

BARTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – DRAFT UNTIL SIGNED

Held on 28th November 2024 7.00pm AT BARTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Chair Walsh, Vice Chair Jones, Cllr Burns, Cllr Cross

Members of the Public: Mr Tomlinson, Mr & Mrs Todd, Mr Thorogood, Mr Pilkington

Charlotte Liversedge-Gell Parish Clerk

69 Apologies - with approval for apologies	Cllr Dobinson – work commitments Cllr Lee – work commitments
70 Declaration of Interest – to receive & consider then decide upon any applications for dispensation	None declared
71 Minutes	Minutes of the meeting held 31st October 2024 approved and signed by the Chair
72 Matters Arising	Matters Arising from the previous meeting minutes – covered in later Agenda items
73 Correspondence	73(i) Half Moon Pub Asset of Community Value (ACV) Update: The PC received an update from NYC in response to questions raised as to the reasoning behind the ACV being rejected by NYC. Cllr Jones highlighted that a lot of effort had gone into the ACV application; Cllr Cross agreed and reiterated the level of Community Support was high. Punch Tavern’s response to the Application levied a lot of legal weight behind it. Citing liability that NYC would have to absorb as Punch Taverns believed the ACV would undermine the commercial value of the property. Mr Thorogood asked if there was a need to reapply if the sale goes through. Chair Walsh explained that if the Half Moon Pub becomes an ACV it will protect it should it go back on the market. It was agreed that the PC will wait until the New Year and when the sale is finalised the PC will invite discussions with the new owners to ascertain the next steps and thoughts for the ACV Application.
74 Public Participation	Members of the public attended the meeting to discuss Item 76 Long Bridge Repairs – and NYC’s proposals for the repairs. Mr Todd spoke to the PC on behalf of himself and a neighbour who had kindly lent a painting of the Long Bridge to show at the meeting. Mr Todd explained that being a resident for 40 years they believe that the Long Bridge is an important visual feature of Barton. It features on cyclist websites, artists paint and draw it and it has even featured on a popular video game – clarity is needed over how the bridge will be repaired and what materials will be used – with emphasis on the concern over the possible removal of the white wooden railings. Mr Todd asked if it would be possible to get audited figures from NYC on how much time and money has been spent repairing the bridge and much they are expecting it to cost over the next ten years. Mr Tomlinson stressed that it is not acceptable to replace the

White Wooden railings with metal as initially proposed by NYC. It was suggested that hard wood is a better option to soft wood as it would last longer. Mr Tomlinson also talked about the possibility of using white, recycled plastic posts similar to those used on racecourses as well as highlighting that the bridge could benefit from being widened slightly for those using mobility scooters, wheelchairs or prams.

Mr Pilkington asked who is responsible for the maintenance of the bridge. Chair Walsh commented it is NYC. Mr Pilkington went on to explain he had been approached for a quote to paint the bridge – if the PC are not responsible for the maintenance why are they asking for a quote to paint/maintain it? Chair Walsh explained that when the PC have had the spare funds they have carried out decorative work at their own cost even though they are not responsible for it. 2016 was the last time it was painted.

Mrs Todd asked if NYC has provided figures on how much they spend on the bridge, Chair Walsh confirmed they had not but we can request them.

Cllr Burns spoke about the trees planted near the bridge as NYC had commented that one of the lime trees may need to be removed due to the roots causing some structural issues to the bridge. Cllr Burns noted the trees were planted around 1910 and they will be matured and should not carry on growing roots and he cannot see where the roots are pushing the bridge structure up. On asking if the PC could adopt the bridge, Cllr Burns offered to make a donation towards it if it was possible. Chair Walsh said this would be very unlikely due to the expense of the liability the PC would need to take on if they adopted the whole bridge but thanks Cllr Burns for his generous offer.

