



## Minutes of Parish Meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022

**Present** – Jim Brierley, Jan Buczak, Lesley Zimmerman, Vicky Buczak (Chair), Sarah Whitney, Alec Robertson, Ann Kern, Neil Kern, Yvonne Wilman, Guy Wilman, Cecilia Colver, Caroline Booth-Burke, Paul Booth-Burke, Sam Johnson, Keith Farrar; also Mark Gent (RSPCA Chief Inspector), Amanda Lay (cat owner), Vikki Byrne (owner of missing cat), Richard Ormston (Councillor), Ken Miller (renter of land off Back Lane),

**Apologies** – Wendy Hoare, Maureen Ayre, Peter Thompson, Sue Sharp, Andrew Sharp, Carol Brierley, Jane Stollery, Neil Armstrong-Nash, Alison Farrar, Michael Colver, Rob Calder; also Tom Jones (New Councillor)

Vicky Buczak (Parish Clerk) chaired the meeting. Meeting commenced at 18.30.

### **1/ Agree last minutes**

Agreed.

### **2/ Brief update regarding recent problems, from RSPCA Chief Inspector Mark Gent**

Mark noted that a number of cats had gone missing recently in our parish specifically, so advised that cat owners take care. The RSPCA are working with the police. Anyone aware of pet welfare or safety issues should report them to the RSPCA on 0300 1234999, with the option to remain anonymous. Mark confirmed that the RSPCA are not investigating any pet welfare offences in our area at present, but could not comment on police investigations.

Amanda Lay reminded us that cats were protected under the relevant Welfare Act. To concerns about cats being a nuisance, she responded by suggesting use of deterrents, or by contacting the cat owners. She offered to supply or advise on deterrents with people concerned.

Vikki Byrne related the sad loss of her cat, on which her family depended greatly for support. She has heard nothing more about it since its disappearance - it was both chipped and vaccinated.

### **3/ Annual Return**

Our parish is required by law to complete an “Annual Governance and Accountability Return” (AGAR) form after the end of the financial year, and to follow the publication and Parish Meeting approval requirements specified. The process includes filling out a

“Certificate of Exemption” from sending the return to the external auditor for a limited assurance review – thereby avoiding further costs.

To this end the Parish Clerk Vicky read out the declarations of the Annual Governance Statement, which seek to establish that there is a sound system of internal financial control, and that it is open and transparent to the parish members. The Parish Meeting agreed that all the provisions had been satisfied.

Furthermore, Vicky presented a summary of accounts to financial year end, covering itemised income and expenditure for our parish, as prepared by an external accountant (at a cost of £150) as required. No objections to the accounts were raised. However, a request was made for the accountant in future to itemise “Sundries” in more detail.

As specified in the AGAR form, the Certificate of Exemption, the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements will be displayed/posted via email, website and Notice Board; and a notice of the period for the exercise of public rights relating to them.

#### **4/ Request of £500 to support running costs of the Institute**

No objections were raised to this proposal. Jim Brierley pointed out that much of the funding needed for these purposes used to be supplied by walkers before COVID. The village may decide on fund-raising activities in the future to supplement such income – this has been done in the past. Sarah Whitney suggested that the precept requested for next year should also increase by far more than inflation. This will be discussed at a meeting close to end year, when the request needs to be made. Fund-raising ideas suggested included Open Gardens (Yvonne Wilman) and a Pudding Club (Keith Farrar).

#### **5/ Update on vote on voluntary registration of village green**

Sam Johnson, a Chartered Surveyor, had created maps to help define what the Parish Meeting might like to register as village green in the name of Thornton Steward Parish Meeting, and brought along some hard copies for the Meeting to examine. We are grateful to him for this work, which he performed pro bono. He provided a detailed composite map showing the extent of existing areas registered to North Yorkshire County Council, referred to as VG28 and VG30. In addition to these areas, his map included the unregistered land in front of The Cottage (owned by Sue and Andrew Sharp), and an area representing a track in front of Honeysuckle Cottage (owned by Jim and Carol Brierley). He also has a detailed map of the proposed changed village green area in front of The Cottage.

Sam will provide electronic versions of his map, plus the equivalent for the existing VG28 and VG30 parts of the green, and these will be posted on the website. Paper copies will also be displayed on the Notice Board, and in the Institute. Vicky suggested that between now and the next village meeting, there will be plenty of opportunity for anyone interested to query the proposed areas, suggest amendments, etc. All queries and suggestions or complaints should be sent to the Parish Clerk in the first place, and she will then involve Sam as needed.

