

Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held in the Lady Anne Neville Room at Middleham Key Centre on Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 7.00 pm. (SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT NEXT COUNCIL MEETING)

Present

Chairman Cllr Mrs S Fairhurst, Cllr Mrs H Byford, Cllr Mr M Cade, Cllr Mr G Fortune, Cllr Mr N Hopper, Cllr Mrs L Skelton, Cllr Mr S Wheeler.

Clerk Mr D Keep.

Public: Mrs L Alderson (items 1 to 6.1 and 9.1 only)

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1. Introduction and Apologies.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first face to face meeting held since February 2020 and declared the meeting open.

All Town Councillors were present. An apology was received from County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick.

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

IT WAS RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 April 2021 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 matters. A confidential matter is recorded in the confidential minute.

6. Town Council - Information/Decision Required

6.1 Election of Mayor and Deputy

6.1.1 Election of Town Mayor / Chairman and signing of Declaration of

Acceptance. The Clerk invited nominations. Cllr Mrs Fairhurst was nominated by Cllr Byford and seconded by Cllr Skelton; on a show of hands Cllr Fairhurst was elected as Chairman of the Council. Cllr Fairhurst signed the declaration of acceptance.

6.1.2 Election of Deputy Town Mayor / Vice-Chairman. Cllr Byford was nominated by Cllr Fairhurst and seconded by Cllr Cade and, being unopposed, was duly appointed as Vice Chairman.

6.1.3 Standing Council Committees. The purpose of such committees was discussed, but none agreed at the current time, other than to establish a burial ground committee (discussed below).

6.1.4 Allocation of specific areas of interest to Councillors e.g. footpaths, planning

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applications, MSCWA, MKC etc. Cllr Fairhurst asked Councillors to keep abreast of ongoing email communications between members and the Clerk as Council was currently busy across a range of activity and responding to on such matters was a shared responsibility. No specific areas of responsibility were agreed at the present time.

6.2 Councillors' report of meetings attended, and actions undertaken (standing item). None, other than as reported elsewhere in these minutes.

6.3 Matters of local interest and concern as reported to Councillors or on the Residents' Facebook page. A post regarding a resident and their pet dog had been removed, following a request by the individual who had been named. The local PCSO had submitted a report to council, confirming that she had spoken to both dog owners however no formal action could be taken as the dog was not considered dangerous to people. There was no role for Council in the matter. No other matters reported.

6.4 Coronavirus Update

6.4.1 Council Meetings. YLCA had advised member councils that the temporary exemption allowing virtual meetings had now expired and that since 7 May 2021 councils could now only meet where Covid regulations allowed and were considered safe to do so following a risk assessment. The Clerk confirmed that Council was acting lawfully and that other councils that continued to hold virtual meetings were not.

6.4.2 Approval of Matters delegation to the Clerk during period that Council meetings could not be held. The only actions undertaken and decisions made under delegated powers was submission of comments on a small number of planning applications, following canvassing of Councillor opinions.

6.4.3 Coordination of volunteers and support to the vulnerable. There had been a recent drop in requests, from an already low level, however it was agreed that assistance should continue to be offered. Frustration was expressed that RDC had not offered a concessionary rate for removal of household items from a resident's garden. It was agreed that this should be funded by Council for £30 to hire a 'man and van' service.

**Cllr
Skelton**

6.5 Land Management Issues (standing item)

6.5.1 Storm drains on Council Lands. NYCC had recently cleared drains in Middleham. The Clerk would check whether this included Park Lane, which until recently had not been possible due to access issues.

Clerk

6.5.2 Friends of the Plantations. Cllr Hopper had met with approximately 10 residents whose homes fronted the Plantations; there was broad consensus on matters such as hedge height, care of shrubs, removal of invasive growth, which he would summarise and would form the basis of for a quotation from Mr Robertson for the items beyond the scope of the volunteers.

**Cllr
Hopper**

6.6 Police Report (standing item). Received for information. Cllr Fairhurst proposed that a meeting be held with the new Police Fire and Crime Commissioner regarding practical steps he would take following manifesto statements prioritising drugs, which appeared to be an increasing problem under Covid. As Leyburn was likely to experience similar issues, it was agreed to ask if its councillors wished to be present.

Clerk

6.7 Middleham Herald. Cllr Byford would shortly invite articles for the summer edition.

**Cllr
Byford**

6.8 Housing matters. There was no progress to report on arrangements for an internal inspection of the Methodist chapel for possible conversion to affordable housing.

The Clerk reported that whilst the s106 and option agreements had been executed in March, the £100 fee payable by the promoter had not been received until it was chased. An apology had been received from the promoter who undertook to ensure future payments under the agreement would be made in a timely manner.

