

**GIGGLESWICK PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 11th April 2023**

23.1 Present:

Giggleswick Parish Council: Councillors Isobel Perrings (Chair), Colin Coleman, Janet Ewin-Newhouse, Martin Saunders, Rosie Scott, Sarah Williamson, Parish Council Clerk Marijke Hill; North Yorkshire County Councillor David Staveley; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Rob Ashford; and two members of the public.

Apologies for non attendance: North Yorkshire Police.

23.2 Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th June 2022, were **accepted** as a true and accurate record and signed by Cllr Isobel Perrings, Chair of Giggleswick Parish Council.

23.3 Chairman's Report

Having re-read last year's report and I have reflected upon progress made over the last 12 months it is clear to see that in some cases we have been prevented from accomplishing some of our routine day-in, day-out work and also from starting to get underway some of our more long term plans and improvements, particularly with regards to the Harrison Playing Fields.

We are still awaiting the Planning Committee's decision for the proposed housing development on Little Lord's, off Bankwell Road. We have been working closely with consultants, from both Craven District Council and those on behalf of the developers, to see how the Section 106 planning obligations will make a positive contribution to the local area and community. However, we are currently at a standstill due to a lack of finalised agreement. At this moment, we are unsure what effect the start of North Yorkshire Council as a unitary authority will have upon this and subsequent decision making.

We do hope that we see some improvements in North Yorkshire Council's obligations as contractors for our parish in respect of lighting repairs and maintenance. We are continually in contact regarding lights that are not being repaired or are awaiting re-connection from lamp standard to another. We have recently carried out a full audit of our lighting provision with a view to commence a programme of replacement and upgrade in order to provide more cost efficient and sustainable lighting across the village. This will be a substantial expenditure and one that we will phase across the forthcoming years. In the meantime, we really need our new unitary council to fulfil their obligations for which they are contracted and paid to provide.

The Harrison Playing Fields continue to be a very popular and well-used outdoor area for both parishioners and those from further afield and we are delighted to announce that the Council has received the Deed of Dedication from the Trustees of the Fields in Trust, a legally binding document which will ensure that the Harrison Playing Fields are protected for future generations to enjoy. The Fields are regularly audited for provision and we hope to soon put in place some planned schemes of enhancement and replacement.

I was recently in attendance, along with Councillors Williamson and Coleman, at a Certificate Ceremony following the final Council Meeting of Craven District Council. It was

an honour to see so many individuals and organisations from this end of our district recognised for their hard work and dedications to our local communities. It was particularly nice to see Margaret Airey and Ray Jones awarded, as well as Tony and Wendy Carroll on behalf of the Giggleswick Gardening and Litter Pick Group and the Settle Swimming Pool Committee; congratulations to all recipients.

Our parish is again looking forward to coming together to celebrate the forthcoming Coronation of King Charles in May. This will take focus across two events; on Friday 5th May, a ‘cheese and wine evening’ in the Parish Church, followed by beacon lighting and fireworks, and on Sunday 7th May, where a Coronation Big Lunch will take place in the grounds of St’Alkelda’s – all are welcome, please pass on and look out for the information posters soon.

Moving onto financial matters and the summary of receipts and payment for 2022-2023, I can report that the Council’s receipts totalled £27,873 of which £22,000 comprise of precept. The payments for the same period total £23,596 and, therefore, show a surplus of £4,277.

To conclude, I would like to give my personal thanks to all my fellow Councillors who give invaluable support and time to this parish. I greatly appreciate your efforts and your commitment and thank you for your great team effort and hard work over this past year. I would like to thank our County and District Councillors, David Staveley and Robert Ogden for their attendance and support to the Parish throughout the year.

Finally, great thanks goes to Marijke, our clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Marijke continues to provide professional support and guidance to all Council Members. Marijke is a great support to me as Chair and on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank you for your dedication and hard work.

23.4 Reports from County Councillor, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and the Police

23.4a Report from North Yorkshire Council Councillor David Staveley

The last twelve months has been a challenging time for all on many levels. We have each faced sharp increases in the cost of living giving rise to wide range of effects both societal and geo-politically. This has meant increased calls from many sectors for higher wage settlements in the public sector that has ultimately had an effect on the finances of Local Government. All this as we move forward into North Yorkshire’s latest chapter in Local Government reorganisation that has seen the seven District and Borough councils merge with North Yorkshire County Council to form the new unitary authority, North Yorkshire Council. Launched on the first of April, we are now into our second week and there is a sense that with the exception of the odd inevitable hiccups, the transition has been planned and executed extremely well.

For many the changes will be minimal as many frontline services will continue to be delivered by many of the same staff on the familiar geographic footprint. That is not to say there haven’t and won’t be further changes, but at this time they are mainly confined to the management structure and of course the democratic profile of representation that is now down to ninety members across 89 wards. As the machinery of the new authority settles in and opportunities for more efficient working practices and estate rationalisation present themselves, I’m sure we will start to see further changes and efficiencies made, but these will

always be within the prism of a commitment to quality of service to residents and value for money.

