

HAWES & HIGH ABBOTSDALE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of 18th September 2017 Commencing at Gayle Institute at 7.15pm

Present: Cllrs J Blackie (Chairman), Mrs S Alderson, Ms A Caygill, A Fawcett, B Fawcett, S Hunter, A Sunter, Y Waluda, I Woolley

In Attendance: Mrs F Cartwright (Clerk), 5 members of the public

Apologies: Cllrs Ms A Caygill, Mrs A Rhodes

1. **The Minutes of the Meeting of 10th July 2017 were accepted as a true record, and signed by the Chairman.** There were no Matters Arising.
2. **Revised Council Membership** - The chairman welcomed Mr Yurek Waluda (co-opted at the 10th July 2017 meeting) and Mrs Francesca Cartwright (Parish Clerk) to the Parish Council.

Mrs Betsy Everett (reporting for D&S Times, Northern Echo & Richmondshire Today) was also welcomed to the meeting.

3. Chairman's Items

Issues / Concerns @ Richmondshire District Council (RDC)

Public toilets – The Penny Garth. The Chairman reported on the further cut-backs in services provided by RDC which are to be implemented without any consultation with the Parish Council. He reminded the Parish Council that for well over 30 years, and probably more, there was a full time street caretaker based in Hawes. Senior Parish Councillors reminisced about 'Chicken' who had occupied this position, followed by the diligent Eric Bell (who was also a Parish Councillor) who kept the public toilets, streets and pavements in immaculate condition and also looked after Bainbridge toilets.

The new arrangements will see this street caretaker position no longer based in Hawes, and it is highly unlikely it will ever be based in the town again. The position has been transferred to Richmond. The street caretaker, currently a local person living in Hawes, will have to report into Richmond every day, and very often will then have to come all the way back to Hawes. The concerns are that care and cleaning of the Penny Garth public toilets and the streets in Hawes is being reduced from full time 7 days a week to once in a while.

The cleaning regime under these new arrangements for the Penny Garth public toilets, which see at 184,000 visits a year the greatest footfall of all the public toilets in the District, are being severely cut-back. They will only be cleaned once on 4 days per week in winter, and once a day for 7 days a week in summer. When the Chairman was Leader of the Council they were often cleaned 3 times a day for 7 days a week in summer, and at least once a day for 7 days a week in winter. Again this new regime was being imposed without any consultation with the Parish Council.

At the same time RDC would introduce a 20p to use the toilet. Parish Councillors mused that only a District Council as erratic as RDC would introduce a charge for toilets after years of them being free to use, and at the same time reduce the cleaning regime you would encounter once you had paid the entrance fee.

The locking mechanism on the outside doors of toilets in the District is to cost £78,000 and from the experience of those toilets already converted where there has been a significant amount of free entry with the locking doors being propped open, the capital payback will take at least 2.5 years to achieve.

Parish Councillors considered we are getting sold short of the mark at Hawes by RDC and it strikes a discordant note with all we do to make it an attractive street scene for local people and visitors alike. Cllr Tony Fawcett commented that everyone agreed that under our Parish Council funded Hawes in Bloom initiative, now in its 3rd year and thanks to Richard Noble and his team of volunteers, the town has never looked so good. Cllr Albert Sunter wondered why the street caretaker needed to go to Richmond, and said the public toilets in Hawes should be a priority.

Cllr John Blackie said it would be inevitable that the Parish Council would be blamed if the toilets were found to be in a state or unclean even though they are not our responsibility, and reminded the Councillors that we were immediately blamed for the allowing the rude Bookseller to operate from a premises we had nothing to do with.

He suggested that there should be a notice/s put up in the town absolving the Parish Council and the street caretaker (because he was not being allowed the time to keep them clean) of any responsibility for the Penny Garth toilets. It should also request complainants to call at the UW Community Office to make their complaints so that the Parish Council could monitor the situation.

Finally he reminded the Parish Council that RDC had £2.5 million in the Bank earning virtually no interest, and reserves that were increasing year on year. Most of this huge sum on deposit had been given by Central Government, with the intention that it be spent on providing services for the communities in the District. Yet RDC was unwilling to give £1500 a year to Askrigg Village Hall to keep its public toilet facility open, and these have now been closed.

