

Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held in the Richard III Room at Middleham Key Centre on Wednesday 24 November 2021 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 Mrs L Skelton, Cllr Mr S Mashford (from 6.3).

Mr D Palethorpe and Mr S Mashford.

Clerk Mr D Keep.

Action

1. Introduction and Apologies.

The Chairman declared the meeting open.

Clerk

Apologies were received from Cllr Mr S Wheeler (on holiday). County Cllr Mrs K Sedgwick was attending another council meeting.

2. Open Forum.

No public or press were present.

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 13 October 2021 and the confidential extract of those same minutes as a true and accurate record to be signed by the Chairman of that meeting.

4.2 The schedule of agreed actions. Noted. Councillors requested that a drop-box' be set up for making meeting documents available as the current system whereby meeting papers were distributed by email was time-consuming to download and review.

Clerk

5. Confidential and Urgent Items. It was noted that Cllr Sedgwick had forwarded the latest Covid statistics indicating that infection rates in Richmondshire were higher than North Yorkshire as a whole, itself higher than nationally for England with the over 65's being the main cohort of hospitalisations and deaths. Accordingly, the current meeting was observing greater distancing between participants. A further risk assessment may need to be undertaken by the Key Centre on behalf of all building users. There were no other urgent matters. One matter is discussed in the confidential minute book.

6. Town Council - Information/Decision Required

6.1 Councillors' report of meetings attended, and actions undertaken (standing item). 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. A FB post by Cllr Skelton advising reduced invitations to the Children's Christmas party following an updated Covid risk assessment had

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prompted some unpleasant comments regarding overall arrangements. It was agreed that whilst the Residents FB was a potentially useful means of communicating to a wider audience, and the offending comments reflected a minority of views, in future where feedback or responses to Council were required these should be made via the Council email address. No other matters reported.

6.3 Co-option of Town Councillor. Three applications were received, two candidates were present and each spoke regarding their application, whilst the third's application was read by the Chairman. At this point, the applicants and the Clerk left whilst the appointment was discussed. Following deliberation, the candidates returned. **IT WAS RESOLVED to co-opt Mr Mashford as Councillor.** The Mayor thanked the unsuccessful candidates. Mr Mashford signed a declaration of acceptance in the presence of the Clerk and duly joined as a member of the Council.

6.4 Councillor duties. A generic job description for a Parish /Town Councillor was received, prepared by the National Association of Local Councils ('NALC'). This was advisory rather than a statutory role description. The Clerk informed Cllr Mashford that virtual training courses were regularly available for new councillors and for key areas of councillor activity. A budget for attendance was available.

6.5 New Code of Conduct. The Local Government Association had updated its model Code for smaller Councils and a copy had been circulated which also included the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles. Having been proposed by Cllr Fairhurst and seconded by Cllr Byford **It Was RESOLVED to adopt the revised Model Code.**

6.6 Post Coronavirus Update - Volunteer coordination and support to the vulnerable. Leyburn CSO report noted.

6.7 Land Management Issues (standing item)

6.7.1 Storm drains on Council Lands. An update from the local area Highways team advising outcome of investigations of the drainage near Westwood House, confirming that drains in Middleham had been cleared, was noted. Further information regarding location and route of drains was awaited. The Clerk would check whether the Park Lane drains in front of MKC had been cleared.

Clerk

Councillors had met with Mr Kalkowski, the tree consultant, and one of his suggestions had been the possibility that trees planted on the Low Moor could restrict water run-off, although this would obviously only be a long-term solution.

6.8 Police Matters. Report (standing item). Noted.

6.9 Middleham Herald. It was agreed that there was no demand for a Christmas issue as a Halloween edition had recently been published.

6.10 Housing matters. Council had questioned the National Park planning authority how the former Methodist chapel in Aysgarth was marketed as only available for 'community use'. The response advised that this was not a planning issue but that the building was registered as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act 2011. Community use excluded conversion for housing as it did not qualify as public access and use of the building/land. Accordingly, this did not represent a different procedure than the chapel recently sold in Middleham. It was agreed to ask the Unitary Authority to place a restriction within local planning guidance upon the proportion of new houses that can be sold to non-local residents.

Clerk

6.11 Funding Opportunities. Details of funding schemes had been circulated to councillors and local groups. Cllr Fortune would review for potential support to purchase benches.

**Cllr
Fortune**

6.12 Supporting the Community:

6.12.1 Local activities and support for children and young people. It was noted that Mrs Anderson, the North Yorkshire Youth Worker, was unable to recruit staff to support activity in Middleham but had offered assistance to set up a volunteer-run club.

Following discussion, it was agreed not to pursue this option as there was no evidence of demand in the town for youth activity to justify recruiting a team to run it.

