

ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (NEC)

held on Thursday 19th May 2022 at 6pm in the Village Hall

PRESENT: Lisa Marriott (Chair)
Cllr. Julie Barber
Jo Fell
Jan Bennett
Cllr. Simon Peers
Kathryn Nolan
Cllr. Kathryn Smith

In attendance: Peter Christopherson, a member of the Village Hall Management Committee, and Keith Langley (Parish Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence.

None. The resignation of David Hartley from the Committee was noted.

2. Declarations of interest.

None.

3. Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of 17th March were accepted as a true record.

4. To Receive and Approve the Annual Report.

The Chair had produced a report of the activities of the Committee for the Annual Parish meeting (which followed) and went through the report. The report was accepted in full, without additional comment or addition by members of the committee for submission to the Parish Council.

5. Recreation Area

a) To Respond to the Parish Council Decision

The Chair had spoken to Dan Kalvert, (and then briefly to Brian Williams) from the City of York Council Tree Conservation team, Dan was very helpful, and recommended that advice be obtained from Natural England and the Forestry Commission, which she did and the advice summarised in the paper report circulated.

b) To Receive the Report to the Parish Council on this Issue

The report included an attachment being the response of the Committee to the decision of the PC to fell all trees in the Recreational Area with a stem diameter of at least 75mm measured at 1.5m above the ground. As noted above the report was accepted in full, for submission on behalf of the NEC to the Parish Council for consideration.

Cllr. Peers advised the Committee that the decision was made after a large tree fell onto the playground landing on top of an infant's swing and a bench. The weather conditions at the time were not extreme and the 2019 tri-annual inspection had not revealed any signs that this tree would come down casting doubt on the status of the other trees and concerns about health and safety. In this instance, no one was injured. Cllr. Peers explained that the effectiveness of inspection was hampered by the amount of ivy growing up these trees. He also explained that once a decision had been made by the PC, it could not be reversed for four months unless two Councillors sent objects to the Clerk. Although two Councillors had done so, their objections missed the deadline for the May meeting agenda and therefore reconsideration of the decision would be an agenda item for the June meeting. The June meeting would consider the Committee's report and take into account inspection of the trees (an inspection of all trees on PC land including the area used by the coaches for parking had been requested as part of the tri-annual review). No action would be taken for several months regardless, due to rules about cutting trees during the nesting season for birds. It was noted that a licence would be needed to fell more than five cubic metres volume of trees per calendar quarter

unless there was an immediate risk of serious harm. It was also noted that to comply with Forestry Commission legislation, there was an onus on the landowner to demonstrate that a tree was dangerous and even if that was deemed to be the case, to comply with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the first course of action would be to restrict access.

The Chair had received an email that afternoon from the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer which she would circulate. It was suggested that a tree management plan was needed. It was noted that the responsibility of the owner of the tree to ensure that those carrying out the inspection were suitably qualified. It was suggested that habitat and drainage also be considered. There was no intention to change the locations of trees in the Recreational Area. The species of tree which fell was unknown, but it was agreed that shallow rooted species be avoided for any future planting and trees with brittle branches (e.g., ash) also be avoided.

There was also a suggestion that moving the swing away from the trees would be better than cutting the trees down. However, legislation regarding playground equipment had changed since the swing was installed. The legislation was not retrospective, and the swing was therefore compliant but moving it would make it subject to the new legislation making this option not cost effective (e.g. new matting would be required). The area in the middle of the Recreational Area would be kept clear for ball games in accordance with the wishes expressed in a survey.

c) Update on Progress with Assessment/Tree Management by Askham Bryan College

It was noted that David Hartley was no longer a member of the Committee but had been liaising with the college regarding trees in the Recreational Area. The Chair had emailed the contact at the college that David had been dealing with, but had yet to receive a response. David had previously advised the Committee that the college had agreed to remove the ash trees that have ash die back as well survey the area and plan further work. The original plan was for this work to be done by the end of the summer term. The Chair would try to get a reply from the college by the July meeting, Jan Bennett commented that educational timelines are dictated by the learning outcomes of the students, which may not fit with the timescales needed to effectively manage the trees.

d) Storm Debris

Storms in February/March 2022 had led to some tree damage. Volunteers from the Committee had cleared the recreation area of debris on 26th March.

e) Green Canopy.

The trees supplied by the Woodland Trust as part of the commemoration the Platinum Jubilee had been planted round the mound, Jo Fell had advised that these could be moved if necessary. A brass plaque had also been obtained and was with the Clerk.

6. Tree Inspection/Management

The responsibility for tree management between the NEC and the Parish Council needed to be clarified. It was noted that the Parish Council had overall responsibility for this, and held the budget, however, Simon Peers commented that it would be possible for this to be delegated to the NEC. The revised TOR for the NEC made reference to this and would be considered for agreement at the July meeting.

7. Land adjoining 149 Main Street

Jo had written an article for the Parish magazine. The submission deadline being the next day. Committee members were invited to comment on the article. It was noted that City of York Council had not cut the grass. Jo volunteered to cut the grass and keep the levels down. Concerns were expressed that the shadow of the trees might impact growth. It was agreed that the work to establish the wildflower area would commence in June/July. The Chair agreed to contact members of the committee to agree a suitable date for a working party to meet to carry out this work. Once a date had been agreed volunteers from the village would be sought

8. Women's Institute Tree

It was noted that the tree offered by the Women's Institute would be planted in the churchyard subject to the approval of the Diocese.

9. Terms of Reference

The Chair had circulated suggested amendments to the terms of reference, Committee members were invited to review the changes and give feedback, so that they could be agreed at the July meeting. These would be reviewed by the PC in due course.

10. Budget

The 2022/23 budget would be the same as 2021/22.

Date of next meeting

21st July 2022 at 6pm at the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 6:45pm.

Signed

Chair
21 July 2022

DRAFT