



Darley & Menwith Parish Assembly 2019

Draft minutes from the Assembly held on 29th April 2019 at 8.00p.m.

Present: Chairman of the Council and 4 Councillors, County Councillor Stan Lumley, Borough Councillor Tom Watson, 23 members of the public and the Clerk, M Pearson.

Apologies: Councillor Robertshaw and Councillor McQueen, A Marquis (RAF Menwith Hill) and Bryan Dexter (Christ Church, Darley)

1. Chairman Sue Welch welcomed everyone to the event and introduced the Parish Councillors, Borough Councillor, County Councillor and the newly-appointed Clerk.
2. Chairman's remarks: The Chairman highlighted that it had been a full and interesting year including significant planning (multiple developments in Darley and Menwith and progress with the Harrogate Borough Council Draft Local Plan) and the appointment of three Parish Clerks.
3. Formal minutes of last Assembly were not prepared as a result of the changes in Parish Clerk. The main action point arising was confirmed to be the request for speed checks to be carried out on Darley Main Street: these had been requested but are yet to be carried out by North Yorkshire Police.
4. The report of the Parish Clerk is attached below.
5. The reports of County Councillor Lumley and Borough Councillor Watson are attached below. Additional concerns were raised by parishioners in relation to:
 - signage and waste materials left along the roads by sub-contractors carrying out work for North Yorkshire County Council. County Councillor Lumley reported that the authority is investigating setting up its own not-for-profit maintenance company to help deal with this type of issue;
 - the centre of Harrogate being untidy (weeds, litter, roads and pavements). Borough Councillor Watson asked that if any specific areas can be reported to him, action will be taken by the relevant authority; and
 - the planned closure of the Doctor's Surgery at Dacre Banks in 2021. Borough Councillor Watson is investigating but suggested an action group to be set up locally to consider and respond to the issue.

It was noted that the car park of Darley Memorial Hall looks superb following its recent refurbishment.

6. Over fifteen local organisations and facilities provided information for inclusion in a written report circulated at the meeting. This is available on the Parish Council website.
7. The Chairman provided an update on a number of areas known to be important to parishioners:
 - housing, including confirmation that 65 houses have now been agreed/constructed in Darley village recently;

- the Inspector charged with reviewing the Harrogate Borough Council Draft Local Plan has recommended the removal of DR14 (an area within Darley considered suitable for up to 88 houses) and alternatives. This is because the exceptional circumstances necessary to support development of this nature within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have not been proven and the supporting transport links are not adequate. Planning Officers are understood to be taking this into account in making planning decisions. The Local Plan is expected to be finalised in early Autumn 2019;

- work has started on an approved development of 18 houses in Darley, with use of an additional off-site parking and storage adjacent to Walker Lane also agreed (although the additional area should be restored following completion of the dwellings). Advertising for some of the new houses has started. Affordable units within the developments are likely to be marketed separately by a not-for-profit body (such as a Housing Association);

- a revised scheme has been submitted for the Darley Mill Centre development. This does not change the agreed plans to any real extent and includes houses and apartments within the existing building and the construction of four more separate houses;

- a possible scheme aiming to provide affordable rental housing at Station Road is currently being revised following consultation with Harrogate Borough Council;

- the Charity of Isabel Day is considering the possibility of two Alms Houses being constructed alongside Main Street at Fringill in order to provide accommodation for those with local need. Responses to a questionnaire circulated with the Village Newsletter to date suggest that opinion is divided as to whether there is a need (although the need for housing suitable for older people has been cited);

- the surface of the road at Darley Mill is due to be repaired shortly and discussions are ongoing regarding the resurfacing of Main Street and Menwith Hill Road;

- North Yorkshire County Council confirmed that the criteria for changing the speed limit or introducing traffic calming are not met on Sheepcote Lane and it would be unlikely that North Yorkshire Police would support any change. Additional signage is possible but limited budgets prevent North Yorkshire County Council providing funding for this. If funding is available locally (such as from the Parish Council) support can be provided to purchase and install signage;

- with regards to the wider speed limit within the village, Councillor Lumley confirmed that North Yorkshire County Council are carrying out a review of speed limits (initially around schools to protect children) with a view to making the policy more consistent; and

- Councillor Lumley also confirmed that the protocol has been passed for Parish Councils to purchase and install vehicular-activated-signs (VAS) to remind drivers of the speed limit. This means that from 1 April, Parish Councils can seek approval for signs to be installed on a temporary basis within areas designated by North Yorkshire County Council. The relationship between VAS and Parish Council powers is one issue under consideration, as are the planning permission requirements.

It was clear from discussions that road safety and speeding within the Parish is a key issue for parishioners and this will be placed on the agenda for a future Parish Council meeting.