Resolved unanimously - *The Parish Council would send a letter complaining about the further reduction in toilet and street cleaning services and the lack of any offer of consultation about the cut-backs. Parish Councillors also endorsed the proposals of the Chairman to display a notice/s absolving the Parish Council of responsibility for cleaning the toilets and to direct complaints to the UWCO where they would be monitored.*

Unnecessary replacement of RDC street lights. This was left last October with the Parish Council advising RDC they did not want the 10 heritage street lights replaced with LED versions more suitable for a motorway service station, and asked that the bulbs simply be changed. 3 street lights in Gayle need replacement lights but RDC have refused to change the bulb, instead they are demanding to remove the heritage street lights and replace them with the LED versions. The heritage street lights were put up as part of a Millennium project.

People in Gayle are starting to complain about the lack of street lights and unless we agree to spend £550 per lighting column to retain new heritage street lights, an expense the Parish Council cannot afford, the only alternative is to accept that they are replaced with the inferior LED versions.

The 4 heritage street lights in Hardraw and the remaining 3 heritage street lights in Gayle continue to work satisfactorily and at least our stand has prevented them being replaced prematurely but in time they will fail and have to be replaced with the inferior LED version. The Chairman reminded the Parish Council that the 4 lights in Hardraw have only seen one bulb replaced in the 18 years they have been in existence.

Resolved unanimously – *The Parish Council accepts with regret that the 3 heritage street lights in Gayle that are not working will have to be replaced with LED lights. Cllr Tony Fawcett added a rider that RDC should be named and shamed over its unresponsiveness to the wishes of the local residents in Hawes & High Abbotside.*

RDC account for pest control services for rats. There had been an outbreak of rats in the Hardraw Beck and the Gayle Beck. The Parish Council asked that as these were community areas and the rats posed a health risk that RDC pest control should be called in to clear them of rats, expecting to pay a charge commensurate with the community nature of the task. Instead the invoice had amounted to £590.56. Cllr Blackie had challenged it with RDC arguing it was a community public health issue and we were expecting to pay a domestic charge for each of the two locations. He offered to pay £200 but RDC had rejected the offer and insisted we pay the invoice in full.

Cllr Tony Fawcett explained RDC would have come out on a number of occasions as they have to try more than one method of eradication. It appears they came out on 4 occasions and there have been no further problems with rats.

Resolved unanimously - *It was agreed reluctantly to pay the full invoice but to think twice next time before calling RDC out, or ask for a guaranteed estimate for the pest control service if we do.*

RDC Boundary Commission Review – The Conservatives in charge of RDC had decided that the 34 District Councillors currently representing the various communities in Richmondshire should be reduced to 24. Although Cllr Blackie and several other RDC District Councillors objected to the proposals they had now been accepted by the Boundary Commission.

The Chairman had made a submission to the Boundary Commission to cover all the Upper Dales communities in his County Council division. His suggestion was that the District Councillor covering Hawes and High Abbotside would also represent Muker and Melbecks Parish Council areas. Muker Parish Council had been fervently unanimous in favour of this suggestion because of the Buttertubs lifeline road link between its Parish and Hawes and High Abbotside.

The Richmondshire District Council proposal was that our parish join with Bainbridge, on the thinnest of community identity reasoning. Other communities in the Upper Dales were similarly treated, for example deeply rural Downholme has been lumped in together with Richmond and Catterick Garrison, and West Witton has been put in with Coverdale. Cllr Blackie thought it was in Wensleydale and was not aware that the geography had changed.

The Chairman concluded the debate by saying his submission for all the Upper Dales communities had attracted letters of support from 11 Parish Councils and a number of letters from individuals and he thought it stood a very good chance of success. In contrast he suggested that the RDC submission was little short of utter rubbish. The Parish Council would know more in late October.

Police and Crime Commissioner proposal to take over control of the NYFRS. At its last meeting the Parish Council resolved to object to the proposal by the PCC, Julia Mulligan, to take over control of the NY Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chairman had subsequently attended a key meeting of North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and in addressing the meeting likened the proposal to a failing and unresponsive organisation (the Police) wanting to take over a highly successful and responsive Police organisation (the NYFRS). He reminded the Parish Council of the excellent service given to the Upper Dales by the retained firefighters in Hawes and Reeth whereas the Police Community Support Office has not been seen in Hawes for the last 3 months.

Julia Mulligan at the NYCC meeting attended by the Chairman offered to meet him in Hawes to discuss the shortcomings of rural policing. The next day one of her staff left a voice-mail to say she expected the Chairman to go to Richmond to meet her.