Mr Thorogood spoke of the feeling in the Village about the bridge and that there is a lot of it as the bridge is in the heart of the Village. Would it be possible to look at the two elements needed for repair – the resurface of the bridge (which would be beyond the PC remit) and the railings? Could NYC resurface the bridge and the PC replace the railings structure with the possibility of a small annual grant towards the upkeep of the railings? Chair Walsh commented that we would need to seek guidance from the PC insurers. Mr Thorogood commented that the quality of work carried out in the past by NYC has been a liability.

VC Jones commented that the plans from NYC for the bridge refurb include the possible removal of a lime tree – this indicates that they have been looking at the structural integrity of the bridge. Chair Walsh highlighted that the lime tree has a TPO so the PC would want clarification over what damage the tree is actually doing to the bridge. Cllr Wool asked if the removal of the tree was to make carrying out repairs easier rather than any effect

	<p>on the bridge itself.</p> <p>Mr Pilkington stressed that it is the look of the railings that is of the most concern to residents and asked if NYC know this. Cllr Cross explained that this is what this meeting is for – to gather information and feeling from residents and feed that back to NYC.</p> <p>Cllr Burns asked how much it will cost to do the work proposed by NYC compared to maintaining what already exists. Mrs Todd agreed – would it be easier and more cost effective to maintain/repair the current structure every two years? Mr Tomlinson explained that putting in steel posts doesn't automatically mean less maintenance.</p> <p>Chair Walsh summarised that the PC will liaise with NYC and communicate everyone's thoughts and feelings around the refurbishment of the bridge and the lime tree adjacent to it. Clerk to arrange meeting with NYC Bridge Engineers, Chair Walsh and VC Jones.</p>
75 Planning	<p>21/00419/FULL - Barton Motorway Truck Stop planning application has been withdrawn. Cllr Wool stated there needs to be clarity on what planning application remains for the lorry park. Chair Walsh confirmed that 22/00479/OUT for the Motorway Service Area (MSA) remains.</p> <p>Cllr Wool shared concerns over whether HGV's would still be able to park there – if not they may start to park in and around the Village.</p>
76 Long Bridge Repairs	See item 74 – Public Participation
77 25 Kettle End	<p>Discuss the access and leasehold at 25 Kettle End. Chair Walsh explained that two bungalows were built at the end of Kettle End in the 1960's and that access was granted across a grassed area that at the time was not classed as Village Green.</p> <p>As one of the property's is being sold the buyers Solicitor has raised concern over the current right of access over an area that is now registered as Village Green.</p> <p>It is proposed that an Easement Agreement be drawn up for both bungalows that use the access with Solicitors and a fee of £2000 be paid to the PC via the Solicitor. This would protect the right of access for both properties.</p> <p>Cllr Wool asked for documents that clarify exactly what is being paid for, Chair Walsh explained that the Buyers Solicitor is drafting the agreement so it is legally binding.</p>
78 Police & Crime Update	One crime in October of harassment
79 NYC Update	<p>North Yorkshire Councillor's Report November 2024.</p> <p>A66 UPGRADE</p> <p>I'm sure that most residents have read that the legal challenge</p>

which was received against the A66 upgrade on the 18th April this year was heard by the Courts on 23rd October and failed. This challenge by TAN i.e. Transport Action Network was not against the principal of the upgrade but against the legal process which the DfT had gone through to arrive at the present position. This delay caused by TAN, an action group who raised £35K to fund their appeal and has some members who I understand have spent time in prison, will hopefully not have cost us the upgrade we have campaigned for years for. The consent order was signed off on the 7th March but the delay caused by TAN has meant that work which would have now commenced may be delayed for further years unless the new Government can be persuaded to give it the go ahead.

The only glimmer of hope is a statement issued by the DfT stating, 'The internal review by the Transport Secretary Louise Haigh is still ongoing'. A possible knock on effect of the uncertainty regarding the A66 is possibly the reason for further delays in recommencement of work on the Designer Outlet. The planning permission granted way back in 2014 for the Designer Outlet contained a clause saying that the outlet could not open for business until the upgrade of Scotch Corner roundabout was completed. This was because of the 30% projected increase in traffic which would be generated.

