

RYHILL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 14TH APRIL 2026

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 and 5 residents of the parish.

MINUTES

- 1 Apologies
Cllr R Caley and DCllrs M Cummings, F Heptinstall and U Ali sent their apologies and could not attend due to election rules.
- 2 Welcome from the Chair of Ryhill Parish Council – Cllr Cheryle Bashforth
Noted
- 3 Approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 8th April 2025
Approved (the draft minutes were noted at the May 2025 council meeting)
- 4 Report by the Chair of Ryhill Parish Council – Cllr Cheryle Bashforth
Received and attached to these minutes
- 5 Public question time

An allotment holder commented on plastic rubbish and that the paths needed mowing – the issue was addressed in the council meeting that followed.

A report was made of noisy cars and exhausts - details will be sent to the Safe Scheme.

Woodlands is to be a 4 girl children's home and the Mill Lane development is ongoing.

A query over the maintenance of private flats was directed to District Councillors.

- 6 Date, Time and Venue for the next Annual Parish Meeting (13/04/27)
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 extremely busy and challenging year. During my 37 years as a parish councillor, I have seen the role of councillors become much more complex and involved but 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.

I would like to offer a special thanks my deputy of the last 19 years, Cllr Burnage, and also to our Clerk, Charles Greaves, who joined us in June 2023. Charles has worked incredibly hard to continue with our structured overall systems to comply with the latest requirements of parish councils.

Key achievements this year

The changes instigated this year:

- The move of the website and councillor and clerk emails to gov.uk to comply with requirements set by the external auditor
- Freezing the parish precept, once again, to help parishioners in challenging times
- Updating of the biodiversity plan and further work on Ryhill Park and Ryhill Stray to increase biodiversity, planting of more trees and shrubs and sowing of wildflower seed on The Stray to encourage re-wilding and increase pollinators
- Continuation with the Safe Scheme for the village which has led to very few crimes compared to those in neighbouring villages
- The purchase and planting up of more planters around the village with more planned in the coming year
- Further work to rationalise our bank accounts to help with online banking and maximise interest paid without risk to the parish.

District councillors

I would like to thank our district councillors for continuing to work with us over the last year. Councillors Maureen Cummings, Usman Ali and Faith Heptinstall 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. We have worked with our district councillors to bring about replacement gates to the cemetery and also the construction of traffic lights at the dangerous crossroads on the B6428 towards Royston. Both are expected March/April. Both Maureen and Usman will be standing in the local elections in May and we wish them every success.

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.ryhillparish.gov.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.

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. The allotment guide for our tenants has been amended to encourage tenants to embrace methods to help biodiversity and nature.

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 budget has been set at £57,928 for 2026-2027. 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

The locking and re-opening of the cemetery gates continues to be undertaken by one of our councillors, Cllr Lisa Booth, and has proved to be effective and consistent. We thank her for this on behalf of the parish for undertaking this task. The cemetery gates are due to be replaced by Wakefield MDC very soon.

Donations to organisations

The Parish Council made a donation to the British Legion remembrance wreath and gift of money. A grant of £1,449 was made towards the cost of traffic safety management for the Santa Parade and related activities. A further £1,250 grant has been awarded to SWS Sports to continue the delivery of a holiday club to young people during the school holidays by paying for the venue. The grant will be paid directly to Rycroft Leisure.

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 3 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 last 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 purchased 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. Those planters that do not have adopters will continue to be planted by councillors and volunteers and watering enabled via our village caretaker. Parishioners have commented that they like the planters and we intend to purchase more this year.

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 for some years now 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 receive many positive comments about the tree and lights and therefore 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. Council is already considering contingency plans in case the tree features are not allowed or restricted this December.

We provided two additional Christmas trees in planters in 2024. One tree needed to be replaced because of a battering by the weather. The tree lights on both trees were also replaced.

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