Resolved unanimously - *It was agreed, at the appropriate time, to write to the local MP to voice the Parish Council's concerns.*

The Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton Primary School Federation (BAWB). Each of these schools are in peril of being closed. The Chairman as the local County Councillor has managed to get – by putting pressure on NYCC - a public engagement programme in the Autumn. He had been contact by parents of children at West Burton School, although he had made clear he was also prepared to act for either or both Bainbridge and Askrigg Primary Schools, if he was asked to do so. The engagement starts on 29th September, with drop in sessions on 4th October. He is in favour of retaining all of the schools as they are at the very heart of the communities they serve.

When Cllr John Blackie was first elected as County Councillor in 1997, the numbers on the roll of each of the schools were as follows: Askrigg (79) / Bainbridge (45) / West Burton (44). In September 2017 the numbers are Askrigg (39) / Bainbridge (18) / West Burton (22).

There will be a number of options within the public engagement programme:

1. Keep all 3 schools open (Cllr Blackie is in favour of this)
2. Close 1 of the 3 schools
3. Close 2 of the 3 schools, in which case Askrigg Primary School would remain open as it was the only school that could accommodate the combined population of the 3 schools.

Cllr Blackie added that it cannot be assumed that the school population in any of the 3 schools scheduled for closure would enroll in the school/s left open. Relying entirely on Excel spreadsheet models can be misleading. Bainbridge Primary School lost 14 pupils to Hawes Primary School in September 2014. West Burton Primary School lost 5 pupils to Leyburn Primary School in September 2017.

The Parish Councillors felt that it was going to be difficult to keep all 3 schools open, and they could see Bainbridge Primary School closing and its pupils coming to Hawes Primary School. Cllr Blackie is fighting to keep all 3 schools open, as long as there are a viable number on roll. He hoped the Parish Council would be prepared to support his campaign to keep all 3 schools staying open, as it was important to the Upper Dales and could have an impact on Hawes Primary School. Once the public engagement programme is launched then he would seek a resolution from the Parish Council. (**Note:** This public engagement programme was cancelled at short notice 4 days before it was due to start and is to be re-scheduled for the Spring term).

Shortfall in the number of Yorkshire Ambulance Service Emergency Ambulance. A local resident suffering from cancer has had to make his own way to James Cook University Hospital because there was not an ambulance available to take him despite it being booked the day before. When the patient and his carer presented themselves at the Yorkshire Ambulance Service desk at the James Cook they were told that as they had made their own way there they would need to make their own way home.

Parish Councillors were disgusted at this response and the lack of compassion and understanding of the distances involved that was showed by the YAS back office procedures. When the complaint was investigated YAS sent a letter of apology and a goodwill payment. The patient is not interested in the payment but does not want it to happen again.

Cllr Blackie made clear his utmost admiration for the front-line emergency ambulance staff but they cannot be in two places at once. The demands being made on them by the never-ending transfers of healthcare services from the Friarage and the Darlington Memorial Hospitals to the James Cook, without additional ambulance resource, is making it very difficult to maintain response times. We in Hawes & High Abbotside are the most impacted by this shortage of ambulances because we are placed furthest away from the James Cook.

Request to reserve a Burial Plot. The Chairman outlined the arrangements in place at the Parish Council Burial Ground in Old Gayle Lane and the Burial Policy is that reservations for plots will only be accepted from people who have a local connection to Hawes and High Abbotside. The local connection is verified by asking the Parish Councillors and members of the public at a meeting of the Parish Council. There are currently 5 reservations for burial, but those holding them remain thankfully alive at this time.

***** (**Note:** this name will be redacted when these minutes are made public) has made a request to reserve a plot. He is very well known by some Parish Councillors and some members of the public.

Resolved unanimously – ***** had a local connection and his reservation is to be accepted. The Parish Clerk would make the necessary arrangements.

4. Chairman's Advisory Items / Latest News / Progress updates

Co-option of Parish Councillor. The Parish Council now comprises 10 councillors, and it would like to co-opt a further councillor. The Chairman asked the Councillors to enquire in the local communities.

Upper Dales Community Land Trust Project Officer. Ms Kate Jump commenced in a new role as Upper Dales Community Land Trust Project Officer in late September. The aim of the initiative is to form a Community Land Trust to provide affordable social housing for rent which will encourage families to the area. The Chairman will invite her to a Parish Council meeting in due course.

Town Foot Shepherd. The wooden shepherd did not survive revellers at the Midsummer Bash taking selfies with him, although it has to be said that it was suffering from advanced foot rot and both his arms had dropped off recently. Mr Rob Ward presented a scaled-down design of a metal Shepherd with a pipe, along with a sheep and a dog to the meeting from a person (Glenn) who owned an Office Supplies company and had a second home in Hawes. He has offered to create, free of charge, a 7 foot x one quarter inch laser cut steel Shepherd, and a set of accompanying figures in return for a plaque advertising his company.

