

**AUSTWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MONDAY 24th May 2021
MINUTES**

Present:

Austwick Parish Council: Councillors Peter Goold (Chairman), Barbara Tibbatts (Vice-Chairman), David Dewhirst, Ian Smith, Sarah Wiltshire; Marijke Hill (Parish Clerk); North Yorkshire County Councillor, Craven District Councillor, and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Member David Ireton; Craven District Councillor, Lead Member Greener Craven, and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Member Carl Lis; and 9 members of the public.

1. Apologies: Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Rob Ashford and North Yorkshire Police.

2. Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 8th April 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by Cllr Peter Goold, Chairman of Austwick Parish Council as the Annual Parish Meeting of 2020 was cancelled.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman, Councillor Peter Goold referred to the emergency legislation that applied to local authority meetings being cancelled. Last year's meeting report was later published in full in the parish newsletter, therefore, this report refers to the last twelve months.

There have been no changes to the Parish Council membership during this time and Cllr Peter Goold thanked fellow councillors Barbara Tibbatts, Sarah Wiltshire, Ian Smith and David Dewhirst for all their support as well as Marijke Hill, parish clerk for all her hard work and her valuable advice over the last year.

The Parish Council usually have eight meetings each year. In this unusual year, the business of four meetings was conducted by the legal process of delegating decision-making to Marijke as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. In practice this meant that councillors discussed, decided and approved matters by email or telephone, and then recorded all actions in minutes, publishing those minutes in the usual way on the council's website. One meeting was held remotely by Zoom and three, including this meeting, were held in the parish hall.

Parish finances

The Council reviewed its forward budget last December and decided to keep the expenditure to around the same level as it has been in the last several years, and so the 'precept request' – for part of the council tax – was made for the same amount of money we have received for each of the last four years at £12,500 for the year. A household in Austwick paying council tax at band D is paying £64 towards the Parish Council's income, just over 3% of the total council tax amount.

Parish Maintenance

The biggest expense the parish council incurs is in looking after the village greens and the road verges and generally keeping the parish tidy and in good repair – often referred to as the Village Lengthsman services. The Council is very lucky to have Craven Garden Care, Ben Shanks, to carry out this work to a good standard, reliably and at a reasonable price. The Council receives many favourable comments about Ben's work and the Chairman recorded his thanks to Ben for his work and for the pleasure it gives us all to see him on a daily basis somewhere in the parish.

The Chairman thanked several other people:

Charlotte Wilkinson keeps the bus shelter clean and tidy for us every week, and our thanks to her for that.

Thanks to the various litter-picking teams and individuals who between them cover the road verges of Clapham Road, Wharfe Road and Graystonber Lane where the rate of litter dropping by visitors seems to just increase every year. Litter-pickers also covers the minor highways such as Townhead and even some bridleways in the parish. We are very grateful to all the pickers for all they do.

Thanks to Kate Vaughan-Williams for continuing to lend us a corner of her field for disposing of our grass cuttings.

The two conservation verges – on Graystonber Lane and Clapham Road - continue to progress and benefit from grants we receive for their upkeep and improvement from the National Park. They also benefit from the advice and the practical input provided by Graham Cleverly and thanks go to him for his enthusiastic involvement in these two projects.

Thank you to our National Park Area Ranger, Rob Ashford, for responding to our requests for work to be done on the bridleways and footpaths in the parish. This year, we have seen Wood Lane and White Stone Lane – all the way from Wharfe to the Washdubs – cleared of overgrowth and saplings. We have also seen a length of the Hale Lane Pennine Bridleway to Feizor resurfaced following the flood damage, and also several new fingerposts on the Pennine Bridleway route.

Austwick, Wharfe and Feizor are all inevitably going to see a continuing increase in visitor numbers and the effect that this will have on our public rights of way. The parish council has only very limited resources and we will need to rely on our National Park Ranger and 'access' team to help keep our environment in good shape.

Planning matters

In the last year the Council have had 19 planning applications to consider. This is the highest annual number for at least the last ten years, and quite possibly the highest number the parish has ever had. However, most of these were not contentious and for 12 out of the 19 – after discussing them, councillors agreed to respond to the National Park, our planning authority, to say that we had no comments to make.

In another 4 cases, we wrote asking for conditions to be applied to the relevant planning consent. These included 'neighbour amenity' issues in one case and the lack of renewable energy provision in two others.

