

DARLEY AND MENWITH PARISH ASSEMBLY

MONDAY 24 APRIL 2023 8pm

AT THE DARLEY MEMORIAL HALL, DARLEY

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Chairman's Remarks (Councillor Sue Welch)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Assembly meeting (report attached below).

2. North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate Borough Council Reports

Former Harrogate Borough Councillor Tom Watson gave a report on the history of Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) and its development over time (copy attached below).

North Yorkshire Councillor Andrew Murday gave a report on his time since being elected in 2022 (copy of the full report attached below).

3. Darley and Menwith Parish Council Clerk Report (Martin Pearson)

The Parish Clerk delivered his report on Darley and Menwith Parish Council highlighting some of its work in the year ending 31 March 2023 (copy attached below).

4. Updates from local organisations

It was noted that there are many thriving organisations within the Parish and that the annual organisations report gives an update on the last year together with contact details. A message of thanks was given to everyone involved in running and supporting local organisations.

Darley Playing Fields Association highlighted that it has recently added playground equipment aimed at younger children and that it is in the process of putting together funding for a wooden adventure trail. The aim is to add something every year. There is also an upcoming Boules tournament using the new facilities.

Darley's Angels WI has been suspended due to a difficulty finding people to take over the roles necessary to run it.

5. Current local issues

Darley Mill Centre: Discussions with the developer have confirmed that it is in the process of agreeing Section 106 payments with the planning authority and tendering for the construction work. The developer would like to start work in Autumn 2023.

Planning: It has been confirmed that for future planning applications within the Darley area, decisions made by Officers will continue to be made by Planning Officers working from the old Harrogate Borough Council offices. However, those that are decided by a Planning Committee will go before a Committee based on County Councillors representing the areas around Skipton and Ripon.

Local Plan: The Harrogate Local Plan was finally approved in 2021, following several years of work and some last minute changes during its Inspection, which resulted in several proposed development sites in our area being removed from the Plan, as they represented major developments within an AONB and as such are not allowed.

Now that HBC no longer exists, it is expected that the new North Yorkshire Council will need to produce and adopt a new Local Plan for the whole county, so new discussions will start. It is understood that this will need to be completed within five years. Until then, the Harrogate Local Plan should still stand.

North Yorkshire Council Contact details: As from 1 April 2023, all services to Darley are provided by North Yorkshire Council (NYC), so there is no longer any question as to whether it is Highways / Social Services / Streetlighting. Contact number is 0300 131 2 131. Face to face guidance can still be

sought at the old HBC Offices in Harrogate, but there will also be other customer access points – around 30 sites are expected.

Community Networks: Assuming these proceed, these committees are likely to be based on market towns, and include a range of stakeholders that reflect the area. They will be able to influence decisions that affect their communities, and be supported to explore appropriate funding opportunities.

Devolution: The change to local government has been made largely to satisfy the criteria set by the government to create a unitary authority that will have an elected Mayor (of York and North Yorkshire) and a devolution investment fund of £540 million over 30 years. Thus, some of the power of Westminster will be devolved to the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire, together with the leaders of the two councils. Funds awarded to the Mayor will be split equally between the two councils (expected to be approximately £10m per year for each).

Double Devolution: NYC has stressed that in turn it is happy to devolve power down to town and parish councils. This could include ownership and management of assets, as well as taking over services within their areas. A few pilot schemes are to be trialled from 2024 to see how this will work. However, it is likely that most benefit will be to town councils rather than parish councils, for whom the cost and managerial aspects of taking over assets or services may be excessive. The Parish Council can certainly consider this once the way forward is clearer.

Harrogate: There is no Harrogate Town or Parish Councils, so since 1st April, there has been no entity focussed on the town, or small parts of it. A consultation is underway to decide if Harrogate should have a Parish/Town Council. Initial response was positive, but there is concern that it will mean a precept is levied, adding extra cost to Harrogate people.

