

SKEEBY PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD IN SKEEBY JUBILEE VILLAGE HALL
at 7.30m, THURSDAY 27th SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT: - Cllrs Budden, Dixon, Metcalfe, Richardson and Rummery and County Councillor Thompson together with ten members of the public (Mr and Mrs H Nolson, Mr and Mrs D Harker, Mr and Mrs C Kassaell, Mr J Wilkinson, Mr N Morton, Mr A Bramley, Mr and Mrs R Wright)

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Richardson declared an interest in Item 5(c)

2. MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr Metcalfe, seconded by Cllr Dixon and carried unanimously that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd August 2018 were accurate and were signed as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

a) **Travellers Rest** - Cllr Thompson and Rummery had attended a meeting called by RDC to look into the possibility of a compulsory purchase order for the Travellers Rest. Cllr Metcalfe asked why other Councillors had not been invited and the Clerk had explained that, through Cllr Thompson, RDC had asked for only two representative from the Council to attend and Cllrs Budden and Rummery had been chosen. As Cllr Budden was not available, Cllr Richardson was asked to go in his place but unfortunately late work commitments prevented his attendance so Cllr Rummery had been the sole representative. Cllr Thompson gave a brief report of the meeting which had been called by Ms Yvonne Peacock and was attended by Callum McKeown (RDC Legal representative) and Cllr Threlfall. It was reported that a CPO had never been carried out by RDC and to its knowledge the only other CPO had been in West Yorkshire. The intention of the meeting was to establish whether the Skeeby Community Pub Group had the intention, support and funds to reimburse RDC, should they be minded to offer the sum of money required to buy the property. RDC was legally obliged to ensure that its investment would be repaid so that it was not left owning a vacant property which would reflect on the Council as it was taxpayers who would essentially provide the funds for the purchase. The reality is that RDC is not flush with cash and has to establish whether a CPO of the property would present best value for money and would need assurances that the Skeeby Community Pub Group would be able to repay the cash in full in an agreed time. A full business plan would need to be provided so that RDC was fully aware of the Group's intentions before it embarked on this route. Mr Wright (RW) stated that there was no actual cash in the bank but the group had expressions of interest amounting to approximately £80K, but until RDC were able to commit to a CPO, the group was not asking its investors to provide actual cash and the group was hoping that the threat of a CPO would force Mr Whitfield to the negotiating table. Once this was achieved, then the opportunity to invest would be offered to a wider investment audience and therefore taxpayers money would not be at risk. Until such time as the CPO was in place there could be no progress. Cllr Budden asked how the figure of £125K had been achieved, to which RW said that the value of the property was disputed and this figure was approximately half-way between that required by Mr Whitfield and the valuation which the group had been given at the start of negotiations. Cllr Budden asked how much support the group had to which RW replied that they had carried out a small local campaign and the concerns raised by Cllr Rummery regarding the burden to taxpayers was unfounded. The Group were also asking RDC planning enforcement officer to take issue with Mr Whitfield regarding the rendering and redecoration of the exterior of the building, following a meeting with Ms Booth and Mr Millburn from RDC twelve months ago. Mr Adrian Bramley (AB) said that the group was having difficulty in negotiating with Mr Whitfield as he was not responding to any requests to meet. Cllr Thompson said that a CPO could be considered to be a leveraging tool and that the Group would need to make contact with Mr Whitfield so that a definite figure could be established as RDC could not risk proceeding without finance being in place to effect a purchase. RW said that there would be costs involved in a survey and legal costs and the Group would be asking investors to provide financial support for this phase of negotiations. Ms Peacock had been keen to understand

