

Minutes of Meeting held 29th November 2017

Present: Coun P Ridley (Chair), Coun A Moore, Coun O Poulter, Coun R Gouldthorpe, Coun J Sanderson, Cllr A Wilkinson (NYCC), Cllr B Phillips (HDC), R Dale (Clerk) PCSO Kim Laws (Northallerton Police) plus 18 members of the public

1) Apologies

None

2) Minutes of meeting held 27th September 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2017 were agreed a true record proposed by Coun Moore and seconded by Coun Gouldthorpe. Signed off by Chair Ridley

3) Matters Arising

1) Village Green Open Space (Paddock)

Mr Sedgwick advised that, because of their failure to attend to this area of land, Linden Homes were potentially in breach of their agreement for the development of the estate. The landscape was supposed to be cultivated and seeded, and the birch tree needed to be cut down. He was pursuing matters with the developers on behalf of the Council. He commented that this area of land would need repeat attention at least twice a year.

2) Level Crossing on Station Lane

Network Rail have advised that this is the responsibility of Wensleydale Railway. **Action: Parish Clerk**

3) Doug Fouling – Back Lane. Dog warden has been notified of continued breaches in this area.

4) Cllr. Wilkinson reported that NYCC Highways Department had no funding available to implement a restricted 20mph zone near the two schools. This was because it was not simply a matter of installing road signs, but because it would also entail introducing costly traffic-calming measures (eg “sleeping policemen”), and their current priority was to focus on areas with a known accident record.

5) The hedge that had been obstructing the School sign in Station Lane had been cut back.

4) Police Report

PCSO Laws introduced PCSI Danielle Kovacs as a new colleague. She reported that, during the preceding two months, there had been one reported burglary, one incident of criminal damage and one “other” incident (fraud) in the Parish. She provided the Clerk with a number of packs of literature for distribution to potentially vulnerable residents with information regarding various initiatives relating to home security and also to keeping warm in winter. She also offered the Council the opportunity to organise a free “property marking” session – **action: Parish Clerk**

5) Safer Hambleton Project

Ms Gina Allen, from the Safer Hambleton team, was invited to address the meeting. An open interactive session followed, during which a number of the concerns of residents, relating in particular to the opening of the new Play Park, were raised. Gina offered to arrange a local workshop, using her - and her team's - experience from their work in other parishes, to help us to develop a plan to tackle the anti-social behaviour and other related issues that were of greatest concern. **Action:**

Parish Clerk

6) Planning Matters

It was noted that the planning application by Mr S Clayton for a construction at the rear of Swaledale Court had been approved by HDC Planning Department. The meeting was advised that, despite the Council's and local residents', objection to this application, no appeal against this decision was permissible under planning regulations. The option to appeal a decision of the Planning Committee was only open to an applicant whose application had been refused.

7) Finance

1) The Clerk reported on the current financial position which was satisfactory. Whilst the Clerk had reported a temporary cash-flow problem at the previous meeting, a delayed VAT refund had since been received and the second half of the annual Parish Precept had also been received at the end of September.

2) A donation of £500 towards the cost of maintenance of the Village Hall was approved, this donation to be made annually thereafter until further notice without further consideration being required by the Parish Council. **Action: Parish Clerk**

3) A donation of £250 to St Helen's Church was approved, this donation to be made annually thereafter until further notice without further consideration being required by the Parish Council. **Action: Parish Clerk**

4) There was unanimous agreement by the Council to the Clerk's request for an increase in the Parish Precept from £3200 in 2017/18 to £6000 in 2018/19. It was noted that this increase was estimated to result in an increase in the typical annual Council Tax bill for a Band C property in Morton-on-Swale from approximately £1 per month to just under £2 per month. The requested increase was due mainly to an under-estimate of the general annual expenditure of the Council during the preceding two years (the major factor being the four-year contract for the Vehicle Activated Speed (VAS) signs for which no separate budget provision had been made), such that the Council's financial reserves had been severely depleted. The increase in the Precept for 2018/19 was required not only to cover the third annual VAS payment due in 2018, but would also go some way towards restoring these reserves, and this level of Precept would probably need to be repeated in 2019/2020. By comparison, it was noted that the annual precept of the neighbouring Parish of Ainderby Steeple, with a much smaller population than Morton-on-Swale, was of the order of £3000. **Action: Parish Clerk**

8) Correspondence

1) A number of items of correspondence had been received from residents, expressing concern about various issues arising following the upgrading of the Play Park. It was noted that these, and other issues, had been dealt with at considerable length during the Open Meeting held on 1st November, and were also raised again during the earlier

discussions under item 5 above. The Parish Council noted these concerns and agreed to take them into account in any further deliberations to be held, in conjunction with the Play Park Committee, over what further actions might be taken in the coming months to address residents' concerns. **Action: Councillors and Play Park Committee**