For now, Harrogate has a set of Charter Trustees and a Charter Mayor, in order to carry out the ceremonial duties of the town. These are the elected North Yorkshire Councillors serving the various wards of Harrogate.

Further information: There is a set of FAQs produced by NYC (available on request from the Parish Council Chairman or Clerk).

6. Open Forum

It was noted that there are a number of events planned for the Coronation of King Charles III, including a ceilidh on Saturday 8 May and a tea party on Monday 8 May (both at Darley Memorial Hall). Details can be found at http://www.darleyvillage.info/Events_16439.aspx.

A vote of thanks was also given to the Parish Council and Councillors on behalf of the village.

No further issues were raised. The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.55pm.

1. Chairman's Remarks

Welcome to everyone.

Since May 2022 there has been a new Parish Council in place, following a contested election in May 2022, with nine candidates.

Elected Parish Councillors attending were introduced. The co-opted Councillor, Joanne Hayes was introduced (Councillor Hayes was co-opted following the resignation of Nigel Nicholas).

Harrogate Borough Councillor Tom Watson was introduced and thanked for the support to Parish Council and parishioners over the past seven years. As Harrogate Borough Council no longer exists, so Tom can now enjoy a more peaceful existence.

Councillor Andrew Murday, our local representative on North Yorkshire Council (the person to contact in future), was introduced.

A brief outline of what the Parish Council has done over the past year was given:

- The Parish Council helped with installation another defibrillator unit - at Darley Shop. Assistance was also provided by County and Borough Councillors.
- Two ornate benches commemorating the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II were purchased by the Council. These have been installed beside the boules court on Darley Playing Fields.
- The Parish Council purchased and installed additional lights for the trees on Low Green, to ensure an on-going display around Christmas time.

Village events organised by Focus on Darley included a Platinum Jubilee Ball in DMH on 28th May – with hog roast and live music, and a Tea Party in the Hall on Thursday 2 June. The Council contributed to these. This year there will be a Ceilidh and a Cream Tea to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III.

The Chairman gave thanks to all the Councillors, new and old. They give their time and efforts freely to help the village, and receive little thanks. It was gratifying that nine names were put forward for election last year, and that a later co-option was also achieved, so that the Council is complete.

Thanks to Martin Pearson (Parish Clerk) for all his work and support. I know it is a tough and thankless job, but can also be rewarding. I hope he agrees.

Thanks to all of you for coming and for helping to make Darley such a great community.

I am proud to have been the Chairman of your Parish Council during 2022-23.

Sue Welch

2a. Harrogate Borough Councillor's Report

Harrogate Borough Council

Harrogate Borough Council was created on 1st April 1974, incorporating parts of former West Riding and North Riding Councils areas. The main settlement areas are Harrogate, Knaresborough, Ripon, Pateley Bridge, Boroughbridge and Masham and there are over 120 smaller settlements scattered across the district.

How things have changed since 1974

The population of Harrogate has grown over the years from 102,407 in 1971 pre-Harrogate Borough, to 162,700 in the 2021 census.

In 1982 Harrogate International Centre (HIC) opened its main auditorium with seating capacity for 2,000 people. In the same year the International Centre hosted the 27th Eurovision Song Contest. HIC has continued to host events and exhibitions from the 1980's to the present day.

Harrogate Borough Council became custodians of the Stray in 1985. The land is owned by the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Victoria Garden Shopping Centre opened in 1992. In 1995 Ripon Leisure Centre opened its doors, along with The Jennyfield Styan Centre Community Centre. Knaresborough Community Centre was constructed in 1996.

In 1998 we received a Royal Visit from Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who opened the Sun Pavilion in Valley Gardens after its restoration.

1999 saw a major expansion to our sport and leisure services with the opening of Harrogate Hydro, which replaced the old Coppice Valley Pool.

The Nidderdale Leisure Centre and Pool was opened in Pateley Bridge in 2005.

