

**BURTON-CUM-WALDEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 21 APRIL 2026**

The Annual Parish Meeting was held in West Burton Village Hall on **Tuesday, 21 April 2026** at 7.30pm.

Members of the Council present were: Councillor Jane Ritchie, Chairman, Councillors David Dent, Sally Sahin and Victoria Whitehead, and Mr Richard Nolan, Clerk.

Also present: Fifteen residents of the Parish.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

**1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 22 April 2025, having been circulated via the website prior to the meeting, with copies available at the meeting, were taken as read. Mrs Christine Pratt proposed, and Mr Neil Smeeton seconded that the minutes were a true record, and this was confirmed by all present. The minutes were duly signed and dated by the Chairman.

The Chairman commented on action that had been taken arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

- The sums raised for fireworks (though not part of the Parish Council's own funds) were, as requested at the last meeting, published in the Parish Newsletter (Issue 70). Such publication will continue in future years.

**2. Annual Report, Parish Accounts and Points Arising**

The Chairman tabled the Annual Parish Report and Accounts, which had previously been circulated via the Parish website, the Parish Noticeboard, and the Village WhatsApp Group. Copies were provided to the meeting.

The Clerk explained that the significant variation from last year's accounts was caused by donations for, and the subsequent purchase of, a new mower for the Village Green. The Clerk also confirmed that donations (from The Elm House Trust, Miss Jane Ritchie and the West Burton Fund Raising Group) had covered the entire ex-VAT cost of the mower, and a reclaim had been submitted for the VAT, so the new mower has cost residents nothing.

There were no questions on the report and accounts.

The report and accounts were then accepted by the meeting.

**3. Use of the Buildings of the former West Burton School**

The Chairman noted that West Burton Village School had now been formally closed by North Yorkshire Council.

The Chairman gave a brief history of the School buildings for the benefit particularly of residents who were relatively new to the village and therefore might not know the background. In short, the school was founded by HT Robinson in the 1880s and the building was vested in a charitable trust which still exists. The purpose of the trust is to provide buildings for a school, failing which to relieve poverty (the provisions of blankets et cetera) amongst the poor of the parish. The trust still owns the school buildings, and the trustee is presently the person who is chairman for the time being of the Parish Council.

Extensive work had been undertaken in 2012–13 to establish ownership of the school. North Yorkshire Council agreed that it did not own the school. Also, in 2012–13, the Diocese of Ripon confirmed it did not own the school. Earlier this year, however, there was a letter from the Diocese of Leeds (the successor of the Diocese of Ripon) investigating ownership of the school buildings. The Clerk had replied to the Diocese of Leeds

confirming that the matter had been settled in 2012–13 and provided copies of the relevant correspondence. To date, nothing further has been heard from the Diocese of Leeds.

The school has not yet been handed back to the trust because of a delay in the process caused by matters unrelated to West Burton School. However, hand-back is anticipated shortly.

A working group consisting of Parish Counsellors and some others has been formed, called “Friends of Robinson House”, to address the question of what to do with the buildings and to deal with matters such as insurance in the interim. The name of the group keeps alive the memory of the school’s founder, HT Robinson, and the group’s firm intention is that the name of HT Robinson will be kept in relation to any redevelopment of the former school buildings.

Friends of Robinson House have opened a bank account and received a grant of £10,000 from the Elm House Trust. Architects have been appointed to undertake preliminary feasibility studies, and meetings have been held with Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) to discuss the attitude of planners towards redevelopment of the buildings.

Various uses have been proposed for the buildings: a large Airbnb, a climbing wall, a shop and café, an old peoples home and social housing. The working group considered that social housing was the most appropriate use. This view was put to the meeting, and the meeting unanimously confirmed its support of that view in principle.

The Chairman noted that any redevelopment of the school buildings for social housing faced at least three problems: funding, vehicular access and parking.

In response to a question from Mrs Christine Pratt, the Chairman said that possible sources of funding included housing enablers, grants from the Elm House Trust, grants from the Mayor’s Fund, the fund established by North Yorkshire Council to distribute the extra council tax raised from second homes, and the Upper Dales Land Trust. As yet, no approaches have been made to any such organisation, but the Chairman noted that the working group was very mindful of the importance of funding, particularly given that the trust which owns the buildings has no liquid cash or other investments.

As regards vehicular access, the Chairman noted that unless YDNPA allows demolition of the entrance lobby of the school, to create access to the rear of the school site, any question of vehicular access was moot. The Chairman took the view, on the basis of meetings with YDNPA, that such demolition was unlikely to be permitted. Members of the meeting suggested that this might be challenged. The Chairman noted that she had hoped for an update before the meeting from YDNPA in respect of its attitude to planning permission for redevelopment of the school; but she had not yet received any update.

If there were to be vehicular access to the former school buildings, there is a question as to where it would run. The current access directly from the road across the Village Green is only temporary, and cannot legally be made into permanent access without removing the status of the land over which that access runs as registered village green. That would require the dedication of an equivalent area as new registered village green. This might be possible as there were some small areas of parish land suitable that are not already registered Village Green. Alternatively, access might be created in front of Cavey Garth, but similar legal considerations applied, as well as questions of cost. A third possible route of access is along the track in front of the pub and then in front of houses. Residents of those houses expressed their concerns about this proposal. These concerns were noted, and the Chairman re-emphasised that she thought the matter was probably moot, as YDNPA is unlikely to allow the necessary demolition of a small part of the school buildings to create vehicular access to the site.

Mr Aaron Davis raised the possibility of access through, and then to the rear of, Cavey Garth.

As regards the issue of parking, the Chairman noted that YDNPA cannot have it both ways: either it must allow the creation of vehicular access (and consequent demolition work) if it requires off-street parking, or else, if it will not allow the creation of vehicular access (because it is unwilling to allow the consequent demolition work) it must accept on-street parking.

The Chairman informed the meeting that there had so far been two tentative and non-binding expressions of interest in redeveloping the former school buildings as social housing: one from the Upper Dales Land Trust and one from an organisation introduced by a resident. No response has yet been made to these expressions, pending greater clarity from YDNPA about its attitude towards planning permission for redevelopment of the site.

The Chairman further noted that, given the present terms of the trust that owns the school buildings, those terms will need to be altered and updated to allow the use of the buildings as social housing, a slow process which will likely involve the Charity Commission. She also noted that it was a matter of fundamental concern to Friends of Robinson House, and to the Parish Council, that the Parish should keep control over the choice of tenants for the any such housing, and be able to prefer local people in that choice, even if the housing is managed by another organisation.

In conclusion, the Chairman confirmed that there would be further public meeting(s) about redevelopment of the former school buildings before any plans are finalised.

#### **4. Any items of concern from residents of the Parish**

One resident raised the issue of moving the 30mph signs on the B6160 so as to be further from the village, particularly on the part of the road going up Bishopdale, in order that the speed limit should be reduced to 30mph where the steps from the Reading Room come down to the road and many walkers cross the road.

The Clerk reported that he had already made such a suggestion to North Yorkshire Council, the body with the power to effect such a change. He had also chased for a reply but as yet had only received a holding reply.

#### **5. Any other business**

Councillor Sahin noted that the Chairman was stepping down from that office at the next (May 2026) meeting of the Parish Council, though she would continue as a councillor until the date of the next elections in 2027. Councillor Sahin noted the tremendous amount of work the Chairman had done for the Parish in her 19 years as Chairman. Councillor Sahin therefore proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman which was very warmly agreed by the meeting.

There was no other business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Chairman:

Date: