

Draft Minutes
Annual Parish Meeting of Electors
Held in Gargrave Village Hall
22 May 2025 at 6:30pm

Gregory L Butt MBE (Chair)

Martin Banks (Secretary to the Meeting)

1. Welcome from Chair and an introduction to the Parish Councillors, County Councillors and Clerk.

The Chair welcomed the 25 attendees and introduced the Parish Councillors in attendance along with the newly appointed Parish Clerk. He stated that Cllr Simon Myers had sent his apologies and that he would read Cllr Myers report.

2. To resolve as a correct record the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24 May 2024 and for the Chair of the meeting to sign these.

The Chair explained that this Annual Meeting of Electors was the first meeting (within available records). Previous 'meetings' had been variations of the Annual meeting of the Council and **not** an Annual Parish Meeting of Electors; because of this there were no minutes to review.

3. To obtain a summary of the council's endeavours throughout 2024-2025.

During the 2024–25 period, the Parish Council was chaired by Gregory L Butt with Karen Hunter as Vice Chair. Two councillors, Claire Cadman and Ian Ackroyd, were co-opted onto the Council. Janet Sugden retired and left the council. Martin Banks served commendably as the Acting Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) for ten months. Martin will be succeeded by Jayne Dunlop, the new Clerk and RFO, who is currently undergoing induction and training. The Chair outlined the following key initiatives and focus for the Parish Council:

- Traveller Gypsy Roma (TGR) Plan:

The Council's main focus this year involved managing TGR presence in Gargrave. This included installing barriers, coordinating with North Yorkshire Police, and providing arriving groups with a welcome, code of conduct, and vacation date. Previous groups have been respectful, and communication has been maintained with residents and authorities.

- Kelber Hill Monitoring:

An Environment Working Group was formed to monitor business activity at Kelber Hill and raise awareness with North Yorkshire Council (NYC).

- Speed Watch Campaign:

In collaboration with other villages, the Council advocated for improved speed enforcement in North Yorkshire, which currently lacks fixed or average speed cameras. Discussions were held with the Deputy Mayor to support changes.

- **River Aire Issues:** Significant concerns stem from the removal of a weir below Mill Lane, which increased river flow speed and is seen as a major contributor to the issues facing the council:
 - **Stepping Stones:** A costly professional solution was deemed unfeasible; alternative local solutions are being pursued.
 - **Erosion & Accretion:** Erosion and sediment build-up are being assessed. The River Aire Working Group will report in October 2025.
 - **Gabion Collapse:** Discussions are ongoing with Yorkshire Water to address this issue near Pinfold.

- **Communications Overhaul:**

Improved communication measures were implemented, including regular Parish Magazine articles and Facebook & website updates. Claire Cadman led a six-month effort to redesign Council communications, culminating in a new policy and plan to be adopted in June 2025.

- **Gargrave Neighbourhood Plan Dispute:**

The Council contested omissions in the 2019 Neighbourhood Plan which affected planning decisions, notably for land off Marton Road. Despite efforts and community support, the issue remains unresolved, and an Ombudsman appeal is under consideration.

- **Community Events:**

The Council partnered with the Gargrave Events Committee to improve Christmas lighting. However, plans for a Bonfire Night event were halted due to insurance and health & safety constraints. Alternative locations are being explored for future events.

4. To receive short report from the North Yorkshire Councillor on his work for this community in the past year.

Councillor Simon Myers, representing the Mid Craven Ward and serving as Executive Member for Culture, Arts, Leisure, and Housing, provided a written report in lieu of attending the meeting due to prior commitments.

He outlined the continued challenges of local government reorganisation, noting the importance of service delivery and local accountability. Financial strain was a key theme, with the sudden removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant causing a £14 million shortfall and added pressures from increased National Insurance contributions. Despite this, prudent financial management has kept North Yorkshire relatively stable, though further savings are needed.

Councillor Myers criticized the unfairness of the Council Tax system, highlighting rural-urban disparities. Policy changes such as alterations to the Home to School Transport scheme have been controversial, but necessary to address a £50 million annual cost, one of the council's highest expenditures.

Concerns were raised about the direction of the government's Fair Funding Review, which may further disadvantage rural areas like North Yorkshire. Cllr Myers also reported progress in his executive portfolio, including new IT systems,

leisure investment planning, and the acquisition of council homes in Skipton and Gargrave.

A major policy was announced to allocate all funds raised from increased council tax on second homes—estimated at over £42 million—toward building 540 affordable homes across North Yorkshire. This complements the Council's goal of delivering at least 500 new council homes over the next four years.

Locally, he has supported Gargrave in various matters including planning, drainage, housing, and concerns about canal flooding. He praised the Parish Council, particularly its work on the Traveller, Gypsy, Roma (TGR) Strategy, to which he contributed funding for fencing.

He remains active with GNAT, which maintains the village's public toilets despite ongoing vandalism. He continues to campaign for fixed speed cameras and better rail services, especially at Hellifield Station.

Finally, Cllr Myers acknowledged the reduction in Locality Budgets to £5,000 and committed to distributing funds fairly across villages. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the Parish Council and volunteers for their contributions to village life.

5. To consider matters raised by electors.

The following issues were raised:

- **School Transport Costs:**

While agreeing that the cost for school transport seemed eye wateringly large, the Chair said the issue would need to be raised directly with Cllr Myers.

- **River Aire**

The Chair stated that he would ask the Parish Council's River Aire Working Group to prepare an interim report for the Parish Council meeting on 2 July 25.

The Annual Parish Meeting of The Electors concluded at 7:45 pm