8. No further questions were asked at the Open Forum. The Chairman closed the meeting at just after 9pm.

Darley and Menwith Parish Council (Chairman Susan Welch)

General The Council has held 10 full meetings throughout the year, and 2 public meetings regarding proposed housing developments. There were 4 absences from meetings due to ill-health or work or holiday commitments. Following elections in May 2018, there were 3 Councillors elected unopposed: D Dickinson, D McQueen, S Welch. During June and July, 4 other Councillors were co-opted (Cllrs Andrew Robertshaw, Ernie Butler, Nigel Nicholas and Jo McAllister), bringing the Council to its full complement of 7 members. Cllr Tom Watson of Harrogate Borough Council, and Cllr Stan Lumley of North Yorkshire County Council have been regular attendees at the Parish Council meetings.

Liaison The work of the council has included liaising with Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council regarding highways issues such as pot-holes, road marking, public footpath problems, and also street cleansing and street lighting issues when problems are noticed or reported to the Council by residents. Responses were also made to various local and national consultations. Councillors represent the Council on various local and regional bodies, including Yorkshire Local Councils Associations, Charity of Isabel Day, Darley in Bloom, Darley Memorial Hall, Nidderdale Plus, Darley Playing Fields Association. Regular reports are given at the Parish Council meetings.

Planning The Council considered 47 planning applications and passed its responses back to Harrogate Borough Council. These included several applications for developments of 9 or more houses. The Council objected to these large developments on the grounds that they should not be undertaken in the Nidderdale AONB unless there were exceptional circumstances. There were other objections based on Highways and safety issues, and surface water drainage. The development of Darley Mill into apartments and houses with an additional 4 houses to be built was passed by HBC Planning Committee after a close vote. Developments of 5 houses on Stumps Lane, 3 houses on Main St and the conversion of garages into 3 affordable houses on Valley Rd were approved by the HBC Planning Committee despite the Council's opposition. The planning application for 26 houses on Sheepcote Lane was rejected after Highways recommended its refusal. An outline planning application for 60 houses on land behind Meadow Lane is still in the planning process, with 201 objections so far registered.

In January, the Council was represented at the Examination Hearings on the Local Plan by the Chairman, a Planning Consultant and a parishioner, with the aim of getting the allocation of 88 houses (DR14) removed from the plan. They spoke at 3 sessions, attempting to convince the Inspector that the AONB needed protection and that the 61 houses already built or approved over the past 2 years were sufficient expansion for the village. The other main point was that HBC's claim that the local bus service was suitable for commuters was incorrect. The Inspector agreed with many of the points during the hearings, saying he thought the scale of proposed development was excessive and he did not think HBC had taken into account the protection of the AONB. In March the Inspector sent a letter to HBC stating that he recommended the deletion of site DR14, along with other AONB sites and that this should be done, in order to make the Local Plan sound so that it could then be approved. It is likely that HBC will now modify the Plan to remove DR14. The proposal for 60 houses on part of this plan is therefore expected to be refused. A recent additional outline application for 18 houses with access from Walker Lane is in the planning process and the Parish Council has registered objections. At the March meeting of the Council, a presentation was given on the possibility of a development of self-build and affordable rental housing in Station Rd. A planning application has not yet been submitted.

Communication and Meetings Information about the Council, meeting agendas and minutes have been regularly posted on the noticeboards and are also available on the village web-site. Items of interest are also published in the Focus on Darley Newsletter. Residents were kept informed about road and footpath closures via the noticeboards and the website, www.darleyvillage.info.

Employment and Contracts Following the retirement of Sue Welch, who had been Clerk for 10 years, Alexia Zeniou was appointed from 1st March. Following her resignation in July, the Chairman undertook the work of the Clerk until Sarah Inman was appointed in September. Unfortunately Ms Inman also resigned after 3 months. Following a recruitment process which included working with Dacre Parish Council to advertise the two Clerk posts together, Martin Pearson was appointed on 1st February and is currently Clerk to both Councils. He will also take over as Responsible Financial Officer to both from 1st April. Martin is attending appropriate training sessions and will be undertaking basic qualifications to assist with the work of a Parish Clerk.

Grass cutting throughout the village and the playing fields was carried out by James Benson. North Yorkshire County Council made a contribution to this cost. James Benson also carried out a verge cut throughout the lanes of the village and was employed in the role of Parish Caretaker to carry out village maintenance tasks such as clearing footpaths and pavements and refurbishing the steps at Fringill Beck.

Winter lights on Low Green were again repaired and extended and the lights on the village Christmas tree were checked. The Emergency Heart Defibrillator in the bus shelter near Prospect Cottages has been taken to emergencies 2 times, but not actually used. It has recently undergone its biennial checks and battery replacement. Anyone interested in receiving basic training to enable them to support its use in an emergency should contact the Parish Clerk, as should anyone interested in becoming a First Responder in the local group.

