

BARTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chair Frank Walsh, Vice-Chair Jones, Cllr Lee, Cllr Cross, Cllr Burns, Cllr Dobinson

Charlotte Liversedge-Gell Parish Clerk Members of the Public: Mr Blow

26th June 2025 7.00pm AT BARTON VILLAGE HALL

16 Apologies - with approval for apologies	Cllr Wool
17 Declaration of Interest – to receive & consider then decide upon any applications for dispensation	None declared
18 Minutes	The minutes of the meeting held 29th May 2025 were approved and signed
19 Matters Arising	Matters Arising from the previous meeting minutes - none
20 Correspondence	<p>20(i) Fly tipping at Back Lane – reported to NYC by members of the PC but at time of meeting yet to be removed. VC Jones noted that concrete posts had slipped down the bank and into the Beck. Cllr Lee had been informed that a parishioner had seen NYC inspecting the waste. Chair Walsh made the suggestion to ask Mr Lawson if a large concrete boulder may be able to be put at the entrance to the Lane to stop people being able to drive down and tip waste out of sight. It was agreed that this was a good idea.</p> <p>20(ii) Waterfall Terrace Footpath – NYC Highways have acknowledged that this stretch of verge is they're responsibility to maintain and will add it to their cyclic budget. Chair Walsh confirmed that NYC will also get the footpath back to the full width it should be, as vegetation has grown over it and made it very narrow. No time scale for these works at present but positive news that NYC has taken responsibility for maintaining the verge.</p> <p>20(iii) Quickline telegraph poles install – The PC and Chair has had various correspondences from Parishioners and Quickline themselves regarding the install of fibre/telegraph poles within the Village. Chair Walsh met with Quickline – a summary of this meeting and his concerns around initial communications are outlined below:</p> <p>In the first instance a pole location adjacent to the entry to St Cuthberts Green was discussed, this is on land under the authority of NYC previously Richmondshire District Council, Mr Walsh confirmed this as the area was clearly uncut grass not maintained by the Parish Council and not registered Village Green, the area when it is cut is cut by NYCC.</p> <p>A second location was discussed. Mr Walsh identified the location as Glebe Close a private un-adopted road, a way leave would be required and the exact location of the pole agreed with residents of Glebe Close. Mr Walsh put the team in contact with Mr Trevor</p>

Frankland resident of 1 Glebe Close who would listen to the request and be able to help liaise with other residents.

A third location was agreed in a verge mid-way along the porch and could be installed with minimal disruption, this would be coupled with a fourth pole to be installed on the corner of the Village Green toward the Ford end of The porch.

All other discussions revolved around overhead cable runs/spans using existing poles and existing underground cable facilities none of which presented any issues which would give rise to concerns.

Lastly Mr Walsh agreed to publish a communication to the community to clarify who Quickline were, what the objectives of the works were, ensure residents were aware that there would be an opportunity to meet Quickline representatives should they wish to avail themselves of access to the new infrastructure. Before bringing the meeting to an end Mr Walsh asked the Quickline team to ensure their own communications were checked before publication as notices posted around the village in advance of the works had been confusing, had identified Darlington Borough Council as the planning authority, completely mistaken, and had generally caused confusion and no little distress to some residents who had visions of poles being erected in positions which would cause difficulty and disruption. In essence poor planning and forethought.

20(iv) New Parish Council .gov.uk is up and running. Clerk to submit a request via the Village network for any photos of the Village that maybe used on the website.

20(v) Heighington Lane Waste Incinerator - Clerk received notification of a proposal for an incinerator at Heighington. Cllr Lee commented it is 12 miles from Barton so should not affect the Village. The PC agreed no comments to the plans providing it meets requisite standards.

20(vi) Home to School Transport – an action group has been setup in response to NYC changes to Home to School transport legislation - School Transport Action Group (STAG). The PC supports the group and is concerned that Village children may have difficulty getting to school being sent to another School in another County.

20(vii) Cllr Dobinson reported to the PC that the Primary School has asked who is responsible for the strip of land between the School Playing field and the Play area as it needs strimming. Chair Walsh confirmed the second fence was put up by the School and they are responsible for the strip of land. Cllr Dobinson to inform the School.