Clerk

Action

6.12.2 Drug Issues: The meeting with a representative of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner and Inspector Gee would take place on 1 December 2021. Council discussed the key issues on which feedback was required, in particular local perception that there was insufficient Police presence on the ground.

6.13 Update on Unitary Authority. An update on the move to a unitary authority and details of virtual briefings for Councillors were received.

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 under play equipment 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 reported that further communications had been received from Area 1 Highways which would be circulated. The Clerk would email Area 1 to request that Council receive copies of all emails. Cllr Byford would recommence search for funding for the road surface project. Recent feedback from trainers was that the hot rolled surface applied in Kirkgate was an improvement and could beneficially be installed elsewhere. It was disappointing that one of the major training yards, which itself regularly experiencing problems due to surface defects that Cllr Byford reported to Highways, had declined to provide statistical information that might assist the surfacing project research accumulate relevant data.

Cllr Byford
Clerk

7.2.2 Vehicle speeds along Back Lane. Following a report from the meeting held with Highways, Area 1 had sought Council agreement to paint signs on the road surface, which was within the Conservation Area. Council considered that this should be agreed as a potential means of reducing vehicle speeds.

Clerk

7.2.3 Street Lighting. The Clerk reported a conversation with RDC that spare parts for lights were not always readily available to repair those that were out. The lead time for installation of the additional lamp on Park Lane was such that it was unlikely before the end of the darker evenings.

7.3 Environmental Matters.

7.3.1 Lower Wensleydale Biodiversity Action Group update. Further details on plans to plant willow trees near Pinkers Pond had not been received.

8. Project Updates:

8.1 Burial Ground.

8.1.1 Rules. The Clerk had received final comments from Councillors but having now received a copy of Leyburn's updated rules felt some amendment incorporating similar sections was desirable.

8.1.2 Scale of charges. The Clerk had not been able to finalise the scale of charges for publication.

8.2 MSCWA.

8.2.1 Report from the Committee. The AGM had been held and the accounts to 31 March 2021 approved. MSCWA had returned a donation of £150 to the Feast Committee.

8.2.2 Update on storage shed, petanque court, fencing by skate park. A snagging list on the storage shed had been compiled. Funding was being sought for the petanque court.

8.3 Key Centre. An email summary following the MKC Management Meeting on 22 November with a summary of financial position and outlook was received.

8.4 Play Area Improvements: The following documents had been circulated:

- A revised funding request from the sub-committee for £5, 248 (plus recoverable VAT) for the play improvement scheme, noting that funding totalling £41,750 had been secured from three other sources. The revised application to Council now included purchase of a replacement older children's swing at an additional cost of £2,850 plus recoverable VAT. Following clarification from Tarmac Ltd,

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- the quantum of contribution requested from Council however was lower by £2,332, in part offsetting the additional cost of the swing.
- A revised proposal from Streetscape (the proposed supplier) now including a new older children's swing.
 - Background information, being the terms of reference establishing the Council sub-committee to look at play area improvements, extracts from relevant Council minutes and reports of meetings with the sub-committee and Streetscape.
 - Estimated ongoing annual costs of insurance, maintenance and safety inspections.
 - Confirmation from the Clerk that he had scrutinised the grant application forms and terms and conditions for each third-party funder and was satisfied they were acceptable.
 - Confirmation from the Clerk that the Council and Charity had lawful authority to make a financial contribution under relevant legislation and charitable purpose, and that the relevant considerations within the Grant Policy had been complied with.
 - Due diligence carried out on Streetscape.
 - Summary of suggested matters for consideration.

In discussion, Council was satisfied that a requirement for the new equipment had been established, that appropriate scrutiny of the other funders and the supplier had been undertaken and that a local council had power to make a financial contribution. Having been proposed by Cllr Hopper and Cllr Skelton **It Was Resolved to approve a contribution of £5, 248 (exclusive of recoverable VAT) to be financed by IH by means of a grant to the Town Council.**

The Clerk was instructed to liaise with funders and Streetscape to implement the scheme.

Clerk

Cllr Fairhurst thanked Mrs Wheeler for her work on this project and obtaining significant funding. The Clerk was also thanked for review and summary of the proposal and funding schemes.

Advice received from RDC was received that there was no regulatory reason why the existing swing could not be re-used elsewhere, although it might be difficult to remove without damaging it. It was agreed that the swing could be stored in the playing fields barn whilst an alternative use was considered.

Cllr Hopper

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.

Cllr Fortune

8.6 Operation London Bridge. This was the codename adopted for advance preparation for the death of the monarch. Guidance on how councils were recommended to respond was received. It was agreed that a book of condolence be purchased and Cllr Byford would source a framed portrait of the Queen.