whether there was full support from SPC and the village itself before embarking on a CPO, so as Cllr Rummery felt that RDC legal officer required facts, told him that SPC had always welcomed the idea of a thriving pub in the village, but reminded the meeting that when a survey had been carried out in the village only 6% of the population had responded and it resulted in a slight preference for the non-retention of a pub. SPC had always supported the provision of a pub, but was not in a position to offer financial support for the purchase or maintenance of the pub. He also pointed out that should the CPO go ahead, then it could be assumed that an appeal would be launched which would not be held locally, but at a higher judicial level and that fighting the cause might prove to be highly expensive. The Clerk asked how the Group intended to finance the continuing work to upgrade the pub to the standard required to open as a viable business opportunity and RW replied that there would be two phases involved, the initial cost of purchasing the pub, then the ongoing costs involved in upgrading the interior. At present the Group did not have the funds to proceed with the second phase but AB said that it was confident that once the CPO had been enforced, then their investors would be forthcoming with additional funds to continue with the work. He also said that the Group would have to commit to repaying RDC within an agreed time and in answer to Cllr Budden's fear that the group would not be able to raise the funds, RW said that insurance was available for legal costs. Cllr Budden asked how much Mr Whitfield was asking and RW said that it was currently at £190K + VAT, but was unable to answer Cllr Budden's query as to whether VAT could be reclaimed. RW said that any offer made by the Group would include VAT and pointed out that other districts in Yorkshire had offered community pub groups a commercial loan rather than taking the CPO route. RW asked for confirmation that SPC was willing to support the Group and Cllr Rummery stated that SPC had always been behind the group and it was the hope of SPC that the group was successful in their endeavours, but reiterated that the Parish Council was unable to provide financial support at any stage. Cllr Dixon confirmed that SPC had always be in favour of having a pub in the village, but the lack of support from the villagers was a worry. In the past a lot of the customers had come from outside the village and she was concerned that this support was no longer available. In answer to a question regarding the provision of food, which it had previously been thought was not an option, AB said that it was the Group's intention to employ a manager, who would be responsible for employing his own staff. Cllr Thompson said that the next step should be for the Group to make contact with Mr Whitfield and arrange a meeting so that negotiations could take place and that following this SPC meeting he would be making a report to Ms Peacock. Mr Morton (NM) said that the Group felt that SPC was rather negative in its support and in the reporting of the efforts of the Group and asked that SPC confirmed its support and this was given. Mr Harker (DH) said that in the 1960s, Darlington Borough Council had provided a CPO for a commercial premises and there had been no appeal but wondered whether the laws regarding CPOs had changed. Cllr Rummery said that he felt the only way forward was for the Group to meet with Mr Whitfield to discuss financial terms. Cllr Budden asked whether MP Rishi Sunac had been approached and RW said that he had been in touch and had the MP's support, pointing out that the MP had put money into the saving of Exelby pub, but the Group would consider contacting him again. RW asked Cllr Thompson why Callum McKeown had become involved and Cllr Thompson said that as RDC's legal representative he had to ensure that all potential loopholes were covered. Mr Kassall (CK) asked whether SPC understood the concept of putting money into the Group which would be able to offer a 3% dividend return on investment, which was above the interest offered anywhere else and it was confirmed that SPC did understand the principles involved. Cllr Budden asked how people could get their money back and AB said that the pub would be run by a management committee and the rent paid by the manager would be used to ensure the dividend return and there was no financial risk to investors. Cllr Thompson said he would check with Callum McKeown to see if he had received a reply from Mr Whitfield, if not he would request a reminder be sent. He would also speak to the Enforcement Officer to see if the terms regarding rendering, redecoration and windows could be escalated. Cllr Rummery said that, although he was fed up with the rats emanating from the derelict building, there had been improvements at the rear of the property and RW said that the front had not been made wind and weatherproof.

It was agreed that until the Group was able to meet with Mr Whitfield to negotiate a settlement, no progress could be made and the discussions on this matter was brought to an end.

ACTION: Cllr Thompson

b) **45 Richmond Road - Gas Pipe** - Cllr Thompson reported that this case was now closed as NYCC was satisfied that the pipe was enclosed in a reinforced casing and no further action was required.

c) **Damage to speed cushions/Traffic Lights at Bridge** - Cllr Thompson reported that NYCC had carried out an initial assessment and was in further discussions with installers to see if relocating the position of the cushions would reduce potential damage. Cllr Thompson would continue to press for a speedy result. Mrs Wright (GW) said that traffic continued to be heavy as many vehicles chose to come through Skeeby, particularly at night, in preference to using the A1 to reach the shopping centre at Catterick Garrison. The question of traffic lights at the bridge was still in the early stages of planning and no firm proposals had been made. DH asked why matrix boards were not available to which Cllr Thompson said that he had been fighting for eighteen months to get NYCC agreement to his proposals that parish councils should be able to purchase matrix boards at a reasonable cost rather than relying on the deployment of council owned matrix boards, the vast majority of which were retained in storage and were not in use. The cost of purchasing matrix boards was prohibitive at present and Cllr Rummary pointed out that when SPC has asked for matrix boards, it has been told that the village had sufficient traffic calming measures with the speed cushions.

