

PRESTON-UNDER-SCAR PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 20 June 2024

Present: Councillor Councillors Amsden (Chairman), Fletcher, Higham, Knights and Sayers

Clerk: Linda Stevens

One member of the public

Apologies for absence: Unitary Councillor Sedgwick

10. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16 April 2024

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16 April 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

11. To declare Councillors' interests in items on the agenda: None.

12. Action taken since the last Parish Council Meeting on 16 April 2024

Moor Road update - the following response has been received from North Yorkshire Council:

Flue Structure – response still awaited from the Council's legal team who would be contacted for an update.

Moor Road Drainage - the Highway Officer had been asked to take another look at the water issue on this road to see if there is anything that can be done to improve the situation.

Village Road Surface - North Yorkshire Council had confirmed that the loose chippings were likely to be from the carriageway surface dressing that was undertaken. The winter wet and cold conditions unfortunately had the effect of breaking off from the surface / other chippings until the dressing treatment settled down. Attending within Preston-under-Scar had been included on the list of sites that require a sweeper to attend and the service had also been requested to sweep the sides of Moor Road. NYC had been reminded that, provided it was notified in advance, the Parish Council was willing to assist with encouraging residents to park elsewhere on the day the sweeper visits

Cemetery Extension – work to repair the gate and fence at the far end of the extension had been completed and the grass in the extension was now being cut once a month.

Portrait of King Charles III – this had been received.

13. Decisions taken by the Clerk since the last meeting: None.

14. Finance and Banking

Resolved:

(1) To note the following opening balances as at 1 June 2024:

Current Account: £ 11,144.13

Savings Account: £ 2,307.35

(2) To note the following payments authorised by the Clerk since the last meeting of the Parish Council under her delegated authority:

Payee	Item	Payment Type	Amount
Clear Insurance	Insurance Renewal	BACS	£412.15
DCN	Grass Cutting – April 2024	BACS	£330
Cllr Knights	Printing for Annual Village Meeting	BACS	£5.25
DCN	Repairs to Cemetery Gate (extension) and Fence	BACS	£330
Clerk	Reimbursement of Zoom Subscription for 2024/25	BACS	£155.58
DCN	Grass Cutting – May 2024	BACS	£330

(3) To approve the Annual Accounts for 2023/24, and statement of reserves at 31 March 2024 as submitted.

15. Annual Governance and Accountability Return

(a) Annual Internal Audit report 2023/24

The internal auditor had completed the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/20234 which had been circulated to Councillors. His report showed under the main headings that:

- Appropriate accounting records had been kept throughout the financial year

- That the Parish Council had complied with its financial regulations and that payments had been properly approved and supported by invoices
- That the precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget had been regularly monitored and that reserves were adequate
- That the Parish Council's Website had been up to date at the time of the audit, in accordance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the Internal Auditor's report.

(b) The Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024

The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer requested Councillors to consider in turn each of the statements 1 – 9 set out in the Annual Governance Statement, which had been circulated with the agenda and to respond either "yes" or "no" in each case. Councillors considered each of the statements in turn and affirmed that in their view the Parish Council had, to the best of their knowledge and belief, met all of the requirements in each case and were therefore able to answer "yes" to each statement, with the exception of statement 9 (Trust Funds) which was not applicable in this Council's case.

Resolved:

To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, as now completed.

(c) The Accounting Statement 2023/24

The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer formally submitted the Accounting Statement 2023/24, which she had signed and certified presented fairly the Parish Council's financial position. Councillors were requested to consider the Statement, which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting, and if satisfied with the statement resolve to approve it.

Resolved:

To approve the Accounting Statements 2023/24 as submitted by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

(d) The Explanation of Variances and the Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer submitted the above documents which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

Resolved:

To approve the Explanation of Variances and the year end bank reconciliation for

2023/24 as submitted.

(e) Certificate of Exemption

Having considered the above sections of the AGAR, the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer invited Councillors to consider and, if satisfied that the Parish Council met all of the criteria, to resolve that the Council was exempt from an external audit and authorise the Chairman and the Clerk to complete the Certificate of Exemption for 2023-24 and submit it to the External Auditor.

Resolved:

Being satisfied that the Council met all of the criteria, to authorise the Chairman and the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer to sign the Certificate of Exemption for 2023-24 and submit it to the Council's external auditor.

(f) The Proposed Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return

Councillors were requested to determine who would act as the named contact for the purposes of the inspection of the AGAR and the accounting records and otherwise consider and if appropriate resolve to adopt the draft notice which proposed that the dates between which the Council's various documents and records would be available would be Monday 24 June to Friday 2 August 2024 inclusive.