- 2) The Clerk reported on the recent launch of the "Parish Portal", an online system designed for Parish Councils to be able to report and track highways and street lighting issues quickly and more easily.
 - 3) He also reported on NYCC plans for an accelerated programme for replacing existing street lighting with more energy-efficient LED equipment, which it was estimated would eventually offer annual savings of £1.2 million, with an anticipated payback in 10 years.
 - 4) A request had been received from the new owner of Red Roofs for the Parish Council to support an application to NYCC for a resident's parking permit for two parking bays within the layby between the old village shop and the butcher's shop. It was understood that the old shop was shortly to be offered to let and it was hoped that a new proprietor would soon be found so that the shop could re-open. It was also noted that this shop and the butcher's shop had historically relied substantially on passing trade, and it was felt that it would not be appropriate for two parking spaces within the layby to be permanently taken up in this way. The Parish Council could therefore not support an application to change the existing parking restrictions. It was understood that a similar application had previously been made by the owner of the old Methodist Church, and this had been refused at the time, so there was an established precedent for this decision. **Action: Parish Clerk** (to notify owner of Red Roofs)
- 9) **Playing Field**
- 1) The Clerk had, as instructed, contacted the Dales School with a view to formalising the existing arrangement, kindly offered by the School, for visitors to the Play Park to be able to use the School's car park out of school hours. However, the School had expressed renewed concern about possible safety issues for vehicles leaving their car park arising because of the obstructed view of drivers to the west along the A684 which was supposedly caused by parked vehicles using the two parking spaces in front of the Village Hall. The School has previously expressed its concern (earlier in 2016) about this issue, when no action was taken, but the increased volume of cars now using the car park has renewed their worries about this matter. The School was therefore unwilling to make a more formal commitment regarding this arrangement until a more satisfactory solution to the In/Out problem had been found. The Clerk would be attending a meeting at the School the following week to discuss this matter. **Action: Parish Clerk**
 - 2) A RoSPA inspection of the new play park had been carried out just prior to the previous Parish Council meeting, but the report had not been available at that meeting. The report had revealed that there were several items of equipment that needed attention, and a copy of the report had been sent to the installation company, Image Playgrounds, who were asked to undertake the remedial work required. With the exception of the trampoline (see item 3 below), this work had now been completed.
 - 3) The inspection had also highlighted that the trampoline (which had earlier been vandalised and for which an insurance claim had therefore already been submitted – subsequently withdrawn) was, in their opinion, an unsuitable model for use in an unsupervised public play park. Image Playgrounds were asked to respond to this allegation, and they eventually replied to say that they had been "conned" by their own suppliers into believing that the trampoline - which from our own independent investigations (conducted by Mr Matt Baker from the Play Park Committee) it had been established from the manufacturer of the equipment that it was intended for domestic use only – was suitable for installation in our Play Park. Under pressure from ourselves, Image Playgrounds had eventually agreed to refund the full cost of the trampoline, including installation charges, and also undertook to remove the trampoline and to cover the hole with wooden boards. This work would be carried out by their employees on or about 15th November. In the meantime, the barriers that had been placed around the trampoline by Couns. Sanderson and Poulter to prevent its continued use, once the vandalism damage had been discovered, would remain in place. On 27th November, Coun. Moore had been alerted by a Parishioner that some youngsters had been seen over the previous weekend climbing over the barriers and playing on the trampoline, from which it was realised therefore that it had not in fact been removed by Image as promised. This information was shared with the rest of the Council, and Couns. Sanderson and Poulter immediately volunteered to attend to this as a matter of urgency. Surprise was expressed by one Parishioner in the public gallery that the Parish Council had not arranged for the removal of an unsafe item of equipment more speedily than this.

In addition to refunding the full cost of the trampoline, Image Playgrounds had also made an ex gratia additional payment of £1390 by way of "compensation" for the inconvenience. This amount had been calculated as the additional price that would have to be paid to acquire a new commercial trampoline to the required standard. However no decision had yet been taken as to whether to purchase a new trampoline, or to use the refunded money in some other way.

- 4) The outstanding completion invoice from Image Playgrounds, in the amount of £5039, was settled after deducting the agreed reimbursable amounts for the trampoline referred to under 9.3 above.
- 5) The final tranche of sponsorship from Groundwork/Tesco, amounting to £3000 was still awaited. **Action: Parish Clerk and Ms McGready.**
- 6) The final tranche of sponsorship from Veolia amounting to £1500 (actually £1499!) was still awaited. **Action: Parish Clerk and Ms McGready.**
- 7) No progress had been made regarding discussions with Image Playground's sub-contract suppliers of the mulch pathway to try to establish whether the weeds were solely due to over-seeding from adjacent grass land, or whether the installation of the underlying membrane was inadequate to prevent weeds from growing through the mulch. **Action: Play Park Committee**
- 8) The Parish Council and Play Park Committee would meet before the next Parish Council meeting in January to discuss how best to tackle the issues raised by residents at the Open Meeting on 1st November (see also minutes of item 8.1 above). **Action: Parish Council & Play Park Committee**

10) AOB

There was no other competent business.

11) Date of next meeting

Wednesday 31st January 2018

The meeting closed at 9.40pm