

Hawes and High Abbotside Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of 22nd May 2017 held at Gayle Institute at 7.15pm

Present: Cllrs John Blackie (Chairman), Mrs Sheila Alderson, Mrs Debbie Allen, Tony Fawcett, Stuart Hunter, Albert Sunter

Apologies: Cllrs Mrs Andrea Caygill, Mrs Abbie Rhodes.

In Attendance: Mr Ian King (Clerk) and 8 members of the public

1. Election of Chairman for 2 years, to May 2019.

Cllr John Blackie was nominated by Cllr Tony Fawcett and seconded by Cllr Albert Sunter, and was elected unanimously. Cllr Fawcett congratulated the Chairman on his re-election as the County Councillor for the Upper Dales. Cllr Blackie said that he was very pleased with the result, the 800 majority, and the turnout which at 53.5% was the highest in the County Council by quite a margin.

The 8 Independents at NYCC are the largest group apart from the ruling Conservatives, and are now the official Opposition, and Cllr Blackie has been elected their Leader. He has also been nominated to represent NYCC at the YDNPA for the next 4 years, and he has been appointed back on to the YDNPA Planning Committee which he has been a member of for the last 20 years.

2. The Minutes of the Meetings of 3rd January 2017 and 3rd April 2017 were accepted as a true record, and signed by the Chairman. There were no Matters Arising.

3. Election of Vice Chairman for 2 years to May 2019.

Cllr Tony Fawcett was nominated by Cllr Mrs Alderson, seconded by Cllr Mrs Allen, and was elected unanimously.

4. Chairman's Key Discussion Items

a) Parish Councils in England. Cllr Blackie described the Government's new expectations on the governance of Parish Councils, as expressed in the new Transparency Code. These include increased usage of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter), and the requirement that every item of expenditure, however small, should be listed on a website and open to challenge.

In the light of this the Parish Clerk, Ian King, had decided to tender his resignation. Cllr Blackie thanked Mr King for his excellent service to the Parish Council and to the local community for over nearly 10 years during which they had never fallen out !!

He proposed an Official Commendation to the Clerk, which was seconded by Cllr Mrs Alderson, and was passed unanimously.

Cllr Blackie said he would set about advertising the position as soon as he could. The Clerk offered to carry on until a new Clerk had been appointed, and also offered to continue as Minutes Recorder at meetings should the new Clerk find that useful.

b) Play Parks. The Council is very grateful to the 3 volunteers who have offered their assistance (Robin Peters, Ian Fraser and Eric Reynolds) and also agreed to take over the supervision of the 3 Play Parks.

Mr Peters said that they had been doing a general clearing up and minor repairs to the equipment, but had been shocked by an estimate of £800 for some boarding to mend the play castle. They will buy and fit a

board themselves at an estimated cost of £200. Ian Fraser is to paint the newly repaired Play Cabin. Expensive parts for repairs to the swings have been ordered, as the Council cannot afford to compromise on safety.

Parish Councillors thanked Robin Peters, who was present at the meeting, for his help with the play parks, and asked that he conveyed the thanks of the Parish Council to Ian and Eric.

- c) **Play Park Inspections.** Cllr Blackie proposed a reduction in the number of inspections from Richmondshire District Council (RDC), now that we have such a good team of local people looking after all 3 play parks, and it would create a saving of around £250 per year. He suggested an inspection at Easter and another one at the start of the Summer Holidays. **This was agreed unanimously.**
- d) **Public Health Nuisance.** The Chairman reported briefly on a dispute between neighbours at the Hawes side of Bealah Bank. This has now escalated into a public health nuisance, and led to an intervention by RDC Environmental Health, who had notified the Chairman of the issues involved in the nuisance. The EHO has demanded action from the offending landowner by 23 May.

The Chairman advised the Parish Council that the EHO had been very receptive of the suggestion that the Parish Council might be able to use its good offices to try to help resolve the public health aspect of the dispute.

Cllr Blackie added that he would bring another item to the Parish Council depending on the progress of the issues involved, if this was necessary, but to ensure fairness and a balanced debate he would invite both the householder and the landowner in dispute to the meeting when this item featured on the Agenda.

- e) **Hawes Youth Club.** For the past 2 years, the Council has been helping to fund this Club, which is of central importance to the life of the town. It has 2 excellent youth leaders and a fortnightly attendance of around 25 youngsters.

Recently with the help of a grant from NYCC, a donation from the Upper Wensleydale Community Office, and a highly subsidised journey to Barnard Castle provided by the Little White Bus, the Hawes Youth Club had put on an excellent show "The Hawes School of Rock" at the Market House which attracted an audience of around 100 local residents.

