

Garsdale Parish Council

17 September 2025

Minutes of the bi-monthly meeting for the Parish Council of Garsdale held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 17 September 2025 at Garsdale Village Hall, Garsdale.

Present: Councillors Simmonds (Chair), Todd, Labbate, and Dickinson. Also in attendance, the Clerk J Hassam.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Colton and Ellwood and accepted by the meeting. Further to the recent resignation, of Cllr Mawdsley, the Chair was able to personally thank former Cllr Mawdsley who was in attendance as a member of the public. Acknowledging the many years of service he has given, and continues to give, to the community.

2. Casual Vacancy

Members noted that, following the public notice of vacancy, no bi-election had been called. Members agreed, therefore, to formally advertise the vacancy for co-option, with a closing date prior to the next meeting. The advert would be placed on the council website and on village notice boards.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no personal or prejudicial declarations of interest made.

4. Minutes of Garsdale Parish Council meetings, dated 16 July 2025

Members resolved to adopt the minutes previously circulated, for the bi-monthly meeting in July, and they were signed as a true record by the Chair, Cllr Simmonds.

5. Report/Update from Westmorland and Furness Council

Cllrs Mitchel and Hodgson were not present at the meeting.

6. Progress reports/updates

- 6.1 Clerk – The Clerk will circulate dispensation forms for formal consideration at a future meeting, in respect of the Village Hall (including hire).
- 6.2 Village Hall – Members noted correspondence advising that the Committee were still waiting for confirmation from the Diocese for the installation of the emergency phone. The Clerk had also circulated the hire agreement, for ongoing and future use of the Village Hall for meetings, and Members resolved that the agreement be accepted, completed, and returned by the Clerk. The session fee was also confirmed, and Members resolved to pay £180* annually, when requested, for use for no.6 scheduled meetings. (*Local Government Act 1972, s133 – Provision of Buildings for Public Meetings and Assemblies)
- 6.3 Highways – Members noted some highways issues, which the Chair advises he will report via the online Westmorland and Furness Council portal. These include a culvert/drain on Back Lane (close to the ford) and overhanging vegetation in various areas. As always, Members are reminded that these can be reported directly, on the portal, and photos to evidence the issue are advised.
- 6.4 B4RN VoIP emergency phones – Cllr Simmonds has been in contact with Garsdale Station, and awaits further updates about any potential future provision.
- 6.5 Update on Transport Group – In the absence of Cllr Ellwood, Members formally resolved to ratify the letter of support, for an indicative timetable drawn up by the Group, sent earlier this month and following initial circulation to Members.
- 6.6 Statement – Members generally discussed the merit of issuing a public statement in response to various issues/concerns/complaints previously raised (see July 2025). This included reference to Item 9.3 Retrospective payments authorised by the former Chair. Following general discussion, about pros and cons of such a statement, Members resolved to defer this item to the next meeting, where it is hoped a broader discussion take place with all Members present.

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7. Public Participation/Open Session

Five members of the public were been welcomed to the meeting. A query was raised in respect of poor condition of stiles on public footpaths, and Members agreed to liaise with Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNPA) about future repairs. Also noted, was ongoing communication around Dandra Garth right of way/bridleway and YDNPA's recent response regarding their investigations. They advised that the boardwalk on the top section has now been repaired by the Ranger and volunteers. However, the enhancement work on the section above the forestry had been more problematic as, following careful probing and excavation for the first 10m, they had been unable to find a constructed surface beneath the peat. YDNPA advise they will review options to see if an alternative viable enhancement solution exists.

8. External Audit query

Members resolved to accept the recent conclusion from the External Auditor following a 'points raised' enquiry. The External Auditor have decided not to accept the objection raised. They advise that, whilst they have made this decision, they suggest that the council consider its wider duties in respect of safeguarding (see 8.1) and, they also suggested that any future amounts paid to or on behalf of the village hall are made as formal donations, and should be supported with the appropriate spending power (see 6.2). They advise that whilst coming to this conclusion, their costs have exceeded £1500, however, they have reduced this fee to £750 (+VAT).

8.1 Safeguarding Policy Following a query raised during public participation at the Parish Council meeting in July, and reference made by the External Auditor, the Clerk was able to confirm that there is currently no statutory requirement for a Parish Council to have a policy. This followed guidance from Cumbria Association of Local Council. Members will review, in the future, if/when advice is amended.

8.2 IT Policy (Assertion 10) The Clerk had updated Members in respect of Digital and Data Compliance (Practitioner's Guide) for 2025/2026 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and Members resolved to adopt the recommended IT Policy as demonstrated in the guide.

9. Financial Matters

9.1 Bank statement reconciliation and update of receipts and payments 2025-2026, with the current bank balance was noted as £6636.40 (12/8/25). Two cheques from the previous meeting remain outstanding, with the latest bank statement being due soon.

9.2 To consider and approve payments to November 2025 Members resolved to approve the following payments. £750.00 (+VAT) External Auditor (see Item 8), £168.00 Insurance renewal (following comparative quotes) renewal due 31 October 2025, £180 meeting room hire (see Item 6.2) and Clerk remuneration for September and October £418.36 (plus PAYE, plus no.6 additional hours). The extra hours were in respect to additional work completed in recent weeks/months in relation to gathering information/evidence for the various concerns/complaints/points raised to auditor etc. No other payments were currently known, however, if anything further transpires, the Clerk will liaise with Members via email and report at the next meeting.

9.3 Retrospective payments authorised by former chairman The Clerk had written to the former chairman, as resolved in July 2025 (see July 2025 Item 9.3 Part I and II). Members noted that a response had been received. Members had agreed that the tone of the communication did not merit further response. Also noting that, currently, no reimbursement has been made.

9.4 Update on banking arrangements The Clerk advised the process of manual transfer was slow, but hopes there will be a window for the transfer to take place later this year, or early 2026, when no anticipated costs (and all outstanding cheques) cleared. The Clerk will liaise further with NatWest about adding Cllr Dickinson, as previously agreed.

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10. Planning Applications

S/02/111A West Mudbecks Barn, Garsdale Full planning permission for change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden. Members resolved to ratify their no objections response previously submitted.

11. Correspondence, notices, and publications

The Clerk mentioned a forthcoming Parish Forum event, for Members, being presented by Yorkshire Dales National Park – Cllr Simmonds hopes to attend. Also, a training event being hosted by Westmorland and Furness Council, Standards of Conduct for Elected Members in Town and Parish Councils. Finally, the Clerk advised of a general reminder for periodic checks for any defibrillators, and the Clerk was asked to liaise with the Community First Responders in respect of general administration/maintenance of the defibrillator attached to the Village Hall.

12. Councillor matters/exception items

Members noted that salt/grit bins appear to have recently been filled on Back Lane.

13. Date of next meeting

Members resolved that the next meeting would be the bi-monthly meeting of Garsdale Parish Council **7.30pm Tuesday 18 November 2025**. This would be held at Garsdale Village Hall, Garsdale, Cumbria (Please note the amended dated, previously Wednesday 19 November 2025 – thank you).

Chairman.....

Date.....

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

DRAFT