine Cross.</u> It was noted that the driver's insurers had agreed to pay for a replacement information board. Before placing the order, it was agreed to check that the artwork and wording remained accurate and, as the sign had been hit in the past, to consider a less prone location in the same area.	All
6.4.6 <u>Land maintenance matters.</u> The Clerk had circulated details of various matters, which were discussed as follows:	
6.4.6.1 Moss and weeds on the Town Wastes. It was agreed to look at increased growth of moss and to consider additional spraying.	All / Clerk
6.4.6.2 Gate to playing field meadow. Council had supplied, via RAW, a replacement gate onto Grove Terrace, operation of which was difficult as it overlapped with the gate to the stile. It was agreed to speak to the tenant if access could be improved.	Clerk
6.4.6.3 Jubilee light on main square. It was agreed that this required repainting and a quotation would be sought.	Clerk
6.4.6.4 Phone box. It was noted that the telephone box was a listed building. Cllr Hopper had recently cleaned the inside and it was agreed to seek a volunteer to 'adopt' the box.	Clerk

The Clerk would ask BT to replace a missing pane and repaint the box.

**Action
Clerk**

6.4.6.5 One-way signs at top of St Alkelda's Road. It was reported that the contractor had cut back the branches obscuring the sign.

6.4.6.6 Bus stop timetable board and honesty box notice at the Swine Cross. It was agreed to adjust so they faced the other way, it was hoped that Cllr Wheeler might have the appropriately sized Allen key.

**Cllr
Wheeler**

6.5 Consultations

6.5.1 Devolution and unitary council for York and North Yorkshire. Cllr Sedgwick reported that the RDC proposal had been submitted to central government but the so called 'east-west' model was unlikely to be accepted as it lacked unanimous support from the County's district councils. Cllr Byford expressed the Council's conclusion supported RDC's east-west proposal as there were concerns regarding service provision and reduced democratic accountability.

6.5.2 Central Government Consultation on Planning. The NALC submission was noted.

**Cllr
Byford**

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

6.7 Middleham Herald. A Christmas edition would be compiled by Cllr Byford.

Regarding distribution, recognising the short timescale and current dark evenings, the Clerk had obtained a quotation for distribution from Central Stores. Whilst attractive, this was not taken up as there was a consensus that personal distribution provided an opportunity for Councillors to be seen within the community. Numbers and street allocations would be reviewed. The longer editions currently published represented a significantly increased printing cost of approximately £150 per issue. The Clerk would investigate cheaper printing costs.

Clerk

6.8 Middleham Online website. It was agreed to investigate possible transfer of content, assuming that it could be transferred to a section of the Council's own website as a repository of information and scope for pointing searches towards the site.

**Cllrs
Fairhurst/
Byford/
Fortune/
Skelton**

6.9 Affordable Housing. Cllr Fairhurst was still awaiting an update from RDC's Housing Officer..

6.10 Dementia-Friendly Communities. A NALC report was considered. Cllr Hopper and Cllr Skelton agreed to be contact points to liaise with other community groups in Middleham.

**Cllrs
Hopper &
Skelton**

6.11 Middleham Heritage Project 2010. Digital copies of the original artwork had been located for use on guides, information boards etc.

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

Concerns were raised about lighting defects in Park Lane and the West End, which would be looked into.

All

7.1 Play Area inspection reports. Council was very grateful to Mr Burren who had fitted replacement seats and shackles to the swings. The Clerk would speak to Mrs Wheeler regarding the proximity of the Skate Park to the 'Messy Boots' area.

7.2 Emergency plan: Progress to be discussed with the Clerk.

7.3 Traffic and Parking Issues.

**Cllrs
Fairhurst
& Byford**

7.3.1 Proposal to create parking spaces in Park Lane. RDC had advised that whilst its five-year housing improvement programme primarily invested in the Council's housing stock (general needs and sheltered housing), it also set aside £40,000 annually for environmental improvements, which could include support for additional parking spaces within the central green space in Park Lane. It was noted however that the fund was likely to be oversubscribed and doubtful whether the scheme constituted an environmental project. After discussion it was agreed not to expend time pursuing funding from this source.

In view of the government's climate change programmes, it was agreed there was a need to create car charging points and the Clerk would investigate funding sources.

Clerk

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

8.1.1 Tender for burial ground works. A briefing note had been prepared by the Clerk. There had been an error in the tender process whereby a further submission had been overlooked. Once this was discovered, shortly after the tender had been awarded to Gavin Smith Ltd, the appointment was retracted and agreed that the matter should be reviewed at the current meeting. It was also apparent that the capital account that would fund construction was incorrectly allocated to TC. Taxation advice had been received that there was no reason why IH could not grant funds to the Council, which would be able to reclaim any VAT. This was accepted as a further consideration requiring review. In discussion, it was concluded that the appropriate action was to recognise these errors, seek to act fairly to the contractors whilst fulfilling the obligation to spend public funds properly; accordingly the tender process should be rerun and considered at the next meeting. It was agreed that Cllr Fairhurst should explain this to Mr Smith.

