

Kirkby Fleetham with Fencotes Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Annual Meeting – 16 May 2024 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Parish Councillors: Mr Walker, Mrs Herbert, Mr Lamperd and Mrs Edwards-Heathcote.

1. Apologies

County Councillor Wilkinson. The Council accepted this apology.

2. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 18 May 2023 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting proceedings and signature agreed upon.

Acceptance was proposed by Cllr Walker and seconded by Cllr Herbert.

3. Chairman's Report

Despite only having occupied the position of Chairman of the Parish Council these last three months I am pleased to be able to present the 2024 annual parish report. Gary Jones stepped down from the chair and the Parish Council in February for personal family reasons so having served as vice chair for the last two years I accepted the elevation to chair, subject, of course, to formal reselection in the forthcoming meeting. I am sure we all wish Gary and his family the very best in their difficult times. I will therefore start with a sincere vote of thanks to Gary for the work he has done for the Parish since he was elected to serve in 2019 and particularly for his time as Chair these last two years. Gary is to be commended for his strong and effective leadership and his diligence in performing the duties of chairman, particularly in the, often onerous, details of parish matters and the procedural obligations which parish councils are required to fulfil in today's world. I will do my best to keep up his excellent work.

Gary's departure has left us with a vacancy for a new parish councillor to bring us back to our full complement of five councillors. North Yorkshire Electoral Services confirmed in early April that there is no requirement for an election by parish residents and therefore we can advertise locally and endeavour to co-opt a councillor to fill the vacancy. Despite advertising for a month, to date, no positive applications have been received. We will redouble our efforts to advertise the vacancy and to encourage anyone showing an interest to come forward.

Over the last 12 months, it has been mostly business as usual, but I will mention, in no special order some of the key matters that have been dealt with or concluded within this reporting period.

St Andrew's Church

The sale of St Andrew's church, with an approved change of use to a dwelling house appears to be complete. The new owners have commenced external works to clear the site ready for the construction of the driveway and the energy hub buildings.

Moving of the gravestones in the affected areas by the monumental masons has commenced and three large yew trees plus one ash tree have been removed. The cremated remains interred in the affected area have been disinterred and moved to a new location in the unaffected part of the graveyard.

National Lottery Heritage Grant

In last year's annual meeting, we reported that the Parish Council had successfully been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for the Commemorative Garden Space project at the Parish Cemetery, which includes the construction of a Lychgate. Funding was received from the Lottery on 1st June last year for the first 50% of the grant. To best manage the delivery of the project, a sub-committee was established including members of the Parish Council, former councillors and members of the local history group as well as the engagement of a specialist heritage consultant. A great deal of progress has been made since then. The most obvious sign of this progress is that the Lychgate is complete. We signed a formal contract with Harland Builders in September last year, work commenced in November and all was completed in March. I hope all will agree that it is a fine structure which greatly enhances the Parish Cemetery. Though less obvious to the casual observer, other project work on local history, environmental and education elements of the project has also

made great progress with the recording of oral history, the development of the wildflower meadow and the involvement of the village school in the environmental work also raising the children's awareness of our local history and heritage.

A special thanks to all the participants in making this project delivery such a success to date, not least in the hard work done by all the cemetery working parties.

We have now received the second phase of the funding from the Lottery, based on a further 40%. It is hoped to substantially complete the overall project and to arrange a celebratory event this Autumn.

Community Speed Watch

We regularly download and analyse data from the Vehicle Activated Speed Sign (VAS) located in Great Fencote. Whilst the problem of speeding in the parish remains, it is now clear that the presence of the VAS has significantly reduced the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit through the village. The original speed survey had indicated that over 30% of all vehicle passes were over 30mph whereas following the deployment of the VAS it is typically below 10%.

We will also continue to deploy the handheld Community Speed Watch equipment around the Parish.

Solar Farm Community Grant

The Solar Farm Community grant was secured from Lightsource BP, to be applied for the benefit of the communities of this parish. Grants for this financial year that have been awarded and funded are as follows: 1. £3000 to the Village Hall as a contribution towards the external renovation, 2. £3000 to the Village School as a contribution towards the upgrading of old play equipment in the schoolyard, 3. £3000 to the History Group as a contribution towards the building of the History Room annexe on the Village Hall: 4. A sum to be determined but approximately £5300 for the NLHF Commemorative Garden Space project including the Lychgate.