When we entered the new millennium, we saw a major political change in local government with the introduction of the Cabinet system of governance at Harrogate Borough.

2002 saw the introduction of kerbside recycling which increased the amount of material being recycled by residents.

Restoration of the Royal Hall was completed in 2008. The Grade II listed theatre has a seating capacity of 950 and was opened by the (then) Prince Charles.

The decision to build the new Civic Centre highlighted our approach to long term planning and the environment, with the completion and opening in 2019.

When the pandemic hit the UK in March 2020, we had a strong platform from which to transfer to full time working from home with minimal service impact. Our information technology services were able to develop our existing platform to ensure that all office staff could work from home.

In April 2020 HIC and our estates team worked together with the NHS to support the setting up of a Nightingale Hospital in the Conference Centre. This delivered a 500 temporary bed hospital facility at HIC which could be used if required until the pandemic receded.

In 1974 there were 8,000 council owned houses flats and bungalows in the Council's ownership. Under the "right to buy" act the number of council owned properties in 2023 is approximately 3,800. In Spring 2021 the Council opened Fern House in Starbeck, a purpose-built hostel solely for single people. Unfortunately, we still have approximately 2,200 residents on our council housing waiting list requiring affordable rented accommodation.

Ongoing refurbishment of the Hydro pool at Jennyfields continues, with a new pool and leisure centre being built at Knaresborough and Ripon pool completed in 2022.

There have been 48 Mayors of The Borough of Harrogate in the 49 years and in 1974 there were over 60 elected members of the Borough Council until 2018 when the number was reduced to 40 elected members.

The last full Harrogate Borough Council meeting was held on 23rd March 2023 and Harrogate Borough Council along with all councils in North Yorkshire were merged into one council on 1st April 2023 under the name of North Yorkshire Council.

It has been an honour to represent the residents of Lower Nidderdale and Nidd Valley Ward on Harrogate Borough Council and I would like to thank all Parish Councillors, Parish Clerks and residents for their support over the years.

Tom Watson

2b. North Yorkshire Councillor's Report

In May last year I was elected to represent the division of Pateley Bridge and Nidderdale on North Yorkshire County Council. A few weeks ago, it became North Yorkshire Council (NYC). In another year, it is very likely that there will be another change, with the advent of the North Yorkshire and City of York mayoralty (elections likely to be in May 2024). So there has been a great deal of change, and it remains to be seen whether that change is for the better or worse. This year council taxes have gone up and services are going to be reduced. So far, so bad.

Probably the most important policy adopted by the council in the past year is the adoption of the route to Carbon-Net-Zero. This has set an ambitious target of 2034 for North Yorkshire to reach a net-zero carbon balance, thereafter becoming carbon negative. The target includes challenges, such as the need to find engineers in sufficient numbers to install 250,000 air-source heat pumps.

The council meets in Northallerton, with full council meetings only 4 times each year. I am also a member of the Health Oversight and Scrutiny committee, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the Nidderdale AONB executive.

But most of my council activities have been more local. In addition to helping connect constituents/residents with the relevant people within North Yorkshire Council, here is a list of some of things I have been doing:

Local Electricity Generation: I have been involved in setting up a Nidderdale local electricity generating cooperative. It is in its early stages of development, but has the aim of helping to develop local systems for generating electricity from renewable resources.

Locality budget grants: Each year every councillor has a pot of money which is available to support community projects and activities. Last year there was £10,000 in this budget for our division. Amongst projects which this fund supported were support for the Sunday 24 bus service and support for Nidd Plus community transport service.

Highways: I have attempted to deal with highways problems, potholes, flooding, road closures etc. People can see up-to-date road closures by going on-line and logging into <https://one.network>.

Youth Council: Alongside NYC youth officer Chloe Thwaites, we have set up a Nidderdale Youth Council for young people aged 11-18years. The first meeting was today, 24 April 2023.

