

Minutes of the Darrington Parish Council Meeting Virtual Meeting

8th October 2020 7PM

Present: Cllr Britton (Chair), Cllr Smith (Vice Chair), Cllr Tagger, Cllr Thompson, Cllr Stones, Cllr Stainer, Cllr Jackson
Clerk (Ian Thompson)

In Attendance:

No members of the public attended.

1. Apologies:

Cllr Jones of Wakefield MDC.

1A. Declarations Of Interest:

Cllrs Stone and Stainer declared their Village Field Committee membership.

2. Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

3. Minutes Of The Previous Meeting:

Cllr Thompson proposed and Cllr Stones seconded the proposal that the September minutes were a true and correct record. There was no dissent.

4. Matters Arising:

i) Parish Boundary and Council Tax Boundary.

At the previous meeting it was pointed out that a few properties on the electoral roll were not on the list of properties paying the Darrington parish council precept. The clerk was instructed to ask Wakefield MDC to ensure the two lists be brought in line. His email to Cllr Jones has been passed on to Cllr Graham the council leader for skills, digital and technology capabilities. Currently neither acknowledgement nor formal response has been received.

ii) Dog "Mess" in Old Orchard

Cllr Smith has passed the parish council's thanks to the resident who is regularly cleaning up the area.

iii) Village Sign Update

Cllr Stones has taken over leadership on this project and has reviewed the material passed over from the clerk. She will update the meeting as and when she makes progress.

ACTION VS

iv) Field Committee Section 137 Grant Request

The village field committee has made a formal request for a grant to help fund a new bench to replace one which has deteriorated to the extent that it is unusable. They would like to replace this bench with a new one made from recycled plastic materials and thus maintenance free and to repair a second one which is also in a bad state of repair. The

estimated cost of both would be in the order of £800. They point out that there was no “Feast and Fayre” this year, usually an excellent way of raising funds. After some discussion Cllr Thompson proposed and Cllr Smith seconded a proposal that the parish council would fully fund this work. There were three votes in favour and two abstentions. Cllrs Stones and Stainer had declared an interest in being members of the village field committee and did not vote. Cllr Stainer will contact them to discuss the actual amount and timescales.

ACTION PS

v) Wakefield Planning Committee Complaint Update

Cllr Tagger has acted as the spokesman for the parish council in leading the complaint about Wakefield MDC’s planning department’s continued lack of success in ensuring the compliance of Bankwood Stables’ owner to several enforcement orders. Additionally, whilst Wakefield MDC did comply with their own complaints’ procedure for Stage 1 in September 2019 which resulted in the parish council agreeing not to pursue any further actions pending imminent, promised actions by WMDC, they have not complied either in content or by time limits to their own Stage 2 procedure.

They do say that a site visit has been made and the enforcement officer is discussing the situation with their legal team but that any paperwork cannot be disclosed. Cllr Tagger was advised that a request would be made on behalf of the Parish Council by the member of the Complaints’ team to the WMDC Freedom of Information Team to release all available documentation that may illuminate reasons for delays and apparent inertia.

It has been the parish council’s position all along that failure to come to a satisfactory resolution after the complaints’ procedure was completed was to take the case to the ombudsman. However, it is now understood that a complaint by a parish council cannot be made about their ‘parent’ district council. Under these circumstances the parish council must reluctantly formally confirm that the pursuance of the complaint is now no longer a parish council matter. However, any private individual and that includes parish councillors acting in a private capacity can take a case to the ombudsman and Cllr Tagger intends to proceed with a personal referral. The parish council unanimously supports Mr Tagger in this endeavour.

vi) Sheep on Land Adjacent to A1 Slip Road

As instructed at last month’s meeting the clerk contacted Highways England in Leeds to inform them of the suspicions that had been raised that Highways England land adjacent to the exit slip road from the north bound A1 is being used illegally for grazing sheep and ask for confirmation or otherwise that they were aware of the situation.. The clerk was contacted a Mr Phillip Suen, the “complex case” manager for Highways England. He acknowledged the report and stated that the land does indeed belong to Highways England and that the grazing has been taking place without their knowledge and permission. He has passed the details onto “Carter Jonas” the company that is their national estate manager. However, despite emailing and asking for updates no further information has been received as to how they will proceed. The clerk will continue to monitor the situation.

ACTION IT

vii) Winter Planting Options

Cllr Thompson has spoken to the contractor currently performing gardening duties and asked if he wanted to supply, plant and maintain winter pansies in the planters. He

replied that he cannot do it this year because of lack of equipment but would welcome the opportunity to be offered the same option next year as he hopes to have more equipment at his disposal. The contractor did ask when First Impressions would come to remove the existing displays as if kept he felt they could be planted elsewhere within the village. Cllr Stones will ask First Impressions as to when they plan to come to remove the existing plants and whether we can “save” the centre pieces. First Impressions had already given a quotation to provide and optionally maintain winter plants. There was no support for this proposal.