Another possible knock on effect of this delay in the Designer Outlet completion is that National Power Grid need to install a new sub station at Scotch Corner to give the required electricity to power the complex. At present, the electricity supply comes down from Spennymoor, through Newton Aycliffe and then down to Scotch Corner from where it loops back to Barton, on to Stapleton, Cleasby and ending in Manfield.

Last winter, we residents had countless power cuts in Stapleton, Cleasby and Manfield because, I am told, we are at the end of the line. This situation can be resolved by the installation of the new Scotch Corner sub station. I would presume that unfortunately the said sub station is unlikely to materialise without a large financial input from the Designer Outlet which won't be forthcoming for the reasons above.

FINANCES

Earlier this year I advised in one of my bulletins that we have a forecast budget deficit in the present year of £26 million and that will increase to £44 million in 25/26. This is despite efficiency savings introduced by our administration of £230 million over the last 12 years. And the Unitary Council is now showing an ongoing saving of £40 million per annum, thank goodness.

We have useable reserves of £90 million. This figure is alarmingly low. Whilst we have assets that we are looking to sell, as a general rule capital disposals can only be deployed on capital or debt reduction. But given that we have added to the Capital plan from Revenue reserves, we would be able to say that what we are

doing is in fact an internal movement of monies. But of course, this cannot go on indefinitely.

However, if the figures above are not of great concern, the effect of the recent budget is to increase the Council's employer's NI contributions coupled with the effect of the increase in the National Minimum Wage, by some £12 million. We have 13,400 employees and given that the Chancellor has so far refused to give assistance to doctors' surgeries or care home providers, it is to be expected that no assistance will be given to Local Authorities. This then takes the projected deficit for 25/26 to £56 million. This is an eye watering figure which is causing great concern. Savings are going to have to be found in all departments. Home to School Transport is one of the savings which we have been criticized for but it could save around £4 million pounds. The budget for Home to School Transport was £19 million in 2019 and this year it has now escalated to an incredible figure of £42 million. The alternative is to start looking at closing school classrooms. As an Authority we have a statutory duty to fund transport for children up to the age of 16 who live more than 3 miles from their nearest school, but only to the nearest suitable school. This is what many other Authorities are doing, rather than to the school of choice.

To find out which is your child's nearest school, go onto:
Find your nearest school – Before you start –
NYC(northyorks.gov.uk)

The calculation will be from the child's house in a straight line to the school. If for any reason the nearest school is full then it will be to the second nearest. Of course parents can choose to apply through the admissions process to any school of their choice. The nearest school for some children may be in County Durham but in one case, Teesdale in Barnard Castle, is rated Ofstead Outstanding.

On a more positive note, the budget awarded an extra £1 billion for SEND, ie. Special Education Needs children. This is most welcome but how much of the share will we get? We have always been regarded by Labour Governments as a 'leafy shire county' which does not warrant funding in the same way as inner city authorities. Another plus in the budget was £500K to be spent on pot holes. But our best estimate is £16 million for North Yorkshire pot holes, but it is more likely to be £4 million. Given that we have 5,800 miles of roads (excluding very small by roads) in the County, this extra grant isn't unfortunately going to go very far. To put it in perspective, 5,800 miles of roads would stretch from London to Tokyo.

Throughout my life I have been an optimist, but I am finding it extremely difficult to be, optimistic about NYC finances going forwards, given what I have outlined above.

PLANNING

There have been many criticisms of the Mercury House Planning Dept. both in the days of RDC and in the last 18 months. These have undoubtedly been justified given the lack of service, lack of response to emails, the list is endless. However, we must understand that the problem is not because of the lack of financial resources, but because of the great shortage of qualified Planning Officers nationally. This has been, and still is, a national problem. One of the problems we have faced since vesting day is that the computer systems of the 7 former District Councils were not compatible. We are I understand within 3 weeks of a system where 2 former district council depts. can at least talk to each other which will enable for example, cases to be passed over to Northallerton, the former Hambleton dept., from Richmond the former RDC dept.

