

## BARTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 7.00pm AT BARTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Chair Frank Walsh, Cllr Burns, Cllr Dobinson, Cllr Cross

Parish Clerk: Charlotte Liversedge-Gell

Members of the Public: STAG representative and resident.

<b>69 Apologies</b> - with approval for apologies	VC Jones, Cllr Wool, Cllr Lee
<b>70 Declaration of Interest</b> – to receive & consider then decide upon any applications for dispensation	None declared
<b>71 Minutes</b>	Minutes of the meeting held 30th October 2025 were signed and approved.
<b>72 Matters Arising</b>	Matters Arising from the previous meeting minutes - none
<b>73 Correspondence</b>	<p><b>73(i)</b> Home to School Transport briefing was circulated (see below).</p> <p>In Spring 2024, North Yorkshire Council (NYC) consulted on proposed changes to its Home to School (H2S) Transport Policy. Despite widespread public opposition and repeated warnings, on 24 July 2024 councillors voted to remove free transport eligibility to catchment schools, restricting it instead to nearest school only. The change was justified on the grounds of long-term cost savings, with officers claiming that the policy would save over £4 million — but not until seven years’ time. Critics, including councillors, parents, and school leaders, have argued that these projected savings are highly speculative, while the immediate social, educational, and financial costs to families, rural communities, and North Yorkshire schools are severe and ongoing.</p> <p><b>Community Response</b></p> <p>In Autumn 2024, the School Transport Action Group (S.T.A.G.) formed to campaign for the reinstatement of catchment-based eligibility. The group has since led a sustained, evidence-based campaign — including protests at County Hall, petitions, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, public questions at NYC meetings, lobbying councillors and MPs and working closely with local and national media.</p> <p><b>Key Developments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May 21, 2025: An extraordinary meeting called by opposition parties sought to reverse the decision. Despite cross-party concern, Conservative and some Independent councillors voted it down.</li><li>• May 22, 2025: Secondary school pupils due to start in September 2025 began receiving emails informing them that school transport had been denied.</li></ul>

- Summer 2025: Over 170 Stage One and 77 Stage Two transport appeals were lodged, with only a small number of successful outcomes. Firm evidence was gathered during this process highlighting multiple inconsistencies and systemic errors in how the policy was applied.
- September 2025: Officers announced that the Post-Implementation Review would be delayed by a full year — meaning no changes until at least September 2028 at the earliest.
- Autumn 2025: Official complaints are now streaming into the Local Government Ombudsman, both from individual parents and from coordinated group complaints highlighting systemic injustices affecting multiple families.

**Resulting Impacts**

- Ongoing stress and uncertainty for children and parents, many of whom now have to spend months — if not years — without clarity on safe or affordable transport to school.
- Community division and deterrence of new families, as uncertainty over school transport discourages families from moving into — or remaining in — rural villages, threatening the social fabric and long-term sustainability of many small communities.
- Financial burden on North Yorkshire schools, as reduced pupil numbers lead to falling funding allocations — forcing some schools to consider staff redundancies, curriculum cuts, and even questioning their long-term viability.
- Heavy administrative burden on officers and significant use of taxpayers’ money to manage a complex policy and an escalating number of appeals, reviews, and Ombudsman complaints.
- Erosion of public confidence and trust in the Council — and in the councillors who continue to back the policy despite overwhelming evidence of harm and inefficiency.

**Evidence of Systemic Failures Requiring Urgent Attention**

**Mapping and Measurement Issues:**

- Incorrect start and end points used when measuring walking routes.
- Use of routes that are neither legal nor safe.
- Missing school gates in mapping software, leading to wrongful denial of transport.
- Refusal to correct known mapping errors.
- Uncertainty over whether low-income families are being measured “by road.”

**Communication Failures:**

- Outdated policy versions still circulating.
- Failure to communicate with parents about key changes or appeal rights.
- Some schools not briefed about the policy.
- Inconsistent and unclear information on NYC’s school transport webpages.

**Unfair Application:**

- Inconsistent appeals decisions.

- Refusal to promptly correct mapping errors.
- Denial of transport to schools served by the same bus stop.
- Refusal to safety-assess high-risk routes.

**Double Counting:**

- Double-counting of school places wrongly affecting eligibility assessments.

**Points to Note**

1. Flawed Savings Model: The council’s savings projections depend on maximising the number of pupils who opt out of school transport altogether — even if they are technically eligible.
2. Measurement of ‘Nearest School’: “Nearest” is being calculated using available walked routes — including footpaths, roads, and bridleways — rather than by road distance, as recommended by the Department for Education (DfE). As a result, the school deemed “nearest” on paper is often further away by road and inaccessible by car or public transport. In most cases, the difference between the nearest and catchment schools is minimal — often measured in feet, not miles.
3. Rural Geography and Fragmentation: North Yorkshire’s rural landscape means the “nearest school” approach causes fragmentation of travel and higher costs.
4. Catchment vs. Nearest – The Catch-22: Admissions operate on catchment areas while transport follows nearest school, creating conflicts for families.
5. Paid Bus Passes and Revocations: Paid-for passes are not guaranteed, often confirmed just before term and can be revoked at short notice.
6. Cross-Border Complications (Darlington): Differing term dates create logistical chaos for border families.
7. Lack of Public Transport Alternatives: Rural transport is sparse and outside NYC’s control, leaving families without realistic alternatives.
8. Annual Mapping Changes: In September 2025, the Council determined that the mapping system would be updated each year. This means “nearest school” routes can change from year to year as paths or bridleways are added or removed from the calculations — creating further uncertainty for families and schools.