Highways

We have all noticed the significant additional burden placed on our local roads over this last Winter as a result of the closure of the A684 due to flooding at Morton Flats. We are aware that this road has been closed six times this Winter, once for the placement of concrete barriers and five times due to flooding. It has been an exceptionally wet Autumn and Winter and consequently, the additional traffic has done disproportionate damage to our road edges and caused an increase in the number of potholes. Gary and I attended a meeting hosted by North Yorkshire Council attended by Highways to discuss the closure of bridges over the River Swale and the associated road closure, official diversion routes, mitigating measures and prompt local notification and reporting measures. Management of the River Swale is with The Environment Agency and there are no plans for measures to prevent overflow of the river at this site.

Local Transport and Community Support

I would like to thank John Lamperd for his tireless work in highlighting local public transport needs and campaigning for their improvement together with his promoting the various support services that are available such as the excellent work done by Hambleton Community Action. The establishment of the Fleetham & Fencotes Outings Group is a great credit to him and we hope its success will continue.

Finance

In a moment Nathen, as Responsible Financial Officer, will outline the Parish Council finances for 2023/24 in some detail. But firstly I would like to briefly mention the issue of the parish precept. Other than grants for bespoke projects, the precept is the only means by which this Parish Council can raise funds. In the last three financial years, our expenses have been greater than our income levels. Recognizing the need to protect against continuing inflationary pressures it was felt necessary to apply a £400 increase from the previous level of £7800 to the current level of £8200 for the 2024-25 financial year. Hopefully reducing inflation trends will mean future increases may be able to be smaller. It is worth noting that, despite the relatively high cost of building the Lychgate together with the other heritage activities, none of this cost has been taken from the Parish precept 85% of the cost is covered by the Lottery grant, with the remainder coming either from the burial authority funds raised by burial fees or from the Solar Farm Community Grant.

I would like to conclude by thanking all of our Councillors, Ann, Alison and John and our Parish Clerk Nathen for the support and commitment they have provided during this past year to me and Gary before me.

4. Financial Report

Parish Council Account

The starting balance at the beginning of the financial year 2023/24 was £8,875, excluding the Solar Farm Community Fund. During the year, £8,589 was spent on the Parish, this included maintenance costs, grass cutting, hedge cutting, wages, village hall rental, insurance etc.

The Parish received a Precept of £7,800, £2,000 from the Burial Authority towards the costs of the Lychgate, A National Heritage Grant of £23,043 from the National Lottery and a further £555 income.

Income (less grants)	£8,355
Expenditure	£8,589
Surplus / Deficit	£ -234

At the end of 2023/24, £8,641 (excluding the Solar Farm Community Fund and Hertigate grant) was carried forward in the Parish Council Account.

Burial Authority Account

The starting balance at the beginning of the financial year 2023/24 was £15,982.

The Burial Authority received £2,522 in income and spent £2,793 this included maintenance costs, grass cutting, hedge cutting and loan costs and transferred £2,000 to the Parish Council towards the Lychgate build. At the end of 2023/24, £13,710 was carried forward in the Burial Authority Account.

Summary

That leaves a total surplus in both accounts of £22,351. In 2012 councillors agreed to hold a contingency fund of £3,000 for unforeseen expenditures. This leaves a balance of £19,351 between the two accounts available for future developments or improvements.

6. Open Discussion

Waste Bins

Residents have requested two additional dog waste bins around the Parish. The Clerk will contact North Yorkshire Council for a quote.

Dog Walkers

There have been some complaints that dog walkers are letting off their dogs in fields adjacent to public footpaths with livestock in and are removing electric fence posts which are disabling the electric fence.

The landowners request that dogs should remain on the lead and respect landowners, to avoid accidents. Some landowners have received verbal abuse when confronting dog walkers.

Cllr Walker will draft a notice for InfoNet to ask if dog walkers could respect the landowner's wishes and keep dogs on a lead.

The meeting closed at 7:30 pm.