

RYHILL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 8 APRIL 2025

Chair of the meeting: C D Bashforth (Chair of Ryhill Parish Council)
Minutes taken by: C Greaves (Clerk to Ryhill Parish Council)

There were 8 Ryhill councillors present, 1 District councillor and 2 residents of the parish.

MINUTES

- 1 Apologies
Cllr T Staves and DCllrs M Cummings and U Ali sent their apologies
- 2 Welcome from the Chair of Ryhill Parish Council – Cllr Cheryle Bashforth
Noted
- 3 Approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 9th April 2024
Approved (the draft minutes were noted at the May 2024 council meeting)
- 4 Report by the Chair of Ryhill Parish Council – Cllr Cheryle Bashforth
Received and attached to these minutes
- 5 Public question time
Resolved – a request was made for the Chairs report to be made available ahead of the meeting so that residents could have time to absorb the detail and to reflect on its contents. The meeting agreed that for future years:

(a) The Agenda would include the Chair's report.
(b) Printed copies of the report would be available at the meeting.
(c) Draft minutes of the meeting would be published on the website.
(d) The minutes would be formally accepted at the following annual meeting.
- 6 Date, Time and Venue for the next Annual Parish Meeting (14/04/26)
Approved

C R Greaves

Charles Greaves
Clerk to the Council
Ryhill Parish Council

Thanks to councillors and the Clerk

I would like to thank the Clerk and councillor colleagues who have all worked very hard again this year. They have continued to be fully active in their various roles within the council, and on working groups and outside bodies during another very busy and challenging year. During my 36 years as a parish councillor, I have seen the role of councillors become much more complex and involved. My colleagues work as a team and have risen to the challenge to perform their duties with dedication. They have also been involved in a lot of voluntary work around the village which has saved the parish money in payments to contractors.

Councillors and Clerk have been involved in a variety of training events this year.

I would like to offer a special thanks my deputy of the last 18 years, Cllr Burnage, and also to our Clerk, Charles Greaves, who joined us in June 2023. Charles has continued to work flexibly and has set out a structured plan to overall our systems over the coming years.

Re-structuring work achieved this year

The big work undertaken this year has been:

- Setting up the new bank accounts and the Reserves arrangements, including online banking
- Updating of the Risk and Assets Register
- Re-brokering the insurance schedule and insurer
- Creating the YLCA policy review.

District councillors

I would like to thank our district councillors for continuing to work with us over the last year. Councillors Faith Heptinstall, Maureen Cummings, and Usman Ali have attended our meetings regularly and played a very positive role in bringing our concerns to the attention of Wakefield MDC. We very much appreciate their hard work on our behalf.

Parishioner volunteers

We have many good, kind people in the parish and I would like to thank those who work voluntarily with council and for the parish. They make a big difference and save the parish money through their goodwill.

Website

Council commissioned the development of a new professionally designed website in 2022. This has proved to be a very useful tool for enabling freedom of information to interested parties about the work of Council and the accounting process. All information about the work of the council appears on the site which is regularly updated by Cllr Karen Fretwell and our Clerk. The website is: **www.ryhillcouncil.co.uk**

Protection of green spaces owned or leased by the parish council

Ryhill Parish Council continues to protect the green spaces in our parish boundaries as best we can. We secured the ownership of our **two allotment sites** and these continue to be popular with parishioners.

We also maintain **Ryhill Park and Stray** and the **old station site** as areas for public amenity. We own Ryhill Park and we lease Ryhill Stray and the old station site. Ryhill Park and Stray regularly feature in photographs sent in to TV weather channels by our talented local photographers. We would like to thank the many members of the public who use the areas with respect to other users and also those who control and clean up after their dogs as requested.

As part of the King's Coronation, Council joined with The Woodland Trust to acquire more trees and hedging at no cost to the parish. Planting was carried out by a working party of councillors, a member of the public and Roger Parkinson of Woodland Trust in the above areas. Our task for the coming months will be to purchase wildflower seed for The Stray to encourage pollinators and biodiversity.

We have a **biodiversity policy and action plan**. We will be looking at this closely over the coming months to see what more we can do as a parish. Sadly, Britain is in an extremely poor state having lost over 50% of our biodiversity.

This is shocking and we will continue to do our best to help nature and to encourage parishioners and allotment tenants to have regard for biodiversity. Even small measures undertaken by individuals such as bird boxes, insect hotels, and leaving uncultivated spaces for nature can have an impact.

Allotment sites

Our allotment sites at Sunnybank and Cemetery Road continue to be popular, with very few plots vacant. We recently replaced the noticeboards on both sites and this was undertaken by Cllr Atherton and a member of the public. Parishioners wishing to enquire about allotment plot should contact the Clerk to the council.