Perhaps the most noticeable and immediate change will be in terms of Planning which will adopt the existing Constituency Committee model which follows the footprint of the Parliamentary constituency of Skipton and Ripon. There has been a harmonisation of the scheme of delegation for members, but meetings will continue to be held at the Belle Vue Mills offices in Skipton.

There will also be a central Planning Committee which will deal with larger applications of over 500 units and Planning Policy as the new County Local plan is drawn up.

Customer services

Our new council will implement a one front door approach from day one. This means access to our services will be easier, while we provide the right experience by using the right contact methods for differing scenarios.

The council's new customer number is 0300 131 2 131. This number will go live on 1 April. Moving forward, this will be the number for all main customer communication. However, no old numbers will be switched off until we are confident that they are not required.

The new number, along with the 'contact us' functionality on the website, will provide the main contact points for customers.

Council Tax

Council tax is now the most important source of funding for council services in North Yorkshire, and each one per cent increase raises more than £4 million towards meeting rising costs and demand. The new council's budget will see a rise in council tax of 4.99 per cent, equating to an increase of £83.64 for an average Band D property.

- We have decided to increase CT by 2.99%, the maximum allowed before holding a referendum, and adding another year of the Adult Social Care levy of 2%
- We do not do this lightly, as we know there are many people in the County who will find it hard to pay any increase, but comes as we face substantial increases in demand for our services.
- Over the last 10 years our CT increases have been below inflation.
- However we must make sure that we have sufficient funds to deliver essential services, especially to people who are very vulnerable, like the elderly, and children who need safeguarding and have special needs. Over 50% of our total spend goes on these two areas now.
- Our budgets face the same cost pressures as many in both personal and business budgets – huge rises in energy costs, where our £7m spend pa could rise to £30m; increased transport costs, especially getting children to school; general inflationary pressures; special inflation in the building sector, especially roads and repairs – we can't buy bitumen from Russia any more, quite rightly, but that prohibition has forced world prices up.
- We have used £30m from our prudent reserves built up over many years to ensure we don't cut services, but we can only use them once.
- We have put in place mitigation measures to help cushion the impact on many people – CT discounts (even more generous than the schemes provided by our district colleagues), increasing our own Local Assistance Fund helping those in desperate need, using the government's extension to their Household Support Fund, supporting

community organisations providing help and food banks, financial support to bodies like the Citizens Advice to help people who need advice on how to manage their financial circumstances.

- We expect savings to be made in the re-organisation of local government, but although some are immediate like £1m pa on the most senior staff, and £700k pa on reducing the number of councillors, it will take time to make other savings, like reducing offices and buildings, but they will be between £30m and £70m a year.

Ward Member Grant scheme

Following on from the previous NYCC ward member grant scheme, the new NYC will continue to offer a funding pot of £10,000 for each councillor to support community projects and initiatives in their division, subject to meeting the appropriate criteria which will now prohibit 100% funding applications.

Previous year grant funding projects:

- Sound equipment to a local School to help promote children's performing arts both in school and external drama club;
- Energy efficient kitchen equipment for Stainforth Village Hall;
- Energy efficient lighting improvements for Horton-in-Ribblesdale Village Hall;
- Children's sports equipment for NRRUFC;
- Replacement handrail along side a footpath in Giggleswick;
- Purchase of replacement safety equipment for the Cave Rescue Organisation;
- Purchase a VAS matrix speed sign for Ribble Banks Parish Council.

23.4b Report from Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Robert Ashford

Public Rights of Way Maintenance

The overall condition of crossings on the PROW network within the Ribblesdale areas at 90% in good condition.

Continued maintenance of the PROW infrastructure within the parish over the past year.

Two ladder stiles on the public footpath between Stackhouse towards Feizor have recently been converted to stone step stiles.

At the request of Giggleswick Parish Council the landowner of Giggleswick Quarry was contacted asking for remedial repairs to the fence surrounding the quarry after the tragic incident involving a dog falling to its death. An emailed response from the landowner was forwarded onto the Clerk.

23.4c Report from North Yorkshire Police PCSO

The Chairman, Cllr Isobel Perrings, reported that the North Yorkshire Police had provided a list of all 161 reported incidents in the year. The Police continues to provide a written monthly incidents report to the Parish Council at its meeting.

23.5 Reports from local community organisations.

a. The Giggleswick Litter Picking Group 'Pride in our Parish'

Tony Carroll presented the annual report for the Giggleswick Litter-Picking Group 2022

Members

The Group had 17 active members who patrol a set route once a month (except where illness or injuries have happened). Some have seen the need or desire to do extra patrols.