Resolved:

That Councillor Fletcher be appointed as the named contact for the purposes of the public inspection period and that the dates between which the public would be able to inspect the relevant documents be set as Monday 24 June – Friday 2 August 2024 inclusive.

(Note: The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that copies of all the above documents would be displayed on the village notice board and/or on the Council's website from 21 June 2024).

16. Village Maintenance: No issues arising

17. Cemetery

Councillor Higham had discussed with a regular visitor to the Cemetery, possible options for tree planting and other amenity work which would assist the Council to achieve its objectives of making the cemetery:

- A welcoming, cared for place
- A place where the bereaved could sit and be with their loved ones and their memories
- An area that enhances the biodiversity corridor

and would help ensure that the new extension would complement the surrounding countryside. She presented a plan which had been prepared by John Green, following those discussions, which showed proposals for possible areas of planting in the new extension, including a new hedge in front of the existing fence at the south west corner and the location for a new seat, located in the extension (in the vicinity of the slender birch tree) and looking towards Penhill, using the footings for the old shed as the base.

An application could be made to the Woodlands Trust's scheme for Free Trees for Schools and Communities which, if successful, would mean the Council would receive sufficient number of appropriate saplings/whips (all native species) for planting during the next planting season. Their planting would require careful consideration in order to ensure that they were planted in locations where their roots would not damage the boundary wall as they grew. It would also be necessary to check with the Bolton Estate the location and route of any active water pipe so that this could be taken into account in planting and future grave digging.

Councillors expressed some concern about the length of time which it would take for saplings and/or whips to become fully established and grow, and also about their survival rate after planting. It was suggested that the cost of buying and planting a limited number of ornamental trees in the extension should be explored. Councillors considered that hedging along the fence at the South West Corner of the extension should not be pursued as this could impact on the setting of the nearby ancient burial mound. It was however felt that this could be made a feature in due course, using a display/information board

It was noted that whilst there was no statutory requirement relating to the size of burial plots, the advice was to provide plots of 8ftx4ft and that there was no requirement to provide any space between individual plots. There were no regulations relating to ashes other than they should be buried not scattered.

Details of the fees and charges for Leyburn Cemetery were also submitted. It was noted that the Parish Council currently charged a "one off" fee for the reservation and use of a plot and that there were no supplementary fees payable (for example for the erection of a memorial) and it was agreed that for ease of administration, with limited resources, the principle of charging one, all in fee be continued. It was noted that the current fees (for one plot) were £350 for a current resident of the Parish and £700 for non-residents.

Resolved:

(1) That Councillor Higham and John Green be thanked for their work in relation to the proposals presented to the meeting.

- (2) That Councillor Higham be requested to investigate the cost of planting ornamental trees at the locations indicated on the plan submitted to the meeting and report back thereon to a future meeting of the Council.**
- (3) That the Clerk be requested to contact the Bolton Estate to ascertain the route(s) of any active water pipes running through the cemetery extension.**
- (4) That the principle of continuing to charge a one off, all-encompassing fee for the reservation and use of a burial plot in the village cemetery be approved.**

18. Biodiversity

Councillor Knights presented his report on the outcomes of the first meeting of the Village Biodiversity Group. There had been a high degree of consensus at the meeting about its aims and a number of suggestions had been made as to simple to use systems that could be established for recording and sharing observations, including information boards, simple chalkboard lists of sightings, guided walks and dedicated pages on the refreshed Parish Council website for observations, seasonal diaries or uploading photos.

Councillor Knights sought the Council's assurance that the Group was progressing in the right direction and also requested the Council's agreement to the circulation of a letter to residents outlining the proposals and seeking further suggestions, and its agreement also to the group making contact with relevant local bodies to in order to further progress the initiative.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor Knights be thanked for his work to date on this initiative.**
- (2) That the proposal to write to residents outlining the proposals put forward at the meeting be approved and that the Council endorse the proposal to contact relevant local bodies to help progress the Group's work.**

19. Play Area

Councillor Higham and the Clerk reported on the outcomes of a site meeting with Kirsty Stewart, Parks and Ground Area Manager (West) with North Yorkshire Council (NYC) about the village's involvement in the play area, which had been attended by a number of Councillors and the Clerk.

At that meeting Kirsty had clarified that:

- The play area was the responsibility of NYC who would provide, maintain and insure all of the equipment provided.
- NYC would take responsibility for the removal and disposal of the existing dilapidated

seating area in the north west corner of the play area and also the two quoits pitches which were in significant disrepair and which represented a health and safety hazard.