ACTION VS

viii) Christmas Trees On Lampposts

First Impressions have been refused permission to attach their Christmas Tree brackets to lampposts. Wakefield MDC say they have not received enough notice nor indeed any brackets to test and there is not enough time now for them to make a decision before Christmas.

ix) Post Office Situation

At the previous meeting councillors believed that the “Reading Rooms”, which ultimately fall under the jurisdiction of the bishop, could not be used for any purpose other than already agreed training of NHS staff by a qualified doctor. At that meeting the clerk was asked to write to the bishop explaining why the post office is so important to so many of our residents and to ask for him to reconsider his position for this one situation. However, that letter was not required as the clerk was informed that the vicar and church warden are in discussions with a gentleman who has been given permission by the post office authorities to run the service in the village. It is understood that the church authorities are happy to allow the use of the Reading Rooms for this purpose. The council fully support the re-opening of the post office service in the village and hope the parties come to an agreement soon.

x) Incredible Edible Update

Cllr Smith has not had a lot of support for this project. Only four people have expressed interest. Cllr Smith had sent a poster to the school hoping that parents would see it and express interest for them and their children to get involved. Unless she gets more support soon she will have to abandon the idea.

xi) “Pig Smell” update

In response to residents complaints that this year the pig smells seem to be more frequent than in previous years Cllr Tagger contacted Mr Batty at the adjacent farm. Mr Batty confirmed that he has taken the same care in doing any work that will produce a smell as ever but made the comment that more people have been at home than in previous years because of COVID-19 and that there have been unusually long periods of north westerly winds which would affect parts of the village not usually affected as much. He stressed that he takes great care to manage odour output and that on viewing social media he feels some residents discredit themselves by making ill-informed comments particularly on the Darrington Community Facebook page. He reminded everyone that his farm is regularly inspected and monitored by the Environment Agency and has never had any issues. He has offered to attend parish council meetings if the council felt it would help. Cllr Smith volunteered to add an entry to the parish council website confirming that minutes of our meetings are readily available for everyone to view and

they will include our discussion of the topic. Councillors noted Mr Batty has always responded quickly to any questions and thanked him for his response.

ACTION FS

xii) “Dog Waste Bags” Dispensers

Cllr Smith has been in touch with a neighbouring parish to confirm that such dispensers also include a bin for used bags. The council do not empty these bins and volunteers are required to empty them. She believes she will be able to pull together a list of volunteers to perform that role in Darrington. Given that dog waste is one of the issues frequently raised by residents she believes such dispensers will be popular with villagers. Some discussion took place as to how many and where they would be placed. The cost per dispenser is £264 plus VAT and includes dispenser, dog waste bin and 800 bags. Cllr. Smith will produce a proposal of how many, where and at what cost for consideration by the council.

ACTION FS

xiii) Christmas Tree Date Of Collection Update

Cllr Stones has not yet contacted Mr Morrell regarding a date for collection of the tree kindly donated by “The Brotherhood” and is awaiting a response from the church warden as to whether or not a tree will be required for the “Reading Rooms”.

ACTION VS

xiv) Website Accessibility Compliance 2.1

The web content accessibility guidelines are an internationally recognised set of recommendations for improving web accessibility and include support, for example, for colour blind people by carefully considering the use of colour on sites, support for hard of hearing by making subtitles available for video etc. Councils are now required to meet the level “AA” of these standards. The clerk has run various site checkers on many local council websites and they have universally failed. However, many council websites have included a certificate of compliance on their site and this brings the reliability of these checkers into question. The council resolved that the clerk should contact Mr Kelvin Wilkins who designed our current website to discuss the situation and then bring that back to the council for options on how to proceed. Cllr Smith volunteered to assist in this process.

ACTION IT/FS

5. Correspondence

i) Footpaths

A question was received by email regarding rights of way in the village. Wakefield MDC have a map showing all of the public footpaths and bridleways in the area and the clerk was able to reply with this information.

ii) River Went South Bank Ownership

An email from a company called “Wavetide Ltd” who have been commissioned to do some work on the south bank of the River Went immediately under the A1 Wentbridge viaduct. The clerk replied and suggested it might well be part of the Brockadale Nature Reserve – but the company reply stating that it is not. The clerk then pointed out that the

south bank of the River Went is in Thorp Audlin parish council area and Wavetide will contact them.

iii) Volunteer Assistance Request

A gentleman whose 90+ year old mother lives in the village phoned asking for help with groceries etc. He had stayed with her all through March but lives in London. After texting the volunteers, one called and offered to help.