In two of the remaining 3 cases, we submitted detailed comments:

Nearly a year ago, Tarmac applied to extend the working life of Dry Rigg Quarry until the year 2034. Councillors decided to focus their attention on the issue of air pollution and dust caused by the very frequent heavy vehicle traffic between Dry Rigg and the nearby Arcow Quarry where stone processing takes place and where the railhead is located. Whether or not our comments made any difference, later published plans and conditions have included more effective proposals for washing both vehicles and the road surfaces.

Last July, an application was made for installing 5 shepherds huts – wooden lodges on wheels – with car parking, package sewage plant and amenities for holiday let accommodation at Crummack Farm at the far end of Crummack Dale. We wrote in detail to say we have very strong concerns about this proposal as these huts would be highly visible from the hills on three sides of the site, causing harm to this very special and quite remote landscape area. We also believe – as the National Park's own stated policy says – that this type of holiday facility should be located near existing facilities and not at the end of a two mile single track lane half of which is unsurfaced. Councillors agreed with the National Park's policy of encouraging farmers to diversify into new markets but this proposal – in a nutshell – is the right thing in the wrong place. As at today – 10 months on – no decision on this application has been made.

Lastly, the Council was recently notified of a planning application relating to Thwaite Lane, the bridleway that runs from the top of Townhead to the tunnels near St James' Church in Clapham. The Ingleborough Estate wishes to create a timber stacking and lorry turning area off the lane, for felled timber from its several plantations and to use the bridleway for transporting the timber. The application gives no information regarding the working methods for all this, and begs many questions on aspects that could well affect parishioners in Austwick for a lengthy time ahead. The Chairman is in direct contact with the planning officer who is dealing with the application asking for answers, so that the Council can then consider its response.

Other matters arising during the year

The Council was instrumental in getting a new defibrillator installed on the outside wall of Elaine's Tea Rooms in Feizor, a location that sees a large number of people pass through, both local and visitors. With the approval of those who raised the funds several years ago, the Council released around £1,500 from the trust fund to purchase and install the new device.

The parish council website was redesigned this year to simplify it and make it easier for everyone to use. The website contains all our agendas, minutes, accounts and financial information, policy documents and other records. The new site also now meets the legal requirement of being more accessible to those with disabilities.

Finally, in a normal year, councillors would attend the regular consultation meetings held by the National Park Authority – management plan forums and parish council forums – and Councillors stand ready to pick up on these and contribute once normality returns. However, the Council had received and responded to two further rounds of consultations leading towards the National Park's new Local Plan that will be published and adopted in due course to govern development and planning policies for the future.

4. Reports from County and District Councillors, National Park Ranger and the Police

4.1 Reports from North Yorkshire County Council and Craven District Council

North Yorkshire County Councillor David Ireton reported that this has been a most difficult year for the County Council and we should be both pleased and proud of the way our staff have stepped up to the challenge of trying to deliver services in unprecedented conditions. Nobody has refused to adopt new ways of working. Over 3,000 now work from home, this was a huge effort from our IT people to facilitate this. The County Council has worked well with a range of partners, other local government, people from parishes, districts, national parks, blue light services, NHS, the Army, businesses and especially our great volunteers. We have organised 25 formal Community Support Organisations, and helped hundreds of smaller more informal groups. All with the same aim of helping those who need it. Public Health teams have been very busy managing outbreaks wherever they occur, and leading on helping set up test and trace activity. Social services teams went to a temporary 7/7 working model, which we are now consulting staff on continuing with as good practice. The County Council has supported the 235 care settings in the county by being in daily contact with them, and has set up Infection Prevention and Control teams. We continue to implement our flagship Extra Care Housing - two schemes opened this year in great Ayrton and Scarborough, with three on course for next year: Skipton, Bentham, and Filey. Unfortunately, at the moment it is questionable if the Ingleton site, which has been earmarked for extra care since the closure of the middle school, will take place. Our children's services have been rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. The first in the country to get this rating. We are transforming our Healthy Child programme to make it work even better, working very closely with Public Health. The County Council has supported all schools throughout the difficult and challenging times of Covid. We have managed record investment into road repairs this year – sadly there will always be more to do as we manage the largest road network in England. As part of the devolution process government have invited proposals to reorganise local government structures in North Yorkshire. County and District Councils have submitted a proposal to Government. The County proposal is based on the existing county boundaries and the District proposal is based on an east west split. We now await the minister's decision on which proposal, if any, we face.

Paul Tibbatts asked about the 3,000 people who currently work from home and whether it is expected that all return to offices. County Councillor Ireton replied that staff will be encouraged, where possible, to remain working from home.