Cllr Blackie proposed that the Council should agree to continue funding the Youth Club, up to a maximum of £1000 for the year. Agreed unanimously.

Council was perturbed that the Market House charges the Youth Club around £700 a year, and agreed that a letter should be sent to the Market House Trustees requesting them to consider lowering the charges to ensure the Hawes Youth Club could survive financially for the future.

Parish Councillors made the point that the Hawes Youth Club was an initiative at the very heart of the Parish, and felt the Hawes Market House, as a Charity with its key objective serving the local community, should offer a generous discount to such a worthy cause.

- f) **The Upper Dales Community Land Trust.** Cllr Blackie introduced the Parish Council to the intention of The Upper Wensleydale Community Partnership (UWCP) Ltd to form an Upper Dales Community Land Trust (UD CLT).

He advised that there are around 50 affordable social housing properties to rent in Hawes and High Abbotside, owned by 3 different Housing Associations and RDC, and most of these are very likely to be sold under the Government's new Right to Buy housing policies. There is a grave danger that the town will lose its affordable housing to rent sector, which would result in yet more young families leaving the Upper Dales.

Currently the provision of community-led housing is very much the flavour of the day and there are some very significant grants and loans available to finance its development. Cllr Blackie as Chairman of the UWCP Ltd has applied for a grant towards the employment of a part time CLT project officer to progress the formation of the UD CLT and then take forward the development of suitable sites to provide affordable housing to rent.

It is very important to note that dwellings developed within a Community Land Trust remain available as affordable houses for rent in perpetuity. By statute they are beyond any possibility of being included in any Right to Buy policy both now and in the future.

A site for 4 houses has already been identified in Arkengarthdale, and Cllr Blackie has won the unanimous approval of Arkengarthdale Parish Council to progress proposals within the UD CLT to take forward its development to the point where the Parish Council could endorse them for construction and occupancy by local people. There are only 13 pupils on the roll at Arkengarthdale Primary School so unless some families are able to stay or move into the Dale it is in danger of closing.

Cllr Blackie suggested that the land owned by the Parish Council alongside the new Burial Ground / Cemetery might also be made available for up to 7 houses facing Old Gayle Lane. He had secured a free appraisal of the planning prospects from the YDNPA and the report was very positive.

If this land was made available for development within the UDC CLT for a scheme of affordable houses to rent then the Parish Council would be a partner in the scheme and benefit from a share of the rental income in perpetuity, which assuming they were fully occupied could offer a substantial income to the Council which could then be spent by the Parish Council on services or projects in the local community.

In addition the Parish Council would have a say whom to allocate the properties to each time the houses became available for rent when tenants moved on. There would be no need to contribute to the cost of building the houses as the Parish Council had contributed via allowing the use of its land for development.

Parish Councillors were very much in favour of this initiative and Cllr Hunter proposed that the Council should support its Chairman in the establishment of the Upper Dales Community Land Trust, and this was resolved unanimously.

g) Issues and concerns – Richmondshire District Council

1) Public Toilets at Askrigg. An agreement between RDC and the Trustees operating Askrigg Village Hall 26 years ago meant that the toilets in the hall were available for public use 24/7 since then, and saved the District Council at the time the expense of building a new toilet in the village. The annual cost of the agreement between RDC and Askrigg Village Hall trustees was £1500 and despite having £2.5 million in the reserves the Council has now stopped paying this amount leaving the 24/7 public facility under threat of closure.

It was emphasised that people from Hawes and High Abbotside regularly use the toilets in Askrigg on their travels to /from places beyond the Dale, and the Chairman called for a show of hands and very nearly everybody at the meeting indicated they often used the toilets in Askrigg.

Parish Councillors were appalled at the thought of a cash rich RDC denying the opportunity of keeping this invaluable public facility open and authorised Cllr Blackie to continue his campaign to restore the original agreement. One Councillor observed that the cost to RDC was less than the product of one Council tax bill.

2) Boundary Commission Review of RDC. The Conservative ruling group on the RDC has agreed to reduce the number of District Councillors from 34 to 24, ostensibly to save a paltry £15000, although when

Hambleton District Council did the same the newly elected reduced number of Councillors each demanded a greater allowance, and there had been no saving made at all.

Cllr Blackie and his fellow Independents voted against the proposal but they were outvoted by the Conservative majority. He had argued at the Council meeting that it would break up the existing pattern of representation that had worked very well since 1974 and dilute the voice and influence of the individual communities are so characteristic of the Upper Dales. Further he suggested that as the Boundary Commission was not required to undertake a review then there were underlying political motives behind the Conservatives at RDC in initiating it in the first place.