ACTION: Cllr Thompson

d) **Planning Permission - Scurragh Lane** - This application had been refused and the Clerk read out an extract from the Planning Officers' findings which resulted in the refusal. It was noted that the second application was not an amendment to the original plans, but a new application for a different section of the land owned by Mr Partridge, lending credence to the long-held view of SPC that the ultimate intention was to develop the whole of this site. SPC agreed that most of the objections which had been raised by the Planning Officers were applicable to the new site and the Clerk was asked to write to RDC asking that this new application be refused on the same grounds as stated previously..

ACTION: Clerk

e) **Speed watch** - The equipment had been returned to NYPA as there had been insufficient support from volunteers to continue the scheme and Cllr Budden had been unable to find any volunteers for the last two proposed sessions. It had been proven that without the signs and the high vis jackets, speed did not significantly increase and Cllr Metcalfe stated that the 'going rate' was 30mph + 10% + 2 and the majority of vehicles were within that range. On one occasion one motorist was exceeding the speed limit by a considerable margin, but insufficient details had been supplied to NYPA and it was unable to take any action. NM said that small safety speed camera vans were now in use and SPC could ask for one of these to be deployed. The Clerk was asked to see if PC Woods could arrange this.

ACTION: Clerk

f) **Amended Plans - 53 Richmond Road** - It was with regret that it was reported that the owner had passed away and any discussion on this matter was deferred until such time as further plans for this site were provided.

g) **Dog Fouling** - The Clerk had asked that the dog warden patrol the affected areas but no up-to-date information was available as to whether the problem had diminished.

h) **Garden of 39 Richmond Road** - This had been tidied.

i) **PFK Littlejohn** - The Clerk was concerned that perhaps SPC was not complying with the AGAR regulations regarding financial self-regulation and had drawn the Council's attention to an article in The Clerk, which highlighted the problems affecting small councils with this new regulation and followed two emails from PFK Littlejohn requesting that SPC provide financial details. The Clerk was asked to contact PFKL to explain that SPC felt it had complied with its requirements when it had declared itself exempt in 2016, but would be happy to do so again.

ACTION:- Clerk

j) **Notice Board - Springfield** - Cllr Thompson confirmed that there was still money available for parish councils or village hall committees to use for small projects and Cllr Metcalfe agreed to get costs for consideration at the next meeting.

ACTION:- Cllr Metcalfe

5. VILLAGE GREENS

a) **Grass cutting** - Both NM and DH complained that the standard of the grass cutting was declining and that grass cuttings had been blown against their properties. It was pointed out that if the contractors removed the cuttings, the cost rose threefold which SPC could not afford. The Clerk was asked to contact Grounds Maintenance.

ACTION:- Clerk

b) **Damage to a window at The Old Post Office** - This had been resolved.

c) **Tree at entrance to Hall Farm** - The owner of the bungalow had emailed the Clerk in response to the letter sent following the last SPC in which the owner was advised to take remedial action themselves, which stated that they felt responsibility lay with SPC and also highlighted a potential problem with overhead cables. It was felt that the onus fell onto the owners of the property to trim overhanging branches, as it had with other properties adjacent to RDC or SPC land and if they were concerned at potential damage to cables, which were examined on a regular basis by utility companies, they should make contact themselves. The Clerk was asked to write to advise them of the recommendations.

ACTION: Clerk

6. RIGHTS OF WAY

There were no problems to report.

7. FINANCE

a) **Report** – This was accepted

b) **Cheques** - Cheques were signed for the Clerk, HMRC and Mr J Earl.

