

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 25th April, 2023 at 7.15pm.

Parish Councillors Present:

Cllr Harrison (Chairman), Cllr Green, Cllr George, Cllr Gajewicz, Cllr Thornton, Cllr Jemison, Cllr Astbury and Cllr Nicholls

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.23 pm.

Seventeen members of the public were present at the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

None

2 Meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting Tuesday 26th April, 2022

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Cllr Jemison. This was seconded by Cllr Nicholls and agreed unanimously.

3 David Boyes-Watson from Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

Mr Boyes-Watson, of Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, thanked the Chair for the invitation to address the Annual Parish Meeting of Bishopthorpe Parish Council to discuss the potential housing development on Sim Balk Lane. Mr Boyes-Watson began by briefly outlining the project as follows:

- Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust is a community benefit organisation who have been operating in the York and Scarborough area for more than one hundred years.
- Over the course of the next ten years Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust wish to support over one thousand new homes in a range of new developments around the city.
- Recently one hundred and fifty new homes were built in New Earswick and in order that Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust can deliver their promise of building one thousand homes, they are now looking outside this area to build more.
- The project at Sim Balk Lane aims to build one hundred and fourteen new homes in this area. These homes will be accessible to disabled people and will be funded on a 60% social rent and 40% shared ownership basis to meet local needs.
- A public consultation was held at York College by Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust in March. It is hoped that a planning application will be submitted during June / July 2023. If the application is approved by the City Council, the construction phase will commence within the next two to three years.
- The City of York has a critical need for affordable housing for key workers and the proposed development on Sim Balk Lane will help to ease that pressure.

Mr Boyes-Watson opened the floor for questions:

Question (Q) – Can Objections only be made on a computer?

Answer (A) – It was confirmed that objections can be made online or in writing; addressed to the City Council Planning Department, quoting the planning application number. The number will be made available if the project enters the planning application stage in June / July 2023.

Q – Whilst the need for affordable housing is accepted why is it necessary to take away Green Belt land to provide this? There are ample brownfield sites all around this City of York and these should be considered first before destroying the Green Belt on Sim Balk Lane.

A- Mr Boyes-Watson stated that the brownfield sites will be purchased by developers and the additional costs of brownfield development will be reflected in the price of the housing built. This will render it unaffordable to those who need housing most.

Q – Where will the majority of the new residents be employed? There is only shop work available in the city and if they are working there, they will travel by car, increasing traffic in Bishopthorpe - especially on Church Lane.

A – Mr Boyes-Watson stated that Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust is a care provider and is struggling to recruit carers in the city. It is this type of person who needs social housing and this development will provide homes for them.

Q – If the application is approved and the estate is built there will only be a small gap of one field between it and the village of Bishopthorpe. What will stop linear development allowing that to be joined to the village in future?

A – A special case would have to be made to link the new development to Bishopthorpe.

Q – During recent months Bishopthorpe has almost lost the First Bus 11 service and will shortly lose the doctors surgery to Copmanthorpe. There are less amenities all the time and a new development will only put what is left under intense pressure.

A – Both of Bishopthorpe's Schools are undersubscribed at the moment and this development will attract families who will fill the vacancies in the schools. Through this type of development a s106 payment will be made to the local authority, which could be spent on increasing amenities in Bishopthorpe.

Q- Would the Church Lane site be the next one to be developed?

A- There are no plans to do this, at moment.

Q- How will the children travel to school in the village – it is unlikely that they will walk the length of Sim Balk Lane to get there – and therefore if travelling by car this will cause another increase in traffic at school times.

A- If the school intake increases due to this development the s106 payment made by the developers to the local authority could be used to address any traffic issues. Comments from the recent consultation day in March were taken on board regarding access to York College and the designs for the new development have been adapted.

Q- How will new residents get to Tesco – especially those on foot?

A- They will cross Sim Balk Lane or use the existing crossing outside York College.

Q- York City Council has a poor record of allowing developers to build where and when they wish. It must be noted that a Government Planning Officer has designated that the land on Sim Balk Lane is Green Belt land. Only truly exceptional circumstance will allow the destruction of Green Belt land for development of housing. A general '*shortage of housing*' argument is not truly exceptional circumstance for the destruction of Green Belt land.

A- Lack of affordable housing is a special circumstance and the decision to allow development on Green Belt land will be challenged.

Q- Bishopthorpe Infant School is closing and they are building houses on this site. The traffic in the village gets worse each year. There is lots of land is available around the bypass, which has been sold for housing with over 17,000 houses built. Residents of the village have paid a premium to live in Bishopthorpe and this development of council / social housing should not impinge on it.

A- Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust do not own any of the land that has been developed around the city and strive to deliver affordable housing in the future. The proposed Sim Balk Lane housing is not 'council housing,' it is 60% social rent homes, which is different.

It was noted at this point that the Parish Council were unaware of any discussions or decisions to close Bishopthorpe Infant School

Q- Has a soil survey been undertaken on site? Askham Bar Park and Ride had to install methane outlet tubes in the ground as it was developed on a site which was a former tip.

A- The developers will undertake soil surveys on site as part of the planning application.

Q- Housing at the top of Sim Balk Lane will be isolated – their closest store will be Tesco and there will be little interaction with Bishopthorpe. So why is there no social housing on Rowntree's site? York needs more than little pockets of new housing. Church Lane is already a 'rat-run' to York and will be worse if this is developed.

A- The affordable housing situation in York is shocking – these questions need to be asked of the City Council.

Q- Will social housing always remain so? You are proposing that purchase will be on a 60% social rent and 40% ownership. What will stop these houses morphing into private housing over time and then being on-sold at city prices?

A- The 60% social rent is in perpetuity and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust will have the first right of refusal to buy the property back in their lease.

Q- Why build on this side of York when work opportunities are on the other side? Employees will have to travel through the city to their employment.

A- The development is sustainable as it is next to Askham Bar Park and Ride.

Q- How many of the one hundred and fourteen new houses has its own garage / driveway? There will be a minimum of one car per household (although it is to be expected that this will be at least two cars per household) – where will these be parked?

A – The houses have no garages and no driveways. They do, however, have two parking spaces allocated for each house within the development.

Q- Each house will have multiple cars: this will not only increase the amount of traffic in Bishopthorpe but will cause major problems on race days.

A- Race traffic will have to be considered.

Q- What if Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust goes bust?

A- The company is in a comfortable financial position.

Q - What is Parish Council's view?

A – Cllr. Harrison replied that there is no consensus at the moment and this was partly the reason to invite a representative of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. Each planning application is presented to the Parish Council for comment by the City Council but the weight of this response is no greater than that of a private individual.

The presentation was concluded at 7.58pm and Mr Boyes-Watson was thanked by the Chairman for attending the meeting.

3 Chairman's Report

2022/23 has enabled the Parish Council to return to normal working and we have therefore held all our monthly meetings face to face in the Village Hall except one that was held in Vernon House. We have had several residents of Bishopthorpe attend our meetings over the last 12 months and hopefully we have been able to help them with their queries.

Before looking at the work undertaken by the Parish Council over the last 12 months, I would like to thank the following:

Cayley Godfrey, our Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, for producing the minutes of our meetings and ensuring our financial transactions are in accordance with ever more stringent rules governing our income and expenditure.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers and residents who help us with the Village Hall, Vernon House, Sports Facilities, Play Area, Sensory Garden and keep our village clean and tidy along with all the local contractors who help us out at a moment's notice when we have building, electrical or plumbing issues.

And I would finally like to thank all members of the Parish Council – all unpaid volunteers who put back into the village much more than they take out to the benefit of all residents in the village. All Councillors attend monthly meetings – on average we miss only one meeting out of the 11 we have in a year – which shows a great deal of commitment when we all have other work and obligations associated with family life.

If I remember rightly, we started the financial year with a full complement of 10 Councillors but unfortunately had three resignations during the year:

Jeannie Conley resigned in October 2022 for family reasons after serving just over 9 years on the Council. I would like to thank Jeannie for her time on the council particularly her knowledge of Planning and leading our planning team for most of her period on the Council. Jeannie still supports us by maintaining and updating our website.

Gary Hunt resigned in November 2022 for family reasons after serving nine months with the council and I would like to thank him for his constructive contribution during his time with us.

Sally Astbury resigned due to work issues in July after 5 months but quickly saw the error of her ways and came back in January 2023 – Welcome back Sally!

We are currently operating with 8 councillors whereas our full complement is 10. I am pleased to see that all 8 of us have put our names forward to continue after the forthcoming election. However, it is disappointing to note that only one other resident of the village put their name forward to join the Parish Council at the election on May 4th. This, of course, means there will not be an election for Bishopthorpe Parish Council as we do not have more than 10 candidates and therefore everyone putting their name forward will be part of the Parish Council after May 4th.

During the last 12 months we have discussed numerous issues within the village but the four main ones creating interest have been:

The No 11 Bus Service – we were initially informed this service may be axed altogether but after a petition organised by Cllr. Carol Green resulted in full support in for the service Carol and I arranged to meet the Operations Director of First Group in York. He explained that the current ½ hour service required 3 buses, and it was running at a considerable financial loss. However, it was eventually agreed that they could maintain a ¾ hour service by reducing to 2 buses and this is where we are at the

moment. Hopefully, this will continue for the future but if the service is used by more passengers, we may be able to reduce the period between buses. The situation is Use it or Lose it!