Once the dates of the Review are announced Cllr Blackie as County Councillor for the Upper Dales will put in front of the Parish Council his proposal for re-arranging the wards of the 3 remaining District Councillors (down from 5 as existing) that will represent the Upper Dales in the future and seek the Parish Council's support for it.

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

- a) **Brown Moor Caravan Site.** Local businesses have noticed a distinct loss of trade as the Caravan Site is refurbished. Cllr Blackie advised that under pressure from him the Caravan Club had brought forward the full re-opening of the site from the end of July to the end of June
- b) **Council Representation.** There is a need to co-opt a new Councillor, but no-one has yet come forward. Parish Councillors were asked to give this matter some attention, and ask any prospective candidate to make the Chairman aware of their interest.
- c) **Police Issues.** Mr Rob Ward asked the Chairman if he had received an email from concerning new problems with motorcyclists ignoring parking regulations and the Chairman confirmed he had, and that he had listed an item on the lack of parking enforcement in Hawes on the next NYCC Richmondshire Area Committee.

6. NYCC Highways.

Some complaints have been made about the conditions of the margins between the A684 and the Market Place frontages along which, as there is no pavement, people are forced to walk. The Chairman said he had walked along the Main Street in Hawes with the NYCC Highways Area Manager, Richard Marr, who had agreed that work to improve the surfacing was needed imminently. The Chairman had suggested that a margin of brown gravelled designated walkway similar to the Holme was a good idea and Mr Marr agreed.

One of the Little White Bus drivers had complained about a tractor regularly parking on the Bus Stop outside the Market House. It was suggested that the driver was visiting a local pub. The Chairman agreed to have a quiet word with the individual.

7. a) YDNPA Planning Applications

R/48/22C Thwaite Bridge Farm, Hawes. Full planning permission for conversion of traditional stone barn to accommodate additional living accommodation within Thwaite Bridge Farmhouse. **Strongly Supported.**

R/56/407G/AA The National School (The Nash), The Hill, Hawes. Consent to display 2 no. signs on the property and 1 no. noticeboard on east gable. **Strongly Supported.**

R/48/160 Spring Wood, Cotterdale - Full planning permission for conversion of barn to form a two bedroom local occupancy dwelling. **Proposal by Cllr Tony Fawcett, seconded by Cllr Sheila Alderson, to approve this application for local occupancy only was agreed unanimously.** The Chairman abstained given his membership of the YDNPA Planning Committee.

b) YDNPA Planning Issues

Holiday Cottage and Roadway at Bence. Cllr Blackie reported back on the planning issues concerning a planning approval for a stone tent at Bence without any vehicular access which had turned into a luxury holiday cottage and newly created roadway to serve it. Both the Parish Councillors and the audience suggested a coach and horses has been driven through the planning process and it was undermining the credibility and reputation of the YDNPA to allow matters to stand as they are.

Cllr Blackie said he had raised the issue at the past 2 YDNPA Planning Committees, and subsequently planning officers had submitted 2 confidential reports to the Committee. The latest position is that the offender was being given until the Planning Committee held in August to bring forward a planning application, and if not enforcement would take place to restore the barn to its original condition. Whether it was possible under enforcement to demand that the roadway would be removed was questionable according to the planning officer but it would be considered at the appropriate time.

Cllr Albert Sunter pointed out that the owner of the property was a very substantial buyer of sheep at Hawes Auction Mart.

1. Correspondence

- a. **Yorkshire Dales Society** - offer of support and Associate Membership. **Noted.**
- b. **St John's Community Centre, Catterick Garrison** – appeal for a Donation. **Noted.**

2. Financial Matters

- a. **HSBC Bank Statements** – The latest bank statements since the April meeting were presented to the meeting, having been circulated previously electronically to the Parish Councillors, **and the expenditure and income they showed was approved unanimously.**
- b. **VAT Claim.** The Parish Council noted that the Clerk had submitted a VAT claim to HMRC for £1466.61 up to the end of March 2017.
- c. **Parish Council Account - Bank Balance.** Council further noted that the Bank Balance as at 20th May 2017 stood at £8353.41.

3. **Any Other Business.** Cllr Tony Fawcett reported a large influx of rats in Hardraw on the river banks and in the village. Cllr Sheila Alderson added that the same problem is apparent at Dyers Garth in Hawes. Cllr Blackie to report these to the RDC, and the Council to pay for a community response. It was also reported that the drain on the corner by the Half Way House between Hawes and Appersett is blocked.

Meeting Closed at 9.13pm.

Date of next Meeting – Monday 10th July – Gayle Institute