## **6/ Update on Thornton Steward Social Group**

The Jubilee events on Thursday (2<sup>nd</sup> June) and Sunday (5<sup>th</sup> June) are well known, and well subscribed: about 70 are expected at the Sunday lunch. Vicky reminded the Meeting about the temporary road closure on Sunday. Keith Farrar kindly offered use of power sockets for the music system from Lower Garth, which is directly below the part of road being used on Sunday.

Caroline informed the meeting that a Quoits Evening is planned for the first Saturday in July. Amanda Lay told the meeting that her partner is a Quoits enthusiast, and may be able to supply more quoits – offer gratefully accepted. Caroline also reminded the Meeting that a Book Club is being set up.

The Meeting recorded their thanks to the Social Committee for all their considerable achievements over the past few months.

## **7/ Update on Unauthorised development and mis-use of agricultural land at Back Lane**

Soon after the last meeting which was proposing writing to our MP about the failures of Planning, a part-time Enforcement Officer visited the site with Ken Miller, and started investigating. She has now left and another full-time Enforcement Officer has taken up the case. She paid an unannounced visit and subsequently exchanged letters with Ken and the Parish Clerk. But clearly Ken and also Rob Calder are dissatisfied with the direction of the progress so far. This may be due partly to the new Officer being unfamiliar with the area, insufficiently acquainted with the less obvious details, or overloaded with work. In addition, Ken claims that a lot of information he has supplied in the past few weeks has been mislaid. Surprisingly, Richard Ormston (Councillor) had not even heard of this from Planning.

Vicky strongly recommended that the new Officer be given more time and help to get to the bottom of the issues faced by Ken and Rob, and of the true extent of any illegal development or mis-use. The Meeting generally agreed with this – in particular that this was not yet the time to involve our MP's office. A 3-pronged mode of attack was suggested by Vicky, and agreed:

- 1. Richard Ormston will chase up Planning, and in particular find out where the missing material has gone
- 2. Ken will have to continue to engage (albeit laboriously) with Planning, supplying info requested even if some duplication is necessary
- 3. Vicky, as Parish Clerk, will write to the Enforcement Officer, strongly encouraging her to visit the site accompanied by Ken (and Rob) at the least

Sarah Whitney pointed out that a good paper trail will be important if matters are still not resolved by Planning, and suggested that for now the primary focus should be on the illegality of the static caravan, leaving existing (illegal?) past building work as a secondary objective.

## **8/ Update on Fibre Broadband**

Lesley Zimmerman looked up the latest: the hardware is all in place, and the service should be commissioned in early June. After that, interested parties will need to contact their service providers to take advantage of the new set-up. Registering interest in the fast new service can be done at [superfastnorthyorkshire.com](http://superfastnorthyorkshire.com).

## **9/ Would anyone be willing to take over the role of looking after the village email distribution?**

Neil Stanton, who performs this task now, will be away for a few weeks. Alison Farrar has agreed to take over this role while Neil is away – many thanks to her. After that, she may be persuaded to continue, but would find it difficult without help during certain periods. Sharing the job would be one option. Anyone interested in taking over the role fully or on a shared basis should contact Vicky.

## **10/ Would anyone like to take over the role of Parish Clerk?**

Anyone interested should contact Vicky.

## **11/ AOB**

- Bob Garner wondered whether the Parish would consider setting up a roster for litter-picking. The Meeting felt that the current voluntary and ad-hoc arrangements work well, and Caroline suggested another 'Mothers Day' style initiative in the Autumn.
- Grass-cutting can make a mess of cars, and so Vicky will ask whether the cutters could give a day's notice. She will also ask if the frequency of cutting could increase. This will go onto the agenda for the next meeting.
- Ex-village resident Julia Waterman is offering to donate a 7 ft rowan tree to be set in a village common area. The Meeting would like to thank her for the offer, but decline. The apple trees proposed at the entrance to the village will have to be at Parish expense. Vicky will check with Highways and other relevant parties whether there are any objections to the proposed location, before planting time in Autumn.
- Briefing meetings about the structure of the new Unitary Council for North Yorkshire will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 30<sup>th</sup> June, online at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/ptc](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/ptc). This is aimed at existing or aspiring councillors and parish clerks.
- Neil Kern wondered whether others had been affected by aircraft flying (often aerobatically) over or near the village. Several had, and others brought up the incidence of annoying drones over the village. Neil has offered to do some research, checking with the local Civil Aviation Authority etc., in time for the next Parish meeting – thanks to him.

Thanks to all who attended.