

Garsdale Parish Council

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Minutes of the bimonthly meeting for the Parish Council of Garsdale held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15 January 2025 at Garsdale Village Hall, Garsdale.

Present: Councillors Colton, Todd and Simmonds. Also in attendance, acting/locum Clerk J Hassam

Part I

1. Elect a Chair

Cllr Colton was proposed and seconded by those present, and duly elected to act as Chair for the meeting. This followed the recent resignation, from Garsdale Parish Council, of the former Chair (and acting Clerk) Cllr Butterworth. Cllr Colton took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair for their contribution to the Council.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mawdsley and Labbate (with 2 vacancies).

3. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Todd – Item 5.2 Village signs

4. To adopt the minutes of Garsdale Parish Council meeting, dated 28 November 2024

Members resolved to adopt the minutes presented, dated 28 November 2024, and they were signed by the Chair of the meeting, Cllr Colton.

5. Reports

5.1 Clerk

Following the recent resignation of the acting Clerk, and previous Clerk, there was no information available. Financial information was, therefore, deferred to the next meeting, this would allow time for Members and the acting Clerk to obtain necessary records.

Members did resolve, however, to discuss the Precept due to the time constraints set by Westmorland and Furness Council (WFC). It is understood that a budget has previously been discussed, though not available this evening, with the Precept proposed at £4952. This equals the same equivalent Band D as 2024/2025 (£30.95), with the greater amount (previous Precept was £4000) due to the increase in the Tax Base from 129.3 to 160.00. This was partly due to WFC introducing second home premium for 2025/2026 throughout the WFC area. Ultimately, therefore, this equates to a 0% increase per Band D equivalent property. Band D properties are used as a national measure, for the precept, for comparison purposes. Members resolved, therefore, to approve the sum of £4952 for 2025/2026. As the Clerk currently does not have access to a formal email address, it was agreed that Cllr Colton would formally request the Precept from WFC, as soon as possible, with the closing date noted as 15 January 2025, for submission of requests.

5.2 Councillors

Members resolved to appoint Miss J Hassam as Clerk, with formal offer to be issued as soon as practicable. It was further resolved that Cllr Colton would investigate HMRC information, in liaison with the Clerk, so that PAYE/VAT communications could be established and confirmed as soon as possible, including payroll. Cllr Simmonds proposed to instruct professional payroll, however, Cllr Colton proposed to complete payroll inhouse, initially, with a further review in due course. In respect of all other outstanding matters, the Clerk will liaise with the former acting Clerk to obtain all relevant records, including Council laptop, access to any ongoing matters/files, access to financial information, bank mandate, access to relevant historical information, access to website and confirmation of current arrangement for cloud storage. It was further resolved that all passwords, required for this information, should be retained on file for emergency access in the future, to prevent a repeat of the current hiatus.

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For example, it was not currently known where the paper minute file was held, nor financial records pertaining to the Annual Governance and Accounting report.

The Clerk hopes to have further information relating to this for the meeting scheduled in March, following liaison with the outgoing Chair/acting Clerk.

Meeting dates, it was proposed that the next meeting would take place at 7.30pm on Wednesday 12 March. Future meeting dates would be discussed further at this meeting, with the aim to schedule dates for the coming year.

Councillor Vacancies, following two recent resignations, it was not clear if WFC had been formally notified. The Clerk will liaise with WFC to confirm, so that the appropriate Notice of Vacancies can be received and advertised, prior to commencing any Co-Option process.

Village signs, informally, Members of the Council (with some additional input from members of the public) discussed the village sign erected at Langstone Fell. It appeared, for example, that it did not have formal consent with the Frostraw Fell Commoners' or the landowner. It was also not clear if WFC had been consulted and any relevant consent given. As Cllr Todd had declared an interest in this item, leaving only two Councillors able to speak, it was formally deferred to a future meeting as the Council was no longer quorate. A resident advised that they had been present at the meeting where this was discussed, and that Members had voted to install the sign, and that some councillors had worked hard to complete the install, which had initially been discussed to try and slow traffic at Langstone Fell.

Whilst the item was formally deferred, Cllr Colton did want to take the opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair, Cllr Butterworth, for the work he had completed on this project.

Policies and Procedures, it was resolved that investigations need to take place in respect of current policies and procedures, including relevant reviews. It was agreed that Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were a priority, and it was hoped that draft versions of each would be available for the next meeting. It was also acknowledged that the Parish Council needed to establish a Complaints Policy (see Part II) and a review of the current Insurance Policy was also required as soon as practicable.

Highways, various highways matters were raised, including ones that had previously been reported to WFC. It was noted that Cllr Simmonds hopes to follow up on some outstanding matters from a previous meeting, and report further at the meeting in March. The Chair reminded all those present that matters on the Highway could and should be reported directly on the WFC Highways reporting system [WFC Highways Portal](#). Members resolved that WFC Councillors Mitchell and Hodgson should be invited to the next meeting, so that communication could commence around improved road safety and responses from highways

Planning, nothing to report.

Environment, nothing to report.

Website, nothing to report as currently no access.

5.3 Community Groups

Village Hall, a Member of the Village Hall and Sports Committee advised Members that, following previous discussions in relation to the Village Hall, and the interface between all parties, that a copy of the original Deed has now been received. Additionally, ActCumbria have corresponded with Garsdale Parish Council (GPC) earlier this month (8 January 2025) regarding ongoing matters. This information was, however, not currently available to Members, due to the lack of access to Clerk/Chairman email. It was noted that the outgoing Chair would forward this email to Members/the Clerk and, therefore, the item was deferred to the March meeting. The Clerk will also try and establish a link with ActCumbria going forward.

6. Schedule of correspondence, notices, and publications

No formal information was available for the meeting, this evening, however it was understood that a Freedom of Information request had recently been received. Given the current situation in respect of access to formal GPC records, there was going to be an unavoidable delay. It was hoped, of course, that this could be pursued (including gauging the level of work involved) once access had been established.

7. Councillor matters

There were no Councillor matters noted, with the item deferred to the next meeting.

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8. Public participation

A resident (who wished to be named, on record, Mr Dickinson) advised that he did not believe that GPC had obtained the relevant permission/consent to erect the village signs.

9. Date of next meeting

The normal bimonthly meeting was scheduled for 7.30pm on Wednesday 12 March 2025 and will be held, as normal, at Garsdale Village Hall, Garsdale.

In accordance with model Standing Orders, it was proposed and resolved that the public should be excluded from the meeting by reason of the confidential information to be discussed in relation to the following item/s

Part II

5.1 Financial Matters, Members discussed the lack of information currently available, and hoped that establishing access to various financial matters could be considered a priority going forward.

5.2 Complaints, confidential complaints were discussed, however, it was believed these were now addressed and matters resolved.

5.2 Website, Members, and the Clerk, to confirm the current arrangement for the Management of the website, including ongoing costs/contracts.

5.2 Policies and Procedures, it was noted (as above) that complaints had been received regarding conduct at meetings, and previous procedures. These were generally discussed, and it was resolved no further action was required at this time. Consideration of a Complaints Policy would be a future agenda item.

5.3 Village Hall, progress investigations into the arrangements/deed with the Village Hall Committee. Members may resolve, at a future meeting, to convene a meeting with the Committee to establish future relationships.

Chairman.....

Date.....

Please note that these are draft minutes, subject to change and will not be signed until the next meeting.