In terms of the latter which of course is the one which concerns us, numerous new staff have been recruited and the process is ongoing.

We are now optimistic that we will be back to good service standards from Mercury House Planning Dept. which we haven't seen for at least 5 years.

COMPLAINTS

One interesting statistic is that NYC have received since vesting day ie. 1st April last year, 260 complaints against councillors, 225 of which have been in respect of parish/town councillors. Given that there are 731 parishes in the county, 27 of which are within my division, this means that if we in Richmondshire North have 3.7% of the number of PCs in the County, then if we mirror the averages, we should have had 8 or so complaints against PC and PM members.

I am pleased to say that I am not aware of any complaints against Parish Councillors or indeed myself, in my division.

THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION.

You may be aware that NYC have the Boundary Commission in at the moment. The reason for this is that prior to the new council coming into being NYCC had 72 councillors. This was increased to 90 in the new council partly to compensate for the fact that 300 district councillors had ceased to be.

It was made clear from day one that a complete review of the number of councillors and boundaries would take place within this Council ie. 5 year period. A plan has been put forwards to the Commission which would reduce the number of councillors to 89 and would have the electorate within the upper and lower limits which they require. That is a maximum of 6,200 and a minimum of 5,400 in each division. I currently have 6,700 electors which is way over the limit. I also have the second biggest division geographically covering 221 square miles from just this side of Barningham to Croft Bridge, skirting Richmond town.

	<p>The proposal is to take Gilling and Aske out of the division and put them with Richmond Town.</p> <p>Middleton Tyas, Moulton and Skeeby would be joined with villages like Scorton, Brompton on Swale and the east end of Richmond to form a new division. However, my division would gain East Cowton.</p> <p>This would give an electorate of just short of 6,200 in North Richmondshire which will fit the bill.</p> <p>I stress that the above suggestions put together by councillors and are still under consideration before being submitted to the Boundary Commission. They will then consider these together with their own ideas and put a final plan together. There will be ongoing consultations with PCs and the public, but once they announce their final plan, that is it. The only body which can overturn their decision is the House of Commons.</p> <p>SUMMARY.</p> <p>The financial situation for NYC is going to be very difficult indeed unless there is more assistance from the Government. We repeatedly asked for more assistance from the previous government and achieved savings of £230 million over the last 12 years. One thing the previous government never did however, was dramatically increase our running costs by £12 million.</p> <p>I suspect that the Government will increase Council Tax bandings, or have a review totally of how Council Tax is charged. In other words a tax rise but that is pure conjecture.</p> <p>Our Home to School Transport policy has met with much criticism in some areas which I fully understand, but what everyone should know that had we not taken this step which could save up to £4 million per annum, we would have had to start selecting school classrooms and possibly more for closure.</p> <p>I also think it is worth pointing out that the same Home to School Transport policy is already in force in Co. Durham and Darlington Borough Council and many more up and down the country.</p> <p>If anyone who is not on my circulation list for these reports wishes to receive them, please send me your email address to cldr.angus.thompson@northyorks.gov.uk.</p> <p>Kind regards, Angus Thompson. 15th November 2024.</p>
<p>80 Play Area Inspections</p>	<p>Clerk to follow up National Lottery Funding Application to update at next meeting.</p>
<p>81 Financial Matters</p>	<p>81.1) Salary Payment & Accounts Payable - £542.72 Clerk Salary Nov & Dec £143.88 – Mark Phillips ref replacement defib pads. Thanks to Mr</p>

	<p>Phillips for sourcing the pads</p> <p>81.2) To receive (an update with regard to) the current bank balance</p> <p>81.3) 2025/2026 Precept After discussion proposed increase of 5% subject to review of 2023/24 cash flow/spend to be circulated by the Clerk before 31/12/2024</p>
82 Next Meeting	To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting due to be held on Thursday 30th January 2025 at 7pm held in the Village Hall