iv) Defibrillator

An email from the ambulance service stating that the defibrillator had been withdrawn by a member of the public. It wasn't used. It has been replaced and diagnostic checks confirm all is in order.

v) Wentbridge Verge Comment

A letter from a Wentbridge resident who corresponded last month. His issue currently is the quality of the cut of the verge outside his house. He believes the quality of the cut along the Moor Lane verges is immaculate. However, his opinion is that the verges on the Great North Road should have been done at the same time to the same standards. It has now been done but the result is that he is of the opinion these verges have the appearance of "scrubland". He has complained to Wakefield and is asking for parish council support. The meeting discussed the issue and concluded, once again, this is indeed a matter for Wakefield MDC and the clerk was instructed to reply to acknowledge the letter and to ensure Wakefield MDC are aware of the issue.

ACTION IT

6. Finance

The opening balance brought forward from the end of August 2020 was £21,650.93

There was one item of income in September.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Income Source</u>	<u>Income Stream</u>	<u>Amount</u>
11.9.2020	Wakefield MDC	2 nd Precept Payment	£6,522.01

There were two items of expenditure in September:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Payment Method</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>VAT</u>
10.9.20	16-2021	Cheque 823	Fiona Smith	Conference Call Charges	£22.14	£0
10.9.20	17-2021	Cheque 824	D. Dyas	Gardening / Maintenance	£88.00	£0
				<u>Total Expenditure</u>	£110.14	£0

This left a balance of £28,062.80.

There was one item for payment requiring approval. Councillors have all had sight of the detail of this requirement for over the required three days.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Payment Method</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>VAT</u>
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8.10.20	18-2021	Cheque 825	D Dyas	Gardening / Maintenance	£272.00	£0
				<u>Total Payments</u>	£272.00	£0

Cllr. Britton proposed payment. Cllr. Smith seconded and the proposal was passed unanimously.

With the caveat that no decision as yet having been made on project spending the RFO's estimate for year-end finances is a balance of over £22,000. The council is actively seeking projects to improve the village.

7. Planning Matters

Two applications that have been discussed at earlier meetings have had their applications approved. There has been one new application within the last month and details were circulated to councillors at the time the application was lodged.

- i) 20/01727/AGR Grove Cottage (near Grove Hall) for barn – Approved
- ii) 20/1300/FUL Chapel Hill cottage off Valley Road, side and front extension – Approved
- iii) 20/01935/CPL New application, Mannaseh, two new outbuildings as circulated. After discussion “no comment” was concluded.

8. Reports

- i) School – the school has been supporting families and managing the difficulties associated with children returning to school. A recent report from the school improvement advisor has described Darrington school as an exemplar for primary schools.
- ii) Gardening Club – Cllr Tagger will shortly produce the seventh edition of the monthly newsletter. Cllr Stones and Tagger are working on a calendar using photographs of local gardens.
- iii) Police – no report
- iv) Village Field – no report
- v) Newsletter – Cllr Stones believes one should be produced by mid-November. Deliveries are normally made by councillors directly but not all councillors would feel comfortable doing that in the current situation. The council will consider paying for them to be delivered. Cllr Smith will investigate costs.

ACTION FS

9. Carried Over Items

Given the current situation with the coronavirus pandemic restricting actions and projects that might otherwise be progressing these items are included in the minutes simply so as “not to forget them” when things return to normal.

The remaining items are:-

- i) Parish Meeting and Annual General meeting
- ii) Litter pick
- iii) Speed strips installation and data analysis

- iv) Report from Wakefield Highways covering crossing in Estcourt Road, Marlpit Lane narrowing, 7.5 tonne signs in Valley Road, Unofficial lay-by on slip road and litter on the slip road.
- v) Enforcement of regulations within deeds of property by Wakefield MDC planning.
- vi) Broken glass in telephone box housing defibrillator

10. Minor Items

- i) Cllr Jackson is concerned that the boundary wall for the new property at 1 Stone Mews does not have the tree believed to be part of the land with the property but skirts around it with the tree outside the boundary wall. Residents close to the property are concerned about mid to long term maintenance of the tree and they would like clarification as to whether or not the tree is part of the property. After some discussion the clerk was asked to obtain the deeds of the property for clarification.

ACTION IT

- ii) Cllr Jackson has had residents asking about the current state of the potential A1 upgrade and possible diversion. The clerk was asked to obtain an update from Highways.

ACTION IT

- iii) The clerk reported that he expects to have an aortic valve replacement operation within the next few weeks. This will mean his being unable to perform his role for at least two months and asked colleagues to cover. Councillors were hugely supportive and will do whatever it takes to cover the role.

11. Date Of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be 12th November 2020.

The meeting closed at 20:38