20(viii) Cllr Lee had been approached by a Parishioner asking who is responsible for the clearing of the vegetation in the Beck as it has become very overgrown. The PC understands it is the Environment Agency but need to clarify this (Clerk to contact)

	20(ix) A raised manhole has been reported outside 11 Kettle End. Clerk to report to NYC
21 Public Participation	<p>Mr Blow attended the meeting to discuss the Plans drawn up for the proposed creation of a pond/nature area on the triangle of Village Green opposite the Primary School. Mr Blow very kindly drew the in-depth Plans. Chair Walsh thanks Mr Blow as the plans and proposals are excellent – it is now a matter of funding. It was agreed that a site meeting should be arranged with the Rivers Trust, PC, the School and Mr Blow to discuss the Plans and how we might be able to obtain funding to bring the plans to life.</p> <p>VC Jones agreed that having the plans already drawn up is a positive position to be in and the PC are very grateful to Mr Blow for this.</p> <p>Cllr Lee asked if the PC would be signing this part of the Village Green to the School and who would be responsible for the cost upkeep/ongoing maintenance. Chair Walsh confirmed the PC would not be signing the Village Green over and ongoing maintenance costs would need to be discussed/agreed with the School. Clerk to contact the Rivers Trust in the first instance. Cllr Dobinson to forward the contact at the School's email address.</p>
22 Planning	No planning applications received
23 Police & Crime Update	<p>Two crimes within the Parish in May 2025:</p> <p>2 x assault with injury</p>
24 NYC Update	<p>Cllr Thompson sent two reports below that can be read below:</p> <p>HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT – the view of a sceptic.</p> <p>OFFICIAL</p> <p>I have made it my practice to write out to constituents and residents alike every other month to update everyone on topical matters. The two months aren't up until early June but I thought last week's vote in County Hall against a motion to revert to the catchment system for Home to School Transport, which failed by 10 votes, was more than worthy of explanation.</p> <p>I have never made any secret of the fact that I have considerable sympathy with the catchment system of providing school transport. Indeed right up until Monday morning of last week I, and I can tell you one or two others on the Conservative benches were thinking the same way, were going to vote for a return to the catchment system.</p> <p>However, two main issues were brought to our attention which I certainly hadn't perhaps fully appreciated the implications of. They were as follows:</p> <p>Firstly, 11,000 parents have accepted and signed up for school places for September. This would be the wrong time to make any change to the transport arrangements because the department in County Hall which administers this could not cope with a change just 15 weeks before the new term. It would be absolute</p>

chaos and yet more resources which we don't have, required to deal with the chaos. Not only this, but many of the 11,000 parents would have been entitled to take legal action against the Council because they had made their choice of school. Under the catchment system this may be a different school. The cost of such action could be very significant to the Council, again using up very valuable resources.

Secondly, I had not fully appreciated the impact of Richmond School's policy of 'poaching' pupils from areas like Northallerton, Bedale, Catterick and even Leyburn. Bedale I can understand for 16 to 18 year olds because they don't have a sixth form, but not the others. They are providing subsidised transport for these children at a cost to the school of £24,000 over the last year. A governor of the school arrived at the Richmond Area Constituency Committee meeting in February with a petition signed by 2,000 parents who wanted a return to the catchment system, many of whom would be my constituents, whilst his policy of doing harm to schools like Northallerton by poaching students, is questionable to say the least.

If subsidising transport for students from way outside of their normal catchment area is possible, then why can't they provide the same from villages like Eppleby or Barton in my division? Richmond School is an academy, and a very good one at that. An academy can under the catchment system apply to expand their catchment area, so if we reverted to the catchment system Richmond School could apply to expand their catchment area to include Northallerton and Catterick etc. so that the County would then be forced to pick up the cost of transport for the students for which they are providing subsidised transport at present. The cost potentially could be an astronomic amount and would be at a huge cost to other services provided by the County. In no way can this ever be allowed to happen.

And another problem is that Richmond School is now full. Any child moving into the area who choses Richmond has to go on a waiting list. SFX is full also. So in the case of someone moving to Gilling from Co. Durham, Risedale in Catterick is the school offered so a taxi will take them there whilst Richmond School provides subsidised transport for pupils from Catterick to Richmond. Not an ideal situation?

The cost of Home to School Transport in 2019 was £19 million. The cost this year is £52 million. This is the third largest cost to the County after Health and Adult Services and SEND ie. Special Education Needs. It is unsustainable unless the Government can be persuaded to increase our funding as an authority.

Another point which I wish to make is the misnomer that the new system won't result in financial savings. I can understand that this will be the feeling when parents see a taxi collecting children and the driver is from Thornaby, miles away and the actual vehicle is from even further away. Parents are saying, 'How can this save money? It will actually increase costs?'

But we need to remember that these taxi providers and bus companies are on fixed price contracts and the most competitive tender will be awarded the contract provided they fit the required criteria. So it is very easy for the transport department to work out the transport budget for the year. The figure has been calculated and it won't change except where children move in or out of the county. The figures for Home to School Transport costs for the coming year starting in September 2025 are now showing a saving of over £3 million.