**The Way Forward**

- 12 November 2025: A Full Council Motion will be debated to restore the original review timeline. If approved, this could enable improvements in time for children starting school in September 2027.
- Admissions Cycle 2026: Applications are underway, with stricter rules expected to cause further appeals and distress.
- Leadership Change: Following Sir Stuart Carlton’s resignation, a new Corporate Director for Children & Young People starts in January 2026 — offering hope for a more balanced and pragmatic approach.

**S.T.A.G. continues to press for:**

- Reinstatement of catchment-based eligibility.

	<p>– Bringing forward the policy review to 2026, ensuring it is independent and includes social, educational, environmental, and fiscal impact assessments.</p> <p>– Correction of injustices and immediate rectification of known mapping and eligibility errors.</p> <p>– Greater transparency, accountability, and oversight in decision-making.</p> <p>Jo Foster attended the meeting and discussed the above briefing. Cllr Cross asked if there was specific data for how Barton families may be affected. This is something that STAG will look into and report to the PC.</p> <p>The PC thanks Jo for taking the time to attend the meeting and the PC would like to acknowledge the efforts taken by those at STAG.</p> <p>If you like further information then please contact Jo Foster, of the School Transport Action Group (S.T.A.G.) Email: <a href="mailto:schooltransportag@gmail.com">schooltransportag@gmail.com</a>, or Facebook: School Transport Action Group – North Yorkshire.</p> <p><b>73(ii)</b> NYC Parish Liaison – information on the NYC Cost of Living campaign circulated to PC and Village network email.</p> <p><b>73(iii)</b> The PC were informed that the power to the housing at the Old Haulage Yard was set to be installed. Chair Walsh confirmed that this work had started.</p> <p><b>73(iv)</b> Email highlighting 2 corrections to October 2025 minutes – they were updated accordingly</p> <p><b>73(v)</b> The hedge at the bus stop of Silver Meadows (opposite the school) has been cut back following PC contact to Persimmon homes as the hedge/icy was compromising the mortar of the bus shelter. Thanks to Chair Walsh for this positive outcome.</p>
<p><b>74 Public Participation</b></p>	<p>A Barton resident attended the meeting to discuss the increasing problem of dog fouling on Wells Green. The problem is getting worse as dog walkers allow dogs to foul within that area whilst both on and off the lead. The resident is picking up other people’s dog waste daily and there have been instances of the mess being trodden on/accidentally handled by children. The resident has CCTV footage of the dog fouling and is increasingly frustrated and saddened at the mess being left within this area.</p> <p>The PC agree that this is wholly unacceptable and steps need to be taken to stop this happening.</p> <p>Dog fouling in Richmondshire holds a £50 fixed penalty notice fine from NYC. If the fine is not paid or is contested, they will take action through the Magistrates’ Court which carries fines of up to £1,000. To report dog fouling please use <a href="#">this form</a> with as much information as possible including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the person committing the offence, their name, address, vehicle, model, colour, vehicle registration</li> <li>• a description of the dog</li> <li>• photographs</li> <li>• date</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time</li> <li>• location</li> </ul> <p>Or if unable to access the form call NYC on 0300 131 2131</p>
<b>75 Planning</b>	To consider the planning applications within Barton Parish - None received
<b>76 Police &amp; Crime Update</b>	October – seven crimes within the PARISH. 3 x sexual offences 1 x fraud 1 x interfere with a vehicle 1x arson 1 x theft from a vehicle
<b>77 NYC Update</b>	Cllr Thompson passed apologies onto the PC. Potential Q&A event at County Hall with Cllr Carl Les. Chair Walsh confirmed interest in attending.
<b>78 Play Area Inspections</b>	Chair Walsh reported that the Play Area is in good repair and that he has kindly purchased a Jet Wash to be used for the deep clean of the Play Area in Spring/Easter time. Cllr Dobinson informed the PC that a handle grip had come off one of the pieces of exercise equipment, Chair Walsh to look at/repair.
<b>79 Financial Matters</b>	<b>79(i)</b> Salary Payment & Accounts Payable: Clerk salary £296, CE & CM Walkers grass cutting £624, NYC Grit Bin refill £90 <b>79(ii)</b> To receive (an update with regard to) the current bank balance £16196.32
<b>80 Precept 2026/27</b>	It was agreed to request a 5% increase for the 2026/27 Precept. Request £15245 – Clerk to inform NYC by 31/12/2025 deadline.
<b>81 Next Meeting</b>	To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting due to be held on Thursday 29th January 2026 at 7pm held in the Village Hall

**MEETING CLOSED 8.15PM**