Resolved - *The design was agreed unanimously after some discussion about whether the sheep dog resembled a fox and whether the sheep was appropriate for the area !! Parish Councillors also wanted to express their gratitude for the offer and would arrange for a letter of thanks to Glenn to be sent once the Shepherd / Sheep / Sheep Dog has been erected.*

Cllr Blackie said he had arranged for a grant of £1000 from the RDC Upper Dales Area Partnership for a competition to replace the wooden shepherd but this was now unnecessary and he would hand the grant approval letter back.

Police Issues. Parish Councillors made clear how dissatisfied they are with the response of the Police to the concerns they raise on behalf of those they represent, and generally the extremely poor level of policing on offer to Hawes and High Abbotside.

Resolved unanimously - *It was agreed to take the standard Police issues item off the agenda as there was little point in discussing concerns that would not be acted upon when they are reported to the Police. Any particular Police issue, if it is serious enough to be discussed at the Parish Council and we need to flag it up in the media coverage of our meetings, will be listed on the Agenda as a separate item.*

Late emerging and Tabled issues - none

5. Report of the volunteer Play Park supervisors

Robin, Ian and Eric are doing a great job in maintaining the Play Parks. Robin had met a representative of the firm who had undertaken the safety surfacing on the toddler's play area. The firm had provide a quotation for around £10,000, which will need to be split into various phases if the Parish Council is to be able to afford it, for the replacement of the safety surfaces under various pieces of equipment. Feedback regarding the Zip Wire on Bealah Bank was that it has been a huge success enjoyed by all ages.

Resolved unanimously – *It was agreed that a letter of commendation would be sent, addressed to Hazel Thwaite, to thank the Gayle Young Mothers Group for fund-raising over £1,000 towards new equipment in the Little Ings and Bealah Bank play areas.*

Playpark Accident Report - The Chairman updated the Parish Council regarding an alleged accident at the end of August at Town Foot Play Park where a child allegedly broke his leg on the roundabout. The family have said that they do not intend to make a claim. The Parish Clerk confirmed that the accident had been reported to James Hawkins, Account Manager at Zurich Insurers on 16 September 2017, and they had advised that should this progress to a claim, the Parish Council will need to contact the Claims Team.

6. NYCC Highways / Dangerous Roads bid proposal

The Chairman outlined a proposal which will be subject to consultation with regard to Government funding to improve the 50 most dangerous roads in England. The A684 between Leeming Bar and Kendal is one of the 50 dangerous roads, probably due to number of motor-bike accidents. Funding has been given to the County Council who will make final decisions after a public consultation in which the Parish Council will be a key player.

The Chairman has put forward a proposal to address the problems with potholes and poor surfacing on the edge of the A684 by the Cattle Market where elderly people do not feel it is safe to walk along the edge of the road. There has also been long-standing issues involving motor-bikes being parked up close to the frontages of the houses overlooking the Cattle Market.

Cllr Ian Woolley advised the Parish Council that he has photographs of cars blocking the walkway in The Holme near where he resides on several occasions a week. People have to move around the vehicles by walking along the A 684 which is very dangerous.

The suggestion would be a paved area dedicated to pedestrians from Penny Garth Café along the frontages of the Cattle Market, then by the side of the road from there to Kiln Hill, when again it would follow the frontages of the buildings up to Café Curva. The Cattle Market and Kiln Hill would be resurfaced under the proposals and the area relined, including the Keep Clear lining. NYCC has been given the funding to address the Dangerous Roads in its area, so there is the money available. The Parish Council will be a key player in the Consultation.

Mrs Brenda Peacock asked how it would affect market stall holders. Cllr Blackie responded that hopefully it would result in them turning their stalls around which they have been previously been asked to do on several occasions.

7. YDNPA Planning Applications

R/56/438A Tim's Barn, Bence, Gayle - Retrospective application for full planning permission for conversion of agricultural building to camping barn

There had been considerable comment and concern in circulation within the local community when the former agricultural barn at Bence, near Gayle, having won planning approval for conversion to a stone tent in 2011, was found to be being advertised on the Internet as a luxury holiday cottage. This led to suggestions locally that the credibility and integrity of the YDNPA planning process was being undermined by this turn of events.