Any parent where their nearest school is SFX which is way over subscribed, but who either don't want to send their child to a faith school or who don't fit SFX's required criteria, and who have been awarded a place at Richmond School but have been told that they will not be eligible for free transport, should submit an appeal. This should be done within 20 days of receiving the email stating they are not eligible for free transport.

In summary, whilst no one likes the idea having to pay for something which was free and I have considerable sympathies with the possibility of a return to the catchment system, now is definitely not the time to do it.

Richmond School should at least have a discussion about providing subsidised transport for children from the villages that were part of their catchment area. I can understand on the basis of purely commercial logic why they wouldn't want to do this. The Governors have a superb school which is full and the only transport costs are £24,000 per annum as outlined above.

So why would they want to spend more money to provide transport for children who will probably come to the school anyway either because their parents will pay the cost if it isn't their nearest school, or if this isn't possible use the appeals system? We will no doubt find out much more in due course, but the Richmond Governors have put commercialism first.

The first review of the new arrangements is due in August next year. At that point we will know exactly what financial savings have or haven't been made. If there are changes to be made, this will be the time to do so. Another question I have been asked a few times recently is, 'Are we the only Council to adopt the new policy?' The answer is that every county in the north of England has adopted this policy except Westmorland. And the reason is of course because they, like us are in dire straights financially and have been forced into a corner.

Those who received my April report will have read that North Yorkshire Council only has 4 years of useable reserves left and we have a legal duty to have a balanced budget. I am absolutely dreading the Government's financial review which is due at the end of June, not only because of potentially bad news on the A66 upgrade, but because I suspect it will contain further bad news regarding funding for NYC.

Angus Thompson.

30th May 2025.

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT - Correction to Report dated 30th May 2025.

I would like to correct one figure contained in my report of 30th May 2025. I stated that 'The figures for Home to School Transport costs for the coming year starting in September 2025 are now showing a saving of over £3 million'.

This should of course have said that the savings are showing a potential of £3 million over the next 3 years ie. 2025 to 2028. My apologies for this error.

I have clarified with Gary Fielding, the section 151 officer (chief accountant) of North Yorkshire Council that he has included in the Council's MTFS (Medium term financial strategy) a figure of savings of £2.59 million. The MTFS covers the 3 years 2025 to 28. He goes on to say, 'In fact they (the savings) may well come in higher if experience of year 1 continues into the next 6 years.' Hence the figure of circa £2.9million.

The expected figure for savings in the first year commencing this September is now given as £532K.

I would also like to say that I have accepted an invitation from the Governors of Richmond School to see round the School and have a meeting with the Head and Governors. This I not only welcome with open arms but I am really looking forward to.

I have said to Judy Hooton, the chair of Governors, 'I look forward to seeing the school, resolving the issues and moving forwards'.

I fully appreciate the frustrations of many parents and indeed the STAG Group (School Transport Action Group) with whom I have considerable sympathies, but as I said 2 weeks ago, 'Now is not the time to change the policy. It would be utter chaos with just 13 weeks to go to the start of the new term.'

To achieve a real solution, we need considerably more funding than we are currently getting from Central Government. It is true to say that the last Government cut our funding, right from 2010, but the present Government has not only dramatically cut our funding, but has greatly increased our running costs. The increase in employer's NI contribution cost us £12 million per annum. Not only that but there have been cuts in grants like The Rural Services Grant which has meant the loss of millions of pounds overnight.

We should know more about funding on 11th June when the Governments Financial Review is due. We will also hear about the A66 upgrade.

Angus Thompson.

6th June 2025.

<p>25 Play Area Inspections</p>	<p>The Play Area is in good condition, DL10 Bathrooms & Joinery have been approached to repair the picnic benches. Works on the new goal mouth/sports wall expected to start imminently. The works will take around one week and the area will be closed off during that time – the rest of the Play Area will remain open.</p>
<p>26 Half Moon Pub ACV Update</p>	<p>The Half Moon Asset of Community Value (ACV) application is ready for submission. Cllr Cross thanks Pat Jones for all of her input to the application – it has been incredibly useful and thanks were also extended to the many kind people of the Village who provided evidence and assistance towards the application. The original intent for the application was to prevent the pub being sold and used as something other than a pub. The PC would like to thank Cllr Cross for his efforts over the last few months on this application. We hope for a positive outcome.</p>
<p>27 Financial Matters</p>	<p>27.1) Salary Payment & Accounts Payable 27.1)(i) Clerk Salary £322.48 includes annual uplift for May and June as was not added to May salary in error, Walkers £936 ref invoice 25455, E Hall £500 27.2) Bank Balance £30859 includes £19k lottery funding to be paid out July/August)</p>
<p>28 Next Meeting</p>	<p>To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting due to be held on Thursday 31st July 2025 at 7pm held in the Village Hall</p>