Nidderdale Greenway Extension: The proposal to have a multi-user path from Harrogate to Scar House Reservoir dates back to 1996. Immediately on winning the election last year I became chair of the steering group for this project. This has been a very difficult issue to deal with. There is a great deal of discontent both amongst landowners and others, concerned about how this pathway might impinge on their property and environment. For the time being, the steering group has decided that the time is not ripe for this project to progress. But we will be continuing the conversation with stakeholders over the summer.

I would like to end by thanking colleagues on Darley and Menwith Parish Council for gently introducing me into the role as a councillor. I would also like to record my thanks to Tom Watson and Stan Lumley for their service to the community as councillors over many years.

Business rates relief: North Yorkshire Council is in the process of harmonising business rates across North Yorkshire. The impact on ratepayers within the Harrogate district may be less as business rates in this area were previously one of the highest in the county. Relief on rates should also be harmonised.

Charter Mayor of Harrogate: It was noted that a number of Charter Trustees have been put in place by North Yorkshire Council covering the unparished areas of Harrogate while the process to establish one or more parish (town) councils is ongoing. A Charter Mayor has been elected (Councillor Michael Harrison) and he is expected to carry out limited ceremonial duties compared to the previous Harrogate Borough Council Mayor.

Damage to verges as part of developments: It was noted that verges around Stumps Lane have been damaged during the development of housing and confirmed that the developer is expected to reinstate verges. The Parish Council agreed to report the damage to NYC.

Andrew Murday

3. Clerk's Report

I thought I would use my time this evening to highlight just some of what Darley and Menwith Parish Council (the Council) does for the Parish and local community:

Representation on planning matters: The Council is heavily involved with planning matters, including being a statutory consultee on planning applications and appeals, being consulted on street name, footpath and public right of way changes and seeking planning enforcement action where appropriate. During the year to 31 March 2023, this involved thirty different cases.

Representation on other key matters: During the year, the Council lobbied against possible reductions to the Number 24 bus service which operates through the Parish, responded to consultations on the proposed changes to the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and lodged an objection against the installation of payment machines at Swinsty, Thruscross and Fewston reservoirs. It also consulted locally on the level of support for a 20mph speed limit through the village.

Supporting local organisations: The Council supports Darley Playing Fields Association with an annual grant to help purchase and maintain children's playground equipment. It also gives annual grants to Focus on Darley to support the regular village newsletter and Darley Memorial Hall towards the cost of making its car park available to the public.

Maintaining three defibrillators: Defibrillators are situated at Hookstone Memorial Hall, Prospect Cottages and Christ Church Community Centre and are monitored regularly. The Council ensures that these are available for emergencies, arranging servicing and replacing batteries and pads when necessary. The Council has also now agreed to monitor the Darley Playing Fields Association defibrillator located at the playing fields/village shop,

Parish-caretaking: Through its Parish Caretaker, Jim Benson, the Council arranges extensive grass-cutting through Darley village six or seven times a year and an annual cut of a number of lanes and junctions to improve safety and visibility.

Celebration of the Platinum Jubilee: During the year the Council purchased two benches to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II. It also awarded a grant to Focus on Darley to help cover the costs of an event it was hosting.

Christmas lights on Low Green: The Council replaced all of the cabling and a number of the Christmas lights on the village green during the year. It intends to add more lights going forward.

Highways and footpaths: The Council regularly reports problems with roads, ditches and paths within the Parish to help keep these fit to use. County Councillor Murday is helping to improve this action and discussions with NYC Highways are ongoing around a number of issues.

Involvement in community and local organisations and events: In addition to giving time on a voluntary basis to be Parish Councillors, many Councillors also contribute to a wider range of other organisations locally and attend events on behalf of the Council and parishioners.

I would like to thank every Councillor for their time and especially thank the Chairman, Sue, for the many extra hours I know she puts in for the benefit of the Council.

I would also like to thank everyone who takes the time to make the Council aware of problems around the Parish and who put forward ideas for the Council to consider.

Martin Pearson