District Councillor Carl Lis reported that essential services continued running throughout numerous lockdowns despite some staff shortages during the pandemic and the waste collection teams continued to collect around 1.4 million bins a year across the District. The Revenues and Benefits team distributed grants of over £40 million to over 2,500 local businesses which has proven to be a lifeline through the

crisis. Bereavement Services worked incredibly hard to keep funeral services running for families. The Environmental Health officers became Covid-19 experts, advising businesses on how to be Covid-secure. Staff from Customer Services, Communications and Partnerships, and Skipton Information and Visitor Centre made thousands of calls to help shielding residents. During the year the department took over 48000 calls.

During the year the Council signed up to the Climate Emergency pledge and during the year:

the Council planted over 9,000 trees on its own land; a programme for the installation of electric vehicle charging points in the district was started with the installation in the Skipton Town Hall car park; a policy was created to include aspects concerning Climate Change on every report that comes to the Council; the Council was successful in securing match funding towards a £1.2 million project to decarbonise its properties. The project includes over 1,800 m² solar panels, large ground source heat pumps, heat recovery, online energy monitoring, insulation, and public displays of carbon emissions in Council buildings.

Despite it being an extremely difficult year for Planning there have been a few positives:

the Council got the go-ahead to build six more affordable homes on two sites in Bentham. Eleven more shared-ownership homes are set to be built on council land in other parts of Craven; plans were approved to transform Langcliffe Quarry into a purpose-built rural enterprise centre. The new development will create over 26,000 square feet of new business space, combining the refurbishment of the old traditional stone buildings together with new buildings to provide modern light industrial and office space.

The District Council has been successful in securing funding of £1,278,480 from Historic England for improvements to Skipton High Street. The High Street Heritage Action Zone, led by Craven District Council, will find new uses for historic buildings in and around the High Street, and aims to attract younger people to the town centre through the creation of public spaces for cultural activities, and the development of youth markets and festivals.

Other events during the year included:

the Government announcement that local government reorganisation would take place in North Yorkshire – Craven joined five other district and borough councils to put forward the East / West model;

the Skipton Town Hall redevelopment was almost completed, with the building due to reopen in June 2021. The £4.7 million transformation of the Town Hall into a cultural hub for the whole of Craven includes the complete redesign of Craven Museum, restoration of the Concert Hall and an extension to house an education room, research office, museum store and an accessible 'Changing Places' toilet. Some Members visited the development last week and it is certainly a very impressive development that will be of value to all of the residents of the district;

the District Council took action against a small number of hospitality businesses for Covid breaches;

a full and balanced budget was approved for 2021/2022.

4.2 Reports from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

The Area Ranger had sent a written report.

General

As we are all aware the past year has been a difficult year for everyone. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has endeavoured to maintain a service throughout the year. The Ranger service has worked throughout the pandemic with two Rangers furloughed from the Southern Ranger Team. Initially the Ranger service only undertook emergency works on Park Authority property and the Public Right of Way Network. Rangers worked at home where appropriate, except for essential journeys and maintenance work. The Ranger service also worked with Police on the 'Stay at Home' message, delivered shopping to the vulnerable and helped deliver prescriptions across the National Park.

One of the areas on our monitoring patrols for the 'Stay at Home' message was Austwick Parish. This involved leafleting visitor's cars, discussing with visitors the need to stay at home, and explaining the Police were monitoring the area and could issue a fine for not staying home. This proved to be a difficult task, although there were not too many issues within the Austwick Parish. This went back and forth through lockdowns, until we once again welcomed visitors.

Projects completed

- Cleared overgrown trees on Wood Lane & White Stone Lane Bridleway.
- Replaced the 3 x information signs in Oxenber & Wharfe Woods

Public Right of Way Maintenance

The overall condition of the Public Right Of Way network, within the Ribblesdale area of the National Park, is at 92% in good condition.

4.3 Written report from North Yorkshire Police.

The Chairman, Cllr Peter Goold, reported that the North Yorkshire Police PCSO had attended the ordinary Parish Council meeting, albeit without giving a specific annual report. The PCSO had reported that crime levels in the Parish remain low.

5. Updates from Local Community Organisations and matters of general interest.

On behalf of the President of the Women's Institute, Catherine Nicolls reported that in-person meetings could not be held this year. She thanked all people for their continuous support, in particular for the foodbank. Hopefully meetings can restart this summer.

Graham Cleverly, Chairman of Austwick Village Show reported that the Village Show was cancelled last year, but that this year's Show will be on Saturday 7th August 2021. The Show is open to all adult residents of Austwick and Lawkland together with members of local organisations within the parish of Austwick, whilst children's

classes are open to all. In recognition of the hard work and dedication by the NHS staff during the Covid pandemic, this year's Show item is 'A Cake in Tribute to the NHS'. Austwick Church will be hosting the artistic flower section of the Show.

