



Minutes of Parish Meeting held on 31st May 2023

Present – Jim Brierley, Sue Sharp, Andrew Sharp, Wendy Hoare, Neil Armstrong-Nash, Maureen Ayre, Cecilia Colver (first half), Michael Colver (first half), Lesley Zimmerman, Jan Buczak, Vicky Buczak (Chair)

Apologies – Sarah Whitney, Neil Kern, Ann Kern, Jane Stollery, Alison Farrar, Paul Booth-Burke, Guy Wilman

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

1/ Agree minutes from last meeting 01 February 2023

Agreed.

Vicky noted that the Defibrillator “Show and Tell” did not materialise on May 8th as promised in the last minutes. However, such a session will be arranged once all the new defibrillator signs are up. A notice on its use will also be posted on the usual media.

2/ Presentation of Annual Return

Vicky presented a summary of parish accounts to financial year end, covering itemised income and expenditure, as prepared by an external accountant (at a cost of £150). Some minor discrepancies were noted: in particular, that Clerk’s Expenses of £500 were missing for this year. This was because the accountant did not receive the info in time. To compensate, we should expect a double figure next year.

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.

To this end the Parish Clerk Vicky read out the declarations of the Annual Governance Statement. The Parish Meeting agreed that all the provisions had been satisfied.

Furthermore, no objections to the related Accounting Statements for AGAR were raised. However, there were questions about how the Fixed Assets figure was calculated. Jim, Maureen, Vicky and Neil will work to establish this, especially since we have been informed that the accounts of our parish specifically will be scrutinised this year by Smaller Authorities’ Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA).

3/ Update and Vote on voluntary registration of village green

Using the definitive map of the village green produced by Sam Johnson (as agreed by all parties), Neil has filled in the forms required by Land Registry: FR1 (First Registration) and ST1 (Statement of Truth). The latter is needed because of a lack of title deeds, and gives evidence that we have treated it as our own, e.g. by grass-cutting and tree management.

The Meeting agreed unanimously that the voluntary registration should go ahead, so the forms will be signed by the Parish Clerk and formally submitted.

4/ Update on unauthorised development + mis-use of agricultural land at Back Lane

Vicky has again tried to contact Planning Manager Bart Milburn, because the latest Planning Enforcement Officer allocated to our case (Debbie) has left, as has the person promising that she would arrange a site visit (Mark Lynch). Bart has not replied or returned calls. However, a new Team Leader, Fiona Hunter, has now promised to chase up our case. Acknowledging lack of staff, she said that Richmondshire would get help from the new North Yorkshire Council, and that our case would be put in the pot of outstanding business next month.

Separately, Ken Miller has tried to get help from our councillor Tom Jones, to no avail.

5/ Vote on paying a tree surgeon to finish pruning big trees: T4, T12, T13 and T14

These are the trees listed as needing attention by Barnes Associates which will not be covered by village pruners or which have already been attended to by Olivers Tree Services. Olivers have quoted £786 to complete the pruning and remove the stump left once the Kanzan Cherry tree has been felled.

The Meeting voted unanimously to carry out this work at a maximum price of £786. (A lower quote may still come in.)

6/ Vote on the placement of village events notice board

The Meeting assumed that the purpose of the new board was to draw attention to the monthly social events: especially for those parish residents who live outside the village and do not access online info or visit the bus shelter notice board. It also serves as a reminder for those passing by.

Though applauding the initiative of the residents who erected the new board, the Meeting argued not just about its placement, but also aesthetics, legibility, and whether such a board should only be up a few days before each social event. In view of the interlinked nature of these aspects, it was felt that a vote on placement alone would be illegitimate.

The Social Group will consult on an improved solution, to be voted on in a future meeting. Highways (who vetoed placement of apple trees) may have a say about location.

7/ Vote on whether the village would like free-standing barrel style planters

Rejected by all those present.

8/ Update on Institute building plans and finances

Jim informed the Meeting that professional architects had been employed to draw up plans for Institute improvements, including kitchen re-roofing and provision of indoor toilet. The trustees are waiting for planning permission before acquiring quotes from builders. Only then will they seek finance for the work.

Jim noted that the Institute had spent £1860 on the architects, with other outlays including electrical work and insurance. He stated that the Institute had run up a deficit of about £700 last year.

9/ Vote on grant from the Precept for the Institute

Jim requested a grant of £1500 this year. Last year the figure was £500. Although the TSPM Precept for this year (already received) is double that for last year, the justification for the hike (as noted in the Meeting Minutes for September 2022) did not include extra funding for the Institute: rather it cited items such as tree pruning and village registration.

Neil pointed out that, from an accountancy standpoint, granting money from the Precept for TSPM (a Parish Meeting under the Local Government Act 1972) to the Institute (a Charitable Foundation) could be regarded as fiscally imprudent, without proper justification. He suggested that a formal budget should be created for TSPM, and that details of running costs for the Institute should likewise be available for scrutiny by TSPM. This would then establish what grant could be justified.

In view of the above, a Vote was not called, due to insufficient information.

Neil and Vicky will work on a budget for TSPM. Institute Trustees will be asked to supply the info needed from their side.

10/ Update on Thornton Steward Social Group

The Meeting was referred to the most recently published newsletter. The Meeting recorded a big thank you to the Social Group for very successful Coronation celebrations.

11/ Vote on having a map of house locations on the notice board

Agreed by all those present. Only house names will be used, using existing information available in the public domain.

12/ Would anyone like to take over the role of Parish Clerk?

No! But the Meeting recorded their gratitude for the excellent work of the present Clerk.

Additional Info

Voting at TSPM meetings can only take place in person (as per Government Act). Written submissions may be read out though, at the discretion of the Chair. Some were read out by the Parish Clerk at this meeting (anonymously).

Thanks to all who attended, especially to those who have volunteered to help