Parish Precept

The parish precept has been set at £53,111 for 2025-2026, which is virtually the same as for the last 11 years. This will result in no change in the parish council charge levied on individual council tax bills because we have committed to cover any increase in expenditure from reserves. This is possible by the careful management of our finances and reserves, and despite the large and unexpected expenses that have arisen this year, with increases from every supplier of service.

Safe Scheme

We continue to fund the Safe Scheme in Ryhill because of the very positive results achieved and appreciative comments by parishioners. We pay for extra policing by our regular neighbourhood police team to deal with specific problems identified by parishioners, including speed checks, dealing with off-road motorcycles and anti-social behaviour. Their tasks and duty hours vary as complaints and issues arise. Without the Safe Scheme we would see very little police presence in the village because we are still considered to be a very low crime area. Officers also work late and into the early hours so may not always be seen by parishioners but we receive a very detailed monthly report about their activities and many successes. Parishioners may contact the Clerk to the Council to suggest priorities for our officers though we know that many parishioners speak directly to officers during their patrols.

The Scheme works really well because we have a Co-ordinator who has been working closely with Council for a number of years and has built up an excellent understanding of Ryhill and its issues.

Cemetery

Sadly, the cemetery has been targeted by vandals over the last year. This resulted in Wakefield MDC locking the gates during hours of darkness. The locking and re-opening was not always consistent and one of our councillors, Cllr Lisa Booth, has since taken on the task of doing this which has proved to be more effective and consistent. We thank her for this on behalf of the parish for undertaking this task. The cemetery gates are due to be repaired and painted by Wakefield MDC.

Donations to organisations

The Parish Council made a donation to the British Legion remembrance wreath and gift of money. We also donated a £600 lunch club grant to the Warm Space at St James' Church. A further £1,250 grant was made to SWS Sports to continue the delivery of a holiday club to young people during the school holidays by paying for the venue.

Sports, leisure and youth services in Ryhill

We continue to support these services in the village. The governance of the sports and youth centre changed in April 2015. It operates as a charity but the day-to-day management is the responsibility of a charitable incorporated organisation, Rycroft Leisure CIO. The services remain the same and 4 councillors from Ryhill Parish Council are members of the management teams and are trustees. We are very pleased with the progress that has been made during its years as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, with the management team securing funds from outside bodies to improve building and services. We are very pleased with the continued success of our local teams.

Hanging baskets, bulb planting and planters

We are committed to improving the look of the village, however, the provision had to change this year. This was because of circumstances beyond our control. The lamppost columns which had features were due for safety inspection by Amey. The cost was very large and we decided to do things differently because this problem would recur, with fewer and fewer columns meeting standards as they age.

Council decided to purchase another 14 planters for the village. We already have quite a number of planters around the village. Siting of the planters is dependent on health and safety issues, and on consent from landowners. All planters are included in the twice-yearly planting programme funded by Council though some adopters kindly choose to pay for the planting themselves. We thank all adopters on behalf of the parish. The planter scheme is a cost-effective means of improving the appearance of the village. The planter provision has been delayed because of supply issues but they are due to be installed for spring planting. Those planters who do not have adopters will be planted by councillors and volunteers and watering enabled via our village caretaker.

Additional Grit Bins and Rock Salt

Council continues to provide winter rock salt for the bins that we have purchased over the last few years. The siting and filling of the bins is one of the roles undertaken by our village caretaker. There was no need for the purchase of grit in 2024 because the weather was not extreme and the bins were already full.

Defibrillator

The defibrillator for our village is located outside St Paul's Methodist Church. It is used approximately once every fortnight. The pads for it are provided and funded by Ryhill Parish Council and Cllr Gloria Booth cleans and resets the device after its use.

Provision of Christmas tree and lamp post features

This has been taken over by the parish council over recent years using funding from our precept. We undertook this with the kind cooperation of St Paul's Methodist Church. We have found that the tree and lights provision is much more cost effective this way even though this involves a lot more time and effort from councillors. We had many positive comments about the tree and lights and will provide the same again this year.

Once again, last Christmas, we had Christmas features on the lamp posts throughout the village. This is dependent and will continue to be dependent upon risk assessments of lamp posts by Amey.

We provided two additional Christmas trees in planters. These were kindly donated by Spring Green Nurseries and Cllr Gloria Booth donated solar powered lights. We thank them for their generosity. Parishioners appreciated the additional trees sited on Station Road and Nostell Lane. Sadly, vandals chose to attack the one on Station Road and the lights destroyed. We are determined to try again this Christmas time.

Village caretaker

We continue to fund our own village caretaker who undertakes a wide variety of tasks on behalf of the parish council. Our caretaker is John Hope and you may see him around the village as he carries out his tasks. These tasks are often those that are no longer provided by Wakefield MDC. John strims around seats and some paths, he stencils the pavements to encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets, and sites and refills the grit bins.

Cheryle Bashforth MEd, BA(Hons) PGCE LCGI
Chair of Ryhill Parish Council