Finance The Parish Council expenditure has been carefully managed and monitored. A small grant was made to Darley School to assist with its change to accommodate Darley Pre-School. Unexpected expenditure was incurred by paying a Planning Consultant for a report to be submitted to the Hearings of the HBC Local Plan and for her attendance at these Hearings, along with the Chairman. The Consultant also worked with the Chairman to produce a report responding to a developer's comments regarding a proposed development of 60 houses. The accounts for 2018/19 are now being completed and are expected to show a small surplus which will help to bolster the current level of reserves.

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT from Councillor Tom Watson

Parishes in the Nidd Valley Ward were regrouped before last Year Elections in 2018 with Bewerley, Thruscross and Thornthwaite with Padside being transferred to the new Pateley Bridge and Nidderdale Moors Ward. The new Nidd Valley Ward now includes the Parishes of Birstwith, Felliscliffe, Dacre, Darley with Menwith and Hartwith cum Winsley, with this group of Parishes being at the centre of Nidderdale. Also in 2018 the Borough Council was reduced from 54 elected members to 40 elected members.

Council Tax Harrogate Borough Council have approved the authority's budget plans, which includes an increase of 2.99 per cent in Council tax

Electric plug-in vehicles 389 were registered in the Borough Council area in the 3rd quarter of 2018. The Borough Council Plan is to provide 61 public charging points across the District.

Street Cleaning The 30 and 40 mph zones in rural areas are programmed for 3 cleans per year and the Council's teams are always on hand to support local communities in clean-up operations.

I would like to thank the Parish Chair, Parish Clerk and parishioners for their support over the last year and for making me feel most welcome at the meetings.

North Yorkshire County Council by Cllr Stanley Lumley

It is a real honor to serve the people of Nidderdale, Lower Wharfedale and the Washburn Valley. To represent the interests of residents, regardless of political persuasion in the place where I have lived my life. We continue to work through the extreme financial challenges facing all Councils and we endeavor to protect front-line services wherever possible. The Council is in safe hands – for the last 25 years the council has been Conservative-led, stable, prudent and consistent in applying sensible policies that work.

- We have kept Council Tax as low as possible, whilst reducing our spending power by 40% playing our part in rebalancing the country's books.
- We have reduced our NYCC owned properties, getting rid of old and inefficient buildings, and we have introduced more efficient working practices reduced our workforce, with very few compulsory redundancies.
- We have altered our support and supply contracts to allow us to deal more with local businesses, and we have started our own companies, building services, legal services and waste management, selling our expertise to other councils and private companies to help our budgets go further.
- We still invest in the big things that matter – more Extra Care Facilities to look after our growing population of older people (46% of the total budget is spent on C&I). On our roads where we are spending more now than ever before, maintaining the largest network of roads in England (almost 7000Miles); replacing old inefficient street lights with modern, less carbon producing LED lights; increasing the roll out of high-speed broadband, available to over 90% of premises and growing, our target is to achieve 98% cover. Increasing telecommunications masts to cover much of our county with 4 & 5G as it comes on line, vastly improving mobile telephone and internet cover.
- We still invest in the smaller things that matter with our Stronger Communities programme – helping people to help themselves, with the community hubs and libraries. Like the one in Pateley at Nidd Plus that also combines HBC tourist information and Police services.
- NYCC provide a Community Car to Nidd Plus, they manage the voluntary service and its drivers, essential to provide transport for elderly and vulnerable residents to get to appointments and to visit relatives in care outside of our area.
- A great NYCC initiative is the Councillors Locality budgets (£5K), allowing the elected member to support local ventures and good causes, It has been most rewarding being able to provide financial support to ventures often charity and volunteer lead and I have been successful securing money for our communities. We have been given a further £5k to support transport & environmental projects provide This year I have been able to award grants to help the Sunday bus services, the Nidderdale Greenway, several of the primary schools and early years and play groups. I have been able to support the Guides, provide IT equipment to PC's, new village signage, renovation of a bus shelter and extra money for the community car.
- We have also worked with government on some very big projects – one in my Division is the A59, Kex Gill. It was closed following a land slippage, while engineers investigated and made safe. Subsequent repairs were done with minimal impact to locals and to the important cross-country trunk road. I sit on the Kex Gill steering group aiming to provide a new road and realignment, working hard with colleagues on target for completion of the new road in 2021.
- Our new massive Energy from Waste plant at Allerton, in partnership with Amey Cespa, is now working efficiently and effectively getting rid of all NY's rubbish without using landfill, and generating surplus electricity and heat with a financial return to the Council.

- Our schools` education attainment is still “top of the class” attaining high standards in GCSE and A Level in the top 20% results nationally.
- Ofsted has judged NYCC Children’s Services as outstanding – the only such judgement in the country.
- We manage public health well, working with the NHS and other health and wellbeing bodies keeping people happier and healthier and out of hospital.

I attend each of the 14 monthly Parish Meetings in my Division, and I have attended all NYCC council meetings and Committee meetings. I will continue to speak-up and work hard for the best interests of the people I represent in my division and in the great County, we live. I would like to thank the Chair, the Clerk and fellow Councilors for their support over the past year and I look forward to working with you in the coming year.