Clerk / Cllr Byford

9. Events in Middleham (standing item).

9.1 Christmas Activity. The carol service / lighting ceremony would take place on 3 December. Cllr Fairhurst would order a tree. The seniors' Christmas lunch would take place however, following a revised risk assessment, regrettably the children's grotto had been cancelled. It was questioned whether the Council should directly organise and run the grotto; possibly in future years it could be arranged by the Key Centre as a community event, funded by the Council.

Clerk

Action**9.2 To agree participation in the following.**

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

9.2.2 Platinum Jubilee bank holiday Thursday 2 June and Friday 3 June 2022. This was noted to be in lieu of Spring bank holiday Monday). Following success of the Super Feast event, it was agreed to discuss a Platinum Jubilee event with the Feast Committee.

**Cllrs
Fairhurst &
Skelton**

Clerk

10. Planning**10.1 Planning decision notices received since the last meeting:**

10.1.1 Replace 3 No Stone Lintels (Front Door, Front Ground Floor Window and Front First Floor Window) and Renovate 5 No Windows (Ground Floor Front, First Floor Front, First Floor Side Bathroom, First Floor Rear and Second Floor Front) at Laundry Cottage, West End, Middleham, DL8 4QL 21/00732/LBC **Granted**

10.2 Planning Applications.

10.2.1 Full planning permission for erection of stables to provide 12 stable boxes and equipment/storage room at Thorngill House, Racing Stables, Coverham, DL8 4TJ - R/60/8G **Comments ratified (response was submitted under Clerk's delegated powers between meetings).**

10.2.2 Full Planning Permission 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 **Comments ratified (response was submitted under Clerk's delegated powers between meetings).**

10.2.3 Full Planning Permission 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 and Replacement of Existing Ground Floor Window at Rear with Door at Hepple House, Kirkgate, Middleham, DL8 4PG 21/00947/FULL. **No objections.**

10.3 Potential Planning Enforcement Issues. Satellite Dish in Kirkgate. Councillors would look at the recently installed dish in light of conservation area guidance. It was agreed that placement of dishes on house fronts was often unavoidable to attain a reasonable signal and, provided not too obtrusive, an acceptable installation, particularly since the TV mast had burned down,

All Cllrs

11. Finance – Information/Decision required

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.

Clerk

The Clerk apologised that due to time constraints a bank reconciliation and copy cash book was not available.

11.2 Budget.

11.2.1 Feedback from RDC precept briefing. The Clerk reported upon the annual precept meeting which confirmed that the process was unchanged from previous years and there were no relevant matters that might affect precept-setting by parishes. He had requested clarification whether the period until establishment of the Unitary Authority from April 2023 would affect provision of services by RDC and been advised that each District Council was already engaged with NYCC to ensure continuity. In practice services would be largely provided by the same teams. It was hoped to avoid staff leaving. Any new vacancies would be offered to current staff.

11.2.2 Budget and precept for 2022-23. The Clerk had circulated a draft budget with a summary of underlying assumptions. Essentially, and as in previous years, it was a 'business as usual' budget apart from suggested increase to the Clerk's working hours, provision for additional cobbles repair, operating costs for new play area equipment, purchase of replacement rubber matting for existing play equipment and reduced

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interest income. The burial ground was expected to be largely self-funded from interment fees and purchase of burial plots. Notwithstanding, the overall budget was projecting a deficit for both the Council and Charity and further work was required to increase income and / or reduce expenditure. A further meeting to approve the budget would be required.

Mr Kalkowski had suggested potential grant funding for tree planting on Council land that could be looked into. Suitable schemes would cover management costs as well as planting and maintenance. Mr Kalkowski had offered 2 to 3 hours pro-bono advice. The matter would be looked into the new year.

11.3 Clerk's contract of employment

11.3.1 Contract review (private discussion)

11.3.2 Clerk's office attendance. The trial period of 6 months required office attendance one day per fortnight would shortly expire. It was agreed that this had provided the same level of service and should continue indefinitely. The Clerk would attend more frequently when required.

11.4 Replacement Laptop. The Clerk reported some problems experienced with the laptop, although it was largely operative, and had been inspected by the Council's IT support Coorecom Ltd who recommended replacement. The device was at least 6 years old. There was an earmarked provision for replacement costs of £541. Alternative quotes for a comparable replacement of similar quality had been sought. **It Was RESOLVED** to purchase a replacement from Coorecom Ltd for £732.13, inclusive of VAT and set up costs..

12. Suggested items for the next agenda.

- 12.1 Report on internal control inspection and other internal checks
12.2 Updated Risk assessment review. For discussion.

**All Cllrs
Clerk**

13. Future Meetings

An additional single item meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 December 2021 to set the precept. The next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 February 2022. .

There being no further business the declared the meeting closed at 9.37pm

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