The Chairman of the Austwick Parish Hall Council, Lindsey Smith reported that the Parish Hall has re-opened for business following government guidance. Details for hirers about what is allowed and risk assessment requirements can be obtained from the booking secretary.

The coffee morning held on 20th May was very successful and approximately 30 people had attended. She thanked Craven District Councillor Carl Lis for the grant that local community halls were entitled to in order to overcome the loss of income during the Covid pandemic which was significant and has helped through the crisis. On behalf of the Street Market Committee, Lindsey Smith reported that more volunteers are needed, including a coordinator to join a Street Market Committee which will plan for a Street Market in 2022.

The Grand Draw will be held this year on 10th July at the Open Gardens both in aid of the Parish Hall and the Playing Fields. Cash prizes will be provided by Tarmac.

Trustee of the Playing Fields Association, Edward Hird, also thanked Craven District Councillor Carl Lis for providing grants to the Playing Fields Association, without which it would have been near impossible to financially survive the Covid pandemic. However, the Association is being run on a skeleton organisation and a flyer will go out to all residents in the parish at the same time as the Grand Draw tickets, setting out the need to support the playing fields and to get an active community Association.

Rev. John Davies reported for the Church and the Parochial Church Council. Like every community organisation the churches had to learn, quickly, how to respond innovatively to the challenges of the lockdowns and restrictions of the past year. Glad to say that through the efforts of many people we were able to play our part collaborating alongside others in the community to provide help and support to those most isolated and affected (telephone 'buddies', Christmas and Easter cards); to find creative ways to bring people together (whether digitally or physically at a safe distance); and to fundraise (a takeaway Harvest Supper and – with garden centres being closed – a successful Plant Stall).

The church porch became a place for the exchange of books, jigsaws, children's toys, and a distribution hub for food bank and other charitable donations. The Austwick Parish Newsletter took on a new editor, Mark Robinson, and it has played a positive part in keeping local people in touch with each other through the year. A churches weekly newsletter distributed by email or popped through people's letterboxes has also played its part, since March 2020, and this continues. Over the winter our boiler fatally broke down, and we found a way to turn that setback into an opportunity to replace it with a biomass boiler, a substantial investment in support of our environmental policy.

Austwick Church is part of a group of four, the others being Eldroth, Clapham and Keasden, and this past year has found us collaborating more closely over events and in weekly worship. Of course we have taken a hit in terms of financial support, and we accept that church life will not be returning to 'the *old* normal', but we have

learned a lot over this period to help us look forward positively as we re-shape and reassemble over the coming months.

Thanks to everyone in the community who has supported us and worked with us over the past year. I'm pleased to say that on 17 May we reopened our doors for people to visit every day, and are now rebuilding our pattern of worship towards something more substantial, and after a hiatus last year we now have weddings and Christenings in the diary to look forward to: and I'm taking bookings!

Parishioners were invited to speak on matters regarding local issues.

Mr Hird enquired if the Council would, again, address the parking issues at the shop. The Chairman replied that the Council discusses parking issues in the village regularly, but that solutions are not easy to find. White lines are not enforceable and yellow lines are not being installed as there is a lengthy legal procedure to follow and no funding for officers to enforce these.

Mr Hird questioned the Parish Council's rationale regarding its views on the planning application for the installation of 5 shepherds huts at Crummack Farm, as it is Mr Hird's opinion that farmers should be encouraged to diversify into new markets. Mrs Jemson asked if the Parish Council would have approved this planning application if only two shepherds huts were proposed. The Chairman replied that Councillors debate every planning application on the detailed information provided in each case. Mr Hird asked County Councillor Ireton if the reorganisation of local government would see a reduction in the scale of operation of the District Council. County Councillor Ireton replied that the government will make a decision early July and that the Boundary Commission will be reorganised before the next elections in May 2022.

Mrs Heap thanked the Parish Council for installing the white posts on Graystonber Lane, which the Highway Authority donated, to stop vehicles parking on the verge. Mr Cleverly has one spare post and Mrs Heap would like to have this installed at the site where there is currently a gap.

Mrs Cleverly spoke on behalf of many residents to express thanks and appreciation to all councillors and local organisations for their community spirit and hard work during these challenging times. It is this community spirit that makes Austwick parish such a very pleasant place to live. The Chairman fully endorsed these words. Mrs Jemson also thanked the proprietors at Crossleigh Stores, who work very hard. Supporting the shop is vital, as is using the local bus.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.