Doctors Surgery – As you are aware the Old School Medical Practice need to move out of the premises on Church Lane in mid-2024 following the completion of their lease. The Landlord does not want to renew the lease and the Integrated Care Board do not consider the site to be “Fit for Purpose.” The OSMP intend to develop their surgery in Copmanthorpe to serve both villages and have also tried to find other premises in Bishopthorpe without success. However, the Parish Council have offered a room in Vernon House as a “Satellite Surgery,” and this is currently under consideration.

The Doctors are also aware that this situation will mean further home visits will be required in Bishopthorpe and are also potentially looking at transport arrangements between the two villages.

New Marina – The Parish Council was attended by Peter Mandy and Kevin Linfoot with their outline plans for a new Marina on Acaster Lane. It would appear that most of the village may object to this proposal but we await further information from the developers.

New Housing on Sim Balk Lane – There has also been a proposal for housing opposite the College on Sim Balk Lane – and we heard further information about this proposal earlier this evening.

Some of the other issues discussed and progressed during the last 12 months include:

Public Right of Way - We have submitted full information to the Government Planning Inspectorate of our objections to City of York Council not extending the current Public Right of Way along the riverside from Ferry Lane to Chantry Lane. We understand the inspector has now reviewed all this information and also visited the site unaccompanied sometime in February of this year - we await the findings of his visit.

Defibrillators - We purchased three defibrillators, with the majority of the funding being provided by private individuals, and these are located at the Social Club on Main Street, Vernon House and Middlethorpe Hall. One was already located at the Scout Hall on Appleton Road and together these four provide wide coverage of the village.

Village Hall - We have undertaken extensive internal redecoration of the Village Hall to maintain a good appearance throughout.

Finance - Recent energy bills for the village community buildings, which are run by the Parish Council (the Village Hall, Sports Pavilion and Vernon House) have dramatically increased and energy costs will be closely monitored to consider their effect on the overall finances of the Parish Council going forward.

However, we are fully aware of the current cost of living issues and therefore our precept (the amount of money we collect via your Council Tax) will remain at £35,000 for the fiscal year 2023/24.

Thank you for your support during the year – are there any questions? None

3i Financial Report

Report for the Financial Year ending 31st March 2023

The Parish Council’s accounts are prepared subject to the approval of the District Auditor (PKF Littlejohn LLP) and comprise of an income and expenditure account along with a balance sheet and supporting statements and bank reconciliation. The accounts, which are presented tonight, are draft accounts.

Income and Expenditure Account**Income**

The main source of income to the Parish Council is the Precept of £35,000. The precept is received in two instalments from the City Council: a grant of £1,167 plus a precept amount of £33,833. Village Hall income remained static over the past financial year at £11,506 (£11,503 last year), however, this income has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels of £13,711 recorded for the financial year 2019/20. Income recorded at the Sports Pavilion doubled from £2,000 to £4,631 during 2022/23. Additionally Vernon House registered an impressive increase in income from £2,150 to £5,992.

Other income from rents amounted to £4,600 which is made up of £2,850 from York Marine Services Limited and £1,750 other rent.

The amount of VAT recovered this financial year is £2,577.

Expenditure

Expenditure was tightly controlled during the year:

1. Refurbishment and upkeep of Parish Council owned assets was as follows:
 - i. The Sports Pavilion on Ferry Lane was internally refurbished at a cost to the Parish Council of £31,438
 - ii. Expenditure on the Village Hall increased from £14,365 to £21,624
 - iii. Vernon House remained static at £5,323 last year to £5,695 this year.
2. Insurances of the Village Hall and the Local Council Insurance which covers the Sports Pavilion cost increased by £692 to £5,288
3. The Parish Council spent £8,352 on Keble Park Play Area (£4,858 was spent last year)

Balance Sheet

This is a representation of the Parish Council's financial statement for the year ending March 31st 2023. The Total Assets owned by the Council amount to £82,290.49. The Parish Council has no liabilities.

Bank / Investment Accounts

At the year-end (31st March 2023) there was a balance of £400 in the Current Account and £81,890.49 in the Deposit Account.

4 Report from the Community Constable

No report received.

5 Any Other Business

The Parish Council was thanked for the Christmas tree in the Sensory Garden and for maintaining the garden all year round.

Cllr. Harrison closed the meeting at 8.13pm.

Next Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 23rd April 2024 at the Village Hall, Main Street.