**Cllr
Fairhurst**

8.2 MSCWA. No matters to report.

8.3 Key Centre. The second MKC business review would be undertaken in 2024. The Covid restrictions had placed many village halls / community centres in a predicament so it was agreed to consider an interim view in April-May 2021 at what point the future operating environment might be clearer.

Clerk

8.4 Safer Roads Project. No matters to report..

9. Events in Middleham (standing item). None.

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 Ushaw View, East Witton Road, Middleham, DL8 4SG ref 20/00644. Approved.

10.2 Planning Applications.

10.2.1 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. No objection (following email comments, the response had been submitted by the Clerk under delegated powers between meetings).

10.2.2 Full Planning Permission for 2 Storey Side Extension and External Alteration to Form Larger Parking Area, 64 Park Lane Middleham DL8 4QU. No objection.

10.3 Potential Planning Enforcement Issues. None raised

10.3.1 Field Cottage, Grove Terrace. Cllr Byford would take a further look to see if any building activity was being undertaken.

**Cllr
Byford**

10.3.2 Satellite dish on a property in West End. This had been reported by a resident. Conservation Guidance did not forbid dishes, which were present elsewhere although usually less prominently, provided they should be sited discretely or at the back of properties. This was not always possible due to signal direction. Cllr Byford would speak to the householder.

**Cllr
Byford**

10.4 Other Planning Matters:. None.

11. Finance – Information/Decision required

11.1 The cash book with a full bank reconciliation as at the end of October 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 Specific Expenditure Approvals

11.2.1 Having been proposed as such, it was agreed to pay the following items of expenditure under s137, Local Government Act 1972.

Action

- £100 to luncheon club
- £120 for Christmas tree
- £700 for switching on, repair and operation of Christmas lights.

11.3 Transfer of capital reserve to IH. As outlined during the burial ground discussion, it was apparent that when TC and IH accounts were separated a few years ago, the capital reserve had erroneously been allocated to TC whereas investigation revealed that it belonged to IH as represented the sale proceeds of the Town Hall had been part of the Manorial Lands. Councillors confirmed that the remaining capital reserve from sale of the Town Hall in 2011 should be transferred from TC to IH and instructed the Clerk to prepare the figurework for the next meeting for formal approval.

Clerk**11.4 Budget.**

11.4.1 Feedback from RDC precept briefing. As usual this had been attended by the Clerk and the presentation circulated. RDC had confirmed it had no plans to hand over any services to parishes next year which the Town Council should budget for.

11.4.2 Budget and precept for 2021-22. A revised draft budget prepared by the Clerk was reviewed. As before, it assumed 'business as usual', and whilst overall pessimistic and making broadly similar assumptions as before, adopted a more positive outlook on the following, all other assumptions to remain as set out in the previous meeting minutes.

1. The budget now projected a 25% reduction in Moors income on the average from the past 3 year's income;
2. Street furniture. Previously assumed to be zero, but now reverting to the full rate, in line with practice at Leyburn.
3. Following discussion by the Clerk with Cllr Wheeler, it was expected that Christmas lights repair costs should be lower as a number of major component parts had been replaced last year.
4. Land maintenance fees had been confirmed as slightly lower.
5. With the above adjustments, it was possible to retain the current level of precept, however, although the charity was now projecting a reduced deficit, it was still likely to be approximately £4.43k. The charity budget did not need to be agreed until a later deadline than setting the precept, giving scope to explore options reduce this further.
6. As previously agreed on 26 January 2020, there was a commitment in principle to contribute up to £20k from the capital account to fund play area improvements, to be formally approved at a later date upon receipt of a detailed proposal. A decision whether to fund from Council or by the charity would be made at that time.'

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the 2021-22 Council Budget as submitted to the meeting, a copy of which is attached to and forms part of these minutes and to set the precept at £12,000 for 2021-22.

Clerk**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. A schedule of training courses had also been distributed

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 Play area improvements.

13.2.2 Amendments to Clerk's contract of employment (private session). The Clerk and The Deputy Chair would liaise to prepare this item.

13.2.3 Review of interest rates on deposit accounts

**Cllr
Byford /
Clerk
Clerk**

Action

14. Future Meetings

The following Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 January 2021. It was agreed that future meeting dates be circulated

Clerk

There being no further business the declared the meeting closed at 9.27pm

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