On average, at least 14 members patrol each month and collect varying amounts litter.

Collection of Sacks

Arrangements have been made with Craven District Council to collect the sacks from a central point, usually after the 1st Monday of each month. Sacks collected at other times are deposited in member's own bins.

Change of Routine

When 'lockdown' was introduced members patrolled their routes from home rather than meeting at St Alkelda's Church on the first Monday each month. This system has worked alongside the original system as it gives more flexibility to members.

Contact with the public

Members often report back on the thanks expressed by members of the public for what the group does for the appearance of the parish, and safety of animals when glass bottles are thrown at or over walls adjacent to fields.

Feedback

Members are encouraged to send a feedback on the content and type of litter they have collected, this has ranged from lorry mudguards to bottles and packets of contraceptives! Also items washed up on the riverbank too large to remove (these were kindly removed by C.D.C.). Reports have also been submitted to YCC on broken Public Footpath signs. The feedback is included in the monthly newsletter to members.

Conclusion

It is gratifying to report that the group is making an ongoing positive effect on the appearance of the parish; there will always be the litter louts but we take heart in that one person was heard to say "I moved to Giggleswick because it was so *'litter free'*".

The group was delighted to be nominated for a Legacy Award. Wendy and I received it at Skipton Town Hall on 30th March.

b. Settle Area Swimming Pool

The Chair of Settle Area Swimming Pool, Colin Coleman, presented the report.

Busy year

It has been a busy year for Settle Area Swimming Pool. We re-opened last October following completion of the year long redevelopment work. We were pleased local councillors attended our official re-opening. The redevelopment work has been well received by users. We have completely revamped the changing area – with new cubicles, showers, lockers and toilets. We now have an open reception area including a café and viewing lounge.

Most important we have fitSpace, a multi-use dry area that at different times of the day hosts children play session, high intensity interval training and more relaxed exercise classes for the less mobile. Usage is growing and we are looking forward to the summer when we can welcome more visitors to the area as well as local residents.

Finances

But, as you will have no doubt read in the press, public swimming pools across the country are under immense financial pressure with, according to one report, as many as half threatened with closure. We are facing serious problems as a result of rising costs:

- Our gas bill has gone up fourfold in recent months;
- Insurance premiums are rocketing;
- And there is of course the general inflation we are all facing.

What we are doing

We are taking a number of measures to see that Settle pool stays afloat.

We have applied for a share of the emergency funding for pool announced in the March budget. We are raising funds for additional solar panels to go alongside those we installed last year that have already helped keep down our electricity bill. We have received a detailed report on measures we can take to cut our carbon footprint as well as reduce costs and are looking at increasing the insulation of the older part of the building.

But despite this, we are also, reluctantly, having to increase swim prices from May. The standard adult rate will now be £6.20 with £5 for concessions. We believe this still represents good value for money and will not deter users. As you would expect we will be keeping the situation under close review over coming months.

Finally one of the great strengths of Settle Pool over the years has been the community support that we continue to enjoy.

Charity Shop

The pool charity shop and associated on-line sales generated £80,000 in the first full year following covid restrictions and we remain indebted to the many volunteers whose support for the pool is invaluable.

c. Giggleswick Gardening Group

The Chair, Councillor Isobel Perrings, read out the Giggleswick Gardening Group report. Just to say what a fantastic, dedicated team we have at St. Alkelda's. The churchyard is looking beautiful and many visitors comments reflect this. This year 15 volunteers have worked 880 hours in the churchyard. This is an underestimation, as some of our volunteers attend at times other than our usual 2 hour sessions every Monday between 1.30 to 3.30pm.

We have only cancelled 5 Monday sessions this year due to bad weather. Three for too much rain, one for too much snow and one for extreme heat! Unusual for Yorkshire! However, several of these days were re-arranged for later in the week.

As usual, our gardening duties include: mowing, strimming, trimming graves and memorial stones, pruning, raking hay and leaves, sweeping, clearing and edging paths and introducing new plants and sowing seeds.

We continue to keep a good balance between 'tended' and 'wildlife' areas. We also continue our policy of not using any chemicals. However, Members of the Parochial Church Council believe that some members of the public do use chemicals on family graves, such as pouring undiluted liquid bleach over a gravestone to keep it clean. This is probably not very good for the stone and definitely not very good for the ground beneath.

Our piles of compost and leaf mould are 'cooking' nicely and are regularly added to borders when necessary.

A Giggleswick resident came to us for advice regarding sowing wildflowers in the Harrison Playing Fields, for which permission had been granted, and I passed on what knowledge I could.

In October we spent £50 of our funds on a large quantity of Yellow Rattle seeds for our wildflower meadow area. Some members put in a huge amount of effort scarifying large patches of ground and sowing and trading in the seeds. Fingers crossed for swathes of Yellow Rattle in 2023!

The Chairman thanked everybody for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7.08 pm.