- Once the above items had been removed the areas concerned would be grassed over and that the vegetation along the western boundary would be tidied up and thereafter maintained by NYC
- NYC would fill in the current rabbit holes and deal with any new holes which subsequently appeared, as part of its regular inspections
- No additional items of equipment or amenity features should be installed by the village or the Parish Council without NYC's prior approval in writing
- There would be no objection to the provision of bee/butterfly friendly plants along the western boundary of the area, that could possibly be cared for by residents

Resolved:

That the Clerk write to NYC to confirm the outcome of the recent Play Area Site Meeting as set out above.

20. Redesign of Village Website and migration to gov.uk domain name and Email addresses for Parish Council business

The Council considered a report by the Clerk which:

- Set out the cost of modernising the Council's current website using its current provider
- provided details of basic costings from two other website providers and drew Councillors' attention to a new local low cost web platform for smaller parishes in Yorkshire, which had been set up by the YLCA working with one of those website providers
- set out the requirements for a gov.uk domain name and the improved security and professionalism it would provide
- Noted that, whilst it was not mandatory for the Clerk and Councillors to use gov.uk email addresses for Council business, it was encouraged and was considered good practice. If the Council migrated to a gov.uk domain, the Clerk would need to use a gov.uk email address.

The Council's current web host was unable to register gov.uk domain names and it was noted that the other 2 companies referred to in the Clerk's report could do so and were both on the government's list of Approved Domain Registrars, and therefore able to access and pass onto the Parish Council a government subsidy currently available to support the transfer to a gov.uk. domain.

Support was expressed in support of the Council seeking to move towards finding a new website host who was able to provide a comprehensive service that would fully meet the Council's needs (ie website provision, registering a gov.uk domain and setting up and hosting gov.uk email addresses for the Clerk and all Councillors. Councillor Sayers offered to work with the Clerk to produce a specification for a fresh website for further consideration at a future meeting of the Council.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor Sayers be requested to liaise with the Clerk to develop a specification for a new Parish Council website and for seeking quotes for registering a gov.uk domain and for setting up and managing gov.uk email addresses for the Clerk and all Councillors.**
- (2) That the Clerk be authorised to work additional hours, should this be required, to audit and where necessary re-present information/documents on the Council's Council website for ease of transfer to the new website once developed**

21. Safety of Lithium-ion batteries and scooters and e-bikes

Councillors considered an approach from a parliamentary researcher working for Lord Foster seeking its support for a campaign to improve the safety of lithium batteries used in e-bikes and scooters, and their disposal. It was noted that nationally there had been over 1000 lithium battery fires in the past few years, resulting in the destruction of some homes, nearly 200 injuries and a dozen fatalities. The campaign was supported by a number of national organisations including the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives, RoSPA, and the Royal Society of Public Health.

Resolved:

That the Clerk advise Mr Bailey that this Parish Council supports this campaign.

22. YLCA Branch Meetings

Resolved:

That no formal appointments be made of representatives to attend and vote at Richmondshire Branch Meetings of the YLCA.

23. Rabbits

A resident of the village had drawn Councillors' attention to the current problems which a number of residents were experiencing with rabbits in their gardens and had asked the Council to consider whether there was any collective action that residents could implement in order to control the rabbit population.

Resolved:

That the resident concerned be advised that the Parish Council was unable to assist in this matter as it has no powers to take any action to control the local rabbit population as this was a matter for landowners.

24. Planning Applications

New Applications: None Notified

Upcoming Applications: None notified

Update on Previous Applications:

ZD24/00273/FULL - Full Planning Permission Proposed Extension of Existing Horse Stable Building and Position Relocation on Land to the North at Paddock At Harry Wood Os 4896 Wensley Station, Preston Under Scar, North Yorkshire (*Councillors have raised no objections to this proposal*)

ZD24/00009/CLD - Certificate of Lawfulness Proposed for replacement of all existing windows and one door at Sakhir Cottage, Preston Under Scar, Leyburn, North Yorkshire (*the Parish Council had no objections to the granting of this Certificate – awaiting decision*)

ZD24/00084/FULL - Full Planning Permission for Single Storey Extension to Existing Dwelling and Detached Garage at Low Scar Barn, Redmire, Leyburn, North Yorkshire (*the Parish Council had no objections to this application – awaiting decision*)

23/00129/LBC - Listed Building Consent for Replacement Roof to Existing Modern Lean To Garage at 2 Preston Mill, Wensley Station, Preston Under Scar, Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 4AG (*the Parish Council had no objections to this proposal - awaiting decision*)

24. Date and Agenda Items for the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk consult Councillors on a date for the next Parish Council meeting, to be held in late September 2024, unless any issues arise which require an earlier meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

CHAIRMAN