The Parish Council considered that the plans still showed an interior laid out as a luxury holiday cottage but it was now being described as a camping barn. This was at odds with the narrative on the Design and Access Statement which suggested it would be used by large and small parties, such as school groups or Duke of Edinburgh Award participants, seeking more basic accommodation.

RESOLVED – (Note: This response was forwarded to the YDNPA)

Whilst the Parish Council was prepared to support the application in principle, this was only on the basis that some of the interior features of the Holiday Cottage are stripped out and it is returned to a lower level of accommodation you might expect in a camping barn. This includes removing features that would facilitate permanent residential occupation of the barn.

Parish Councillors added there should be absolutely no parking provision by the barn. A member of the audience present noted that he had helped hay-making in the field in which the barn stood for many years since back in the 1950's and the only access to it was via a gateway in an adjoining field. There had been no access from the road.

Cllr Blackie conducted the debate that led to this resolution but due to his membership of the YDNPA Planning Committee abstained from voting when it was put to the Councillors.

R/56/10F Bainbridge Ings Caravan Site, Gayle - Removal of condition 6 of a previous planning permission and its replacement with a new condition allowing holiday occupation of static caravan for 12 months of the year and the maintenance of a register of guests

RESOLVED – (*Note:* This response was forwarded to the YDNPA)

This application was supported. It was noted that most caravan sites in the Yorkshire Dales had been granted an approval allowing occupation of static caravans (and the like) 12 months of the year as long as their visitors could record their permanent home address on a register of guests. There was considerable interest shown by visitors in staying on caravan sites in the winter, and their spend in the local economy helps local businesses to keep trading during the quieter months of the year.

R/48/12L Shepherds Cottage (aka Longshaw), High Abbotside - Full planning permission for erection of detached stone storage building

RESOLVED – (*Note:* This response was forwarded to the YDNPA)

This application was supported. The application site, a fine looking barn known locally as Longshaw, has been a feature of High Abbotside in its present state as a luxury holiday cottage since the early 1980's and Councillors noted that it seemed to be occupied almost every week of the year. The application is apparently prompted by the need to store equipment to keep the cottage, and the land in which it sits astride, in tip top condition and maintain this very high occupancy percentage. Visitors staying there will undoubtedly spend widely the year round in the local economy in Hawes.

8. Parish Council - Financial Matters

The Parish Clerk had circulated information on the bank account and payments made. It was noted the Bank Balance was £4,375.75.

Resolved - *The Parish Council approved all the payments that had been made.*

The Parish Council are now managing the HSBC bank account with online internet banking which works well. However, there is a need for debit cards for paying in donations from the Play Parks, Fund Raisers and making sundry purchases etc.

Resolved - *It was agreed unanimously that authority was given for Cllr John Blackie and Mrs Francesca Cartwright to be issued with debit cards.*

A letter was circulated at the meeting authorising this and signed by the bank account signatories Cllrs Mr John Blackie, Cllr Sheila Alderson and Mr Ian King.

9. Any Other Business

The Chairman informed the Parish Council that a letter has been received from the Hawes Fireworks Committee asking if the Parish Council would make a donation towards this year's Fireworks display event on Sunday November 5th.

Resolved - *It was agreed that a letter would be sent offering continued support through using the Hawes Community Fields, which now have electricity (and soon to have water) available on site, with these facilities part paid for by the Council. The Parish Council would continue to pay for a skip for the removal of the remains of the bonfire and rubbish after the event, if needed. This would be in place of an offer of a donation.*

Mr Rob Ward raised concerns about Gayle Bridge. It has been damaged by vehicles colliding with its walls. Also a water bypass has been blocked for years which is why houses and gardens near the bridge have flooded recently. The Chairman offered to call in NYCC Richmondshire Highways Manager, Richard Marr, to look into it.

Foliage growing over the pavement between the Bus Shelter in The Holme and the Doctor's Surgery is becoming an obstruction. It is thought it is coming from the beck bank. Cllr Ian Woolley offered to remove it.

Cllr Stewart Hunter commented that the trees along High Abbotside have not chopped back significantly enough and are causing a traffic hazard. Cllr Blackie said that he would look into it with NYCC Highways.

Cllr Albert Sunter commended NYCC Highways for getting flood signs out quickly near Haylands Bridge, but they do not appear to remove them after the floods have subsided which is confusing to visitors.

The Parish Clerk read out a thank you card from Ian King (former Parish Clerk) for his retirement gift from the Parish Council.

Date of next Meeting - Monday 27th November commencing at 7.15pm at Gayle Institute.

Meeting Closed at 9.20pm

Ambaldeo
27 Nov 2017