

SCORTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 14th May 2025 in the Scorton War Memorial Institute at 7.00pm.

Present: Cllrs Rafelt, Terry, Harper, Richardson & Threlfall, North Yorkshire Cllr Les, Frank Broughton (Save Our Swale), MOP x 3, Cllrs Calvert & Robson (later)

Audio recording of meeting by PC, video recording of meeting by MOP, informed attendees, no objections.

1. Apologies for absence: PCSO Brown, Alan Coe (REMS)
2. Election of Officers. Cllr Threlfall elected as Chairman, stating that this is for 1 year only. Cllr Robson elected as Vice Chairman.
3. Chairman's report. This is my last AGM as chair, I started in 2019 and it is time for a change. Another year of stewardship and incremental improvements; for example, some additional trees have gone in, the AEDs in both Scorton and Bolton are being managed and we have ensured these are fully functional, there have been some enhancements to the bike-track element on Jubilee Green and some drainage work on Bridge Green. Additionally, we have started the long process of deregulating the parts of the village which were incorrectly assigned village-green status many decades ago.

The relationship between PC and NYC continues to evolve, it seems there will be plenty of challenges and opportunities as this progresses.

The government's changes to the planning system along with the removal of regional planning officers will have some impacts on the nature of planning applications and the power that Parish councils have to have any plans amended. This has changed substantially in the past 10-years and it is a dynamic area.

I think it's important to mention the areas around the lakes – I walk and cycle around them regularly and it's delightful to watch as these areas have developed in terms of flora and fauna. I think I speak for everyone when I extend thanks to Alan and his team for all the work they do. Also, we did some work to the windsock recently including changing the sock itself.

Last year we lit the beacon and remembered D-day, and last week the Parish Council organised an event to mark the 80th anniversary of VE day, this was well received by all involved. It is appropriate that these events are marked; they help to remind us all of how lucky we are to live in peace and safety, although there are always going to be some small disagreements we must remember to focus on the good and keep any issues in perspective.

Finally, the bridge. For those of you who don't know, I have a bit of a thing about bridges, and this year I had the opportunity to be part of a team who actually built one. The wooden footbridge on the aptly named 'bridge green' required replacing after 20 or so years of faithful service. Myself, along with Ian and Martyn constructed the flat-pack bridge purchased with funds gratefully received from Cllr Les' locality budget. Then a team installed the bridge on the existing footings in the summer of 2024. It's a great location to have a footbridge and will hopefully give the residents many years of service; a small but meaningful addition to the beautiful village of Scorton.

I will end by saying thank you to my fellow councillors for their support; especially Ian and Jenny. And finally, thanks to Vicki – a Parish Council is only as strong as it's clerk and we are very lucky to have such a dedicated clerk supporting the council and the community.

4. Financial report
 - External audit – approval of Annual Governance Statement 24/25. Cllrs resolved to approve the statement.
 - Appointment of Internal Auditor. It was resolved to retain Margaret Goldie.
 - Adoption of the accounts for year ending 31st March 2025. The Bank reconciliation and year's accounts were distributed to councillors, and it was resolved to adopt the year's accounts. The combined balances at 31/3/25 = £12,618.03, as the March meeting was held in April £1808.21 outgoing was pushed into the new financial year.

Summary of Accounts for 2024/2025

Income

Funding/donations 1750
Precept 17000
VAT refund/wayleaves 3550
Urban grasscutting 1150
Insurance claim 600

Outgoing

Insurance 950
Donations 3050
Grass cutting 7700
Broadband 550
General maintenance 1700
Projects (Bike track improvements – JG, land drain & replacement trees– BG, VAS post, football nets. Bins – Brompton Road & Mollie Cail, bridge extras) 5200
Admin (Wages, PAYE, S&D Times, PC phone, training, audits, defib replacements, service charge & subs) 8350
Park inspections 650

5. Parish documents annual review (Standing Orders, Resilience Plan, Asset Register, Publication Scheme – FOI, Complaints procedure, Vexatious Policy & Recording of meetings). Review completed.
6. Bolton on Swale School report. No report received.
7. Trustee Michael Syddall Representatives' report. Cllr Les gives the report, the charity is in the process of winding up. Currently £100,000 assets, £4000 annual incoming. The charity holds 3 meetings/year. The proposal is to donate all the funds to the Michael Syddall School, the trustees have sold the school site to NYC for a nominal fee and so this has allowed DfE to start building a new school. There are two elements of the Michael Syddall fund: Educational foundation & charity.
8. Save Our Swale Group report. Frank Broughton gives the report. The monthly water sampling programme continues, the nearest site to Scorton, at Brompton, regularly shows the highest pollution levels of any of the eight monitoring sites. Levels of E. coli between Sept 23 – March 25 have exceeded the safe bathing limit 14 times out of 16. SoS are working with Surfers Against Sewage Campaign and taking part in a weekly sampling project, initial findings show high levels of Coliform bacteria including E. coli. SoS have erected warning signs at Brompton on Swale near to the main swimming/paddling areas. Phosphate levels are also generally exceeding Environmental Agency's recommended levels; this is likely due to a combination of run-off from farmland and sewage treatment works discharges. A monthly sampling programme for aquatic invertebrates has been begun, early results show very low levels of invertebrates, and possibly an influencing factor in the decline of the thriving population of dippers at Brompton. SoS have been actively pressurising Yorkshire Water to upgrade its local treatment facilities, and visited the Richmond treatment works, this was poorly maintained and had inadequate treatment facilities leading to continued discharges of raw sewage into the river, this is in breach of Yorkshire Waters legal obligations. SoS wrote to Yorkshire Water's head office with their concerns; they await a response. Other complaints have been reported in the local and national press, and SoS intends to make an application for approved Bathing Water Status at the river in Richmond. If successful, this would require the Environment Agency to be more active in promoting water quality. SoS are also assessing options for a campaign to promote non-payment of water bills, and continues to keep up pressure to ensure sewage discharges into the river become a thing of the past. Cllr Calvert asks if discharges are still happening in this dry spell, FB doesn't have the figures for this year but discharges were still happening in dry seasons last year. Cllr Terry queries how far down the river the pollution goes, FB doesn't have these figures. Cllr Richardson asks why the Environment Agency aren't pro-active, is it lack of resources or evidence based, ie, difficult to prove. FB, it is possible to analyse both phosphate and bacteria levels to identify the source, however this is very expensive and so reliant on EA for this work, additionally EA have had many staff cuts; the work SoS are carrying out should be undertaken by EA, equally the bathing status at Richmond will push EA to carry out more work. Cllr Rafelt thanks for attending and carrying out such valuable work. Mr Broughton leaves.
9. Parish Council Representatives for YLCA x 2, Scorton War Memorial Institute Committee. Cllrs Richardson & Threlfall elected as YLCA reps, SWMI – Cllr Harper.
Meeting closed at 7.50pm