6.9 How to get young people involved in local councils. Details of a recent web discussion convened by NALC were received. Councillors considered how engagement

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might be achieved locally, concluding that it was best through consultation on specific topics likely to be of interest, such as Spring Cleans and recent consultation over play areas which could involve local schools.

6.10 Heatwave Planning. The Clerk would review the actions suggested for local councils to ensure resident safety and support to vulnerable people, which could be published in the Herald.

Clerk

6.11 Clerk's office attendance. Cllr Fairhurst and Cllr Byford had met with the Clerk. It was agreed that most of the Clerk's activity could be undertaken by phone and email whilst working from home and that this should continue for a trial period of 6 months with attendance in the office one day per fortnight, and additional presence as required. The reduction in travelling would also reduce the carbon emissions.

Clerk**7. Review of Health & Safety and Environmental Matters (standing item).****7.1 Play Areas**

7.1.1 Inspection reports. Received. It was noted that the shackle on the swing had been replaced by Mr Burren.

7.1.2 Update on repainting project. Volunteers coordinated by Mr Burren would shortly undertake repainting play area equipment.

7.1.3 Replacement Scramble board. A revised quotation for a board from the original manufacturer was in excess of £1000, even with a 25% discount, and deemed still to be too expensive.

7.2 Road surface concerns. Localised recent deterioration in the surface had caused injury to racehorses. Recent hot weather appeared exacerbated by reflected heat from buildings. NYCC's Area 1 team had responded quickly to make repairs although these were likely only to be effective for a short period. A proposed 'anti-slip' overlay would not overcome deterioration of the underlying layers. Cllr Byford was continuing liaison with Aston University over a longer-term solution.

7.3 Street Lighting. The Clerk reported that the funding application was still being considered. As RDC had now requested that a brief application be completed, he had sought and received an assurance that, as an early applicant, the allocation of funding remained on a first-come first-served basis, subject to a site inspection.

Appreciation was expressed to the volunteers coordinated by Mr Burren who had rubbed down and repainted the Jubilee Lamp. It was agreed that parking signs on the lamp detracted from its appearance and should be relocated, if possible. A resident had generously offered to purchase a new light fitting, which was a much later addition and not part of the lamp's listed status. Cllr Byford was looking into a suitable design. The Clerk would investigate the process for alterations to a listed structure.

**Clerk /
Cllr
Byford****7.4 Environmental Matters.**

7.4.1 Noise disturbance from clay pigeon event in Agglethorpe. The 3-day event had disturbed nearby trainers' yards although no residents were known to have complained. The location was outside Middleham's area and was held in accordance within planning rules. It was agreed to monitor the impact of any future events, which were expected to take place.

8. Project Updates:

8.1 Burial Ground. Good progress by Gavin Smith Limited was noted and was being overseen by Cllr Hopper. Following discussion, it was agreed that all payments should be made to the contractor and not sub-contractors. Having been proposed by Cllr Fairhurst and seconded by **It was Resolved to appoint a Council Committee, comprising Cllr Hopper, Cllr Skelton and Cllr Fortune, to oversee finalisation of rules, scale of charges, burial plan and other matters to expedite opening as soon as possible once construction was complete.** The Clerk would draft suitable terms of reference.

Clerk

**Action
Clerk**

It was anticipated that early applications for plots would be received. The Clerk would liaise with local funeral director, Mr Sanderson, regarding the width for the existing gateway.

8.2 MSCWA.

8.2.1 To receive a report from the Committee. There were no matters reported by exception.

8.2.2 Applications to construct a storage shed, petanque court, fencing by skate park. A copy of the risk assessment for the fence prepared by MSCWA and reviewed by insurers was received. It was agreed that each application be approved; for the shed, either of the submitted designs was acceptable as they were within permitted development rights.

8.3 Key Centre. A written report from Trustees noted. Regular activities and bookings were resuming.

8.4 Play Area Improvements. The Clerk reported that Mrs Wheeler had been successful in obtaining funding and that further applications would be submitted. The matter would be considered at a future meeting.

9. Events in Middleham (standing item).

9.1 Middleham Super Feast Day on Bank Holiday Monday 30th August 2021. Mrs Alderson outlined planned events, arrangements for door-to-door fundraising and publicity. A number of funding pledges had been received. A good team of volunteers would support the event and, in particular, clear away and tidy up afterwards. She would liaise with the Clerk to ensure insurance cover was in place under the Council policy and forward a budget. The Council resolved to support the event, which was planned to appeal to all residents, through section 137 of the Local Government Act for £500.

Clerk

There was brief discussion whether it might be viable and practical to hold a Mayor's Ball.

9.2 Oktoberfest. A further meeting had been proposed but not so far arranged.

10. Planning

10.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting: None received.

10.2 Planning Applications.

10.2.1 Full Planning Permission (FPP) for a Slurry Lagoon at Land Between Middleham and Wensley, South of The River Ure, Middleham. 21/000287. **Comments submitted under delegated powers, no objection.**

10.2.2 FPP for Redevelopment of Racing Yard, demolition of buildings, construction of Houses, Accommodation. Stable Blocks, Gallops, Parking, Landscaping etc. at Manor House Farm, Middleham, DL8 4RH 21/000285. **Comments submitted under delegated powers - no objection.**

10.2.3 FPP to Demolish Timber Shed and Link Proposed Garage to Existing Porch, above Existing Lean-to to Provide Sun Lounge at Ashdren Lodge Park Lane Middleham DL8 4QY 21/21/00500. **No objection.**

10.3 Potential Planning Enforcement Issues. There were none.

10.4 Other Planning Matters: Local Plan – RDC Consultation. Invitation to submit comments noted.

11. Finance – Information/Decision required

11.1 Annual Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2021. A copy of the draft annual return (officially known as Annual Governance & Accountability Return' or 'AGAR') and various other documents referred to below had been circulated prior to the meeting. Also distributed were summary sheets showing the transactions for Town Council that supported the AGAR.

The Clerk drew attention to the following matters:

- After last year's timetable had officially been put back by 2 months as a consequence of Covid19, this year's reverted to previous deadlines for submission of 30 June and publication of the exemption certificate on the website no later than 1

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July.

- Council was again eligible to be exempt from the requirements for external audit (officially referred to as a 'limited assurance review') as it fulfilled the criteria set out within the exemption certificate (Part 2 on page 3) of the AGAR, principally that neither its gross income nor expenditure exceeded £25k. Accordingly it was not required to submit its AGAR to the external auditor but make certain disclosures on its website in compliance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities. These documents were noted to be:
 - Statements of all expenditure over £100
 - End of Year Accounts in the agreed format
 - List of Councillors (see the Members page on the website)
 - Details of public land and building assets.
 - Minutes, agendas and Papers of formal meetings.
 - The Annual Return
- There was a prescribed order for consideration of the accounts set out in Instructions relating to AGAR.

11.2 Approvals

11.2.1 Report of the Internal Auditor. A 'clean' report had been received and the Internal Auditor had signed page 4 of the return.

11.2.2 Certificate of exemption. Having satisfied the requirements, The Certificate of exemption was approved.

11.2.3 Bank Reconciliation Statement. The Clerk confirmed that this document reconciled with the Cash Book as at 31 March 2021, adjusted to exclude transactions on behalf of IH.

11.2.4 Annual Governance Statement. It was noted that an internal review of controls had been undertaken by Councillors Fairhurst and Byford, due to Covid restrictions on meeting in person, this had unavoidably been undertaken since the year end rather than during the year and an updated risk review document had been circulated by the Clerk. Having considered each individual assertion, a 'yes' response was agreed in each case. The annual governance statement (Section 1 on page 5) was approved.

11.2.5 Accounting Statements for 2020-21. The meeting considered the Accounting Statements as a whole. Having received the draft accounts in advance and received explanation from the Clerk, no questions were asked.

11.2.6 After careful consideration and having been proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Byford **IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements and that they be signed and dated by the Mayor presiding at the meeting and that all the previously referenced documents be approved.**

11.2.7 Dates for exercise of public rights (inspection period). These had been drafted by the Clerk and were noted and approved.

11.2.8 Explanation of variances. The explanations were noted and approved.

11.2.9 Signatures. The Chairman and Clerk were authorised to sign off the relevant paperwork and the Clerk was instructed to make the necessary arrangements for submitting the Exemption Certificate electronically to the external auditor and to place the required documents onto the Council's website for public inspection. On behalf of the Council, the Chairman thanked the Clerk for his oversight of the annual return process.

11.2.10 Asset register as at 31 March 2021. A copy of the asset register was received for information and is attached to these minutes.

11.2.11 Internal Audit Fee. The payment of the agreed sum of £150 to Kim Duke Accounting Services had been approved at a previous meeting. The Clerk would seek agreement with Ms Duke that she would continue for a further year.

11.2.12 Updated Risk Assessment Review. Received but not reviewed in detail.

**Cllr
Fairhurst
/ Cllr
Byford**

Clerk

Clerk

12. Suggested items for the next agenda.

12.1 Updated Risk Assessment Review.

Action

13. Future Meetings

It was agreed that due to a number of important ongoing actions that the July meeting be cancelled and the next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

There being no further business the declared the meeting closed at 9.35pm

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