ACTION: Clerk

c) **Fund-raising** - Cllr Dixon said that fund-raising was required to maintain the working balance of the Community Parks Account and proposed a Ladies Night. This was approved and Cllr Dixon was asked to go ahead with arrangements. If advice or approval was required, Cllr Dixon would contact other SPC members directly. Cllr Rummery also agreed to make initial enquiries regarding a music night by Mr Steve Cowal and would liaise with Cllr Dixon on suggested dates to avoid a clash.

ACTION: Cllrs Dixon and Rummery

d) **SLCC Membership** - Confirmed.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

a) **PC Wood's Report** - Reports for July and August were received

b) **Awards for All** - Grant closure had been received.

c) **Non-User Survey RDC Leisure Centre** - Cllr Budden undertook to complete and return this document.

ACTION:- Cllr Budden

d) **RDC - Town and Parish Council Elections** - A document regarding charges for these was received. The requirement for costs would need to be factored into the precept submission for 2019, due in November.

ACTION: Clerk

e) **Highway Customer Services Officer** - The Clerk had received notification that Sarah Bailey was moving on and the Clerk had sent a note of thanks for her support during her tenure.

f) **Letter from Mr G Hall** - A letter had been received from Mr Hall in which he criticised SPC in their attitude, work and failure to support volunteers. At the request of SPC, the Clerk had responded, defending actions taken by the Council, all of whom were unpaid volunteers themselves, who sought to ensure that all financial and legal responsibilities were upheld and contrary to Mr Hall's view, did carry out much of the overall work required to maintain the village. SPC regretted that Mr Hall had adopted such a stance on the issues he raised.

g) **High Brough Moor Garage Premises Licence** - No objections had been raised and the Clerk had advised RDC of this..

h) **HMRC VAT information** - This document had been received.

i) **Royal Mail Scams** - Posters had been displayed giving advice on scam mail.

j) **Journals** - Clerk, Clerk and Councils Direct, Parkers Bulbs

k) **Tabled**

RDC - North Richmondshire Community Partnership Funding - closing date
31/12/18

YLCA - Richmondshire Branch Meeting

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) **D & S Times** – This report would be submitted at a later date

ACTION: Cllr Budden and Clerk

b) **Scrap left on Richmond Road** - It was reported that scrap was being left on the side of the road outside two houses on Richmond Road for scrap metal merchants to collect. Although the items were not left on village green land, it was felt that the display of scrap items

did not enhance the overall view of the village and it would hope that the practice would cease. The Clerk was asked to write to both parties to ask that they dispose of items of scrap in an alternative way.

ACTION: Clerk

c) **Twisted Arts Studio** - NM asked why there appeared to be different regulations regarding the repainting of commercial premises within a conservation area and private properties. The Clerk said that she had contacted RDC Planning Office regarding the choice of colour and had been told that Building Regulations had been relaxed and that there was nothing further SPC could do. NM expressed his thanks to SPC for their help, but felt that he and others in the vicinity were left with a view which had been spoiled by the occupants choice of colour scheme. NM was advised to take it up with RDC himself, but the Clerk had done all she could in this matter.

d) **Duck Race** - Cllr Metcalfe said that thanks were due to Cllr Dixon, Ms Kay Richardson and Mrs Jackie Smith for the excellent work which raised more than £300.00 for the Community Parks Fund. The addition of an excellent raffle had boosted the overall sum. Letters of thanks had been sent.

e) **Defibrillator** - Cllr Metcalfe and RW had attended a course which they said had been excellent. RW asked why Skeeby did not have one available and was told that SPC had previously looked at buying a machine, but initial purchase costs together with on-going maintenance costs had proved prohibitive. The problem of having trained operators was dismissed as RW said that the machine contained instructions so that anyone could follow its use without additional training. The question of a suitable site and the possibility of vandalism had also been a concern, but SPC was quite willing to consider the matter again and Cllr Metcalfe undertook to provide details for the next meeting.

f) **Damage to phone box** - This had been reported.

10. **DATE AND VENUE**

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday 29th November 2018 in Skeeby Jubilee Village Hall

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.05pm