



KIRKBYMOORSIDE TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Kirkbymoorside Town Council held on 16 February 2026 at 7.30pm in Church House, 7 High Market Place, Kirkbymoorside, YO62 6AT.

Present: Councillors Joe Coughlan (Chair), Chris Dowie, Andrea Moffat, Tony Riby and Simon Woodhams.

Also Present: Town Clerk, L Bolland, and 10 members of the public including representatives of Kirkbymoorside In Bloom, Kirkbymoorside Environment Group, Ryedale Environment Group, NYMNPA and the Town Council's grass cutting contractor, Phil Gospel.

25176 Agenda item 1. Apologies for Absence

- a. Apologies for absence given in advance of the meeting were **received** from Cllrs Bettany and Shields.
- b. Reasons given for absence were **approved**.

25177 Agenda item 2. There were no Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda

25178 Agenda item 3. Minutes and Matters Arising

- a. The draft minutes of the Ordinary meeting dated 19 January 2026 were **approved** and **signed**.
- b. There were no matters arising.

25179 Agenda item 4. Public Session - members of the public expressed an interest in making representation in respect of agenda item 7. Cllr Coughlan invited participation in discussion at the relevant agenda item.

25180 Agenda item 5. There were no questions already posed, and no new matters for discussion with Councillors.

25181 Agenda item 6. Financial matters

- a. Accounts paid since the last meeting of the Council were **reported** cheque payments **approved** according to the list provided.
- b. The Financial Summary to 31 January 2026 was **received**.
- c. The Section 137 expenditure limit for 2026/2027 financial year of £11.60 per elector, up from £11.10 in 2025/26, was **noted**.

25182 Agenda item 7. Biodiversity and grass verge management

- a. It was **agreed**, in accordance with the Town Council's Biodiversity Policy, adopted 21 July 2025, to seek to restore and enhance precious habitat within the town.
- b. Feedback from the public meeting on 4 February 2026, facilitated by the Town Council was **received**, as detailed in the supporting documents.

Discussion of all matters covered by agenda item 7c. – g. ensued encompassing:

- grass verge cutting and implications of reducing the number of cuts from 14 to 9
- a stepped approach to some verges as trialled in 2025 by North Yorkshire Council
- hedge cutting on a two or three year rotation
- Nature Areas involving cut and collect in Spring and late Summer only
- Blue Hearts & publication of information

Cllr Riby referred to the opposition by residents regarding the A170 verges being designated as wildflower areas, and the Town Council's response, by resolution, to abandon the project.¹ Residents then offered thanks for supporting their opposition to the project and the Town Council's decision to respond decisively to their concerns. However, the current agenda item appears to go against that resolution.

Residents and businesses have already voiced opposition to designation of A170 verges for wildflower/nature projects as the untidy appearance of uncut verges creates a poor impression of the town. The business of promoting biodiversity does not partner well with road safety and therefore is not a suitable proposal. Cllr Riby provided Councillors with a map identifying alternative sites that would be suitable nature areas as alternatives to the A170, on Swineherd Lane, Gillamoor Road and Gawtersyke Lane.



¹ Extracts of Minute **25081** Agenda item 12. Biodiversity & Wildflower verges of the Ordinary meeting dated 15 September 2025.

First Proposal: "Cllr Riby proposed that the Town Council take notice of the residents concerns and abort the wildflower project."

Counter Proposal: "Cllr Woodhams accepted that whilst the project has been well intended it is beset by conditions beyond control and if the public opinion is opposed to the project then it warrants review. Cllr Woodhams seconded the motion by Cllr Riby with the specification that the current approach be abandoned and reviewed. "

Final Resolution: "Cllr Coughlan repeated the proposal to abort the *current* wildflower verges management project with the intention to *review* the opportunities to improve biodiversity within the town and determine a strategy that is supported by local residents through consultation. **Agreed.**"

Additional locations suggested include the land north of Old Road play area, east of the Ambulance Station in Keldholme, the golf course and open space throughout Manor Woods, all of which would require consent and partnership with the landowners. There are many alternative areas that would be suitable for rewilding without compromising the appearance of the town.

Cllr Riby requested an item on the agenda of the next appropriate meeting to consider the proposal to fully support rewilding but avoid the A170. He concluded that resolutions of the Town Council, having been proposed, supported and agreed, should be upheld.

Cllr Coughlan invited members of the public to make representation.

Mr Croad made representation, in a personal capacity, sharing the views of many residents that he has spoken to and continues to speak to about the project (Notes appended to the Minutes):

Firstly, he thanked those Councillors that had been receptive to the views of many residents who were upset and disappointed by the previous project and the decision to respond to the concerns raised. However, he agreed with Cllr Riby that the wording of the agenda item contradicts the decisions of the Town Council at the September meeting. The motions as proposed make it apparent that no credence has been given to any of the points put forward by the public as none of the proposed motions have involved consultation with local residents and businesses.

Kirkbymoorside is not an environmental desert. It is a biodiverse landscape without any intervention. It is not necessary to use the A170 verges to promote biodiversity when residents could encourage environmental benefits within their own gardens. How the biodiversity duty is implemented by the Town Council should not compromise the interests of its residents.

There has been much focus on the need for grass to be left to grow tall but there are many benefits to short grass. Shorter cut grass promotes a variety of plants, invertebrates and birds. Clovers for example, which are protein and pollen rich are beneficial to bees, butterflies and moths and are a good food source for small mammals. Ground feeding birds forage in shorter grassed areas for leather jackets, ants and earth worms.

The issue to date has been about where the Town Council has chosen to undertake the project and the detrimental effect this has had on the appearance of the town. It is important that the town has the appearance of being cared for and the In Bloom planters are visible. Some areas of longer grass and native plants might then be encouraged towards the back of verges where they will not be visually intrusive but still offer environmental benefits.

The Town Council was urged to keep to the decision of the September meeting and come up with a strategy that works with, and supports the interests of, the local groups in its considerations.

Cllr Coughlan offered assurance that, any agreed proposals will involve consultation with all affected parties. **Agreed.** This was specified in the resolution of the Town Council at the September meeting Minute 25081" ...to abort the *current* wildflower verges management project with the intention to *review* the opportunities to improve biodiversity within the town and determine a strategy that is supported by local residents *through consultation.*"

Helen Gundry, Kirkbymoorside Environment Group, acknowledged the concerns and observations voiced, but disagreed with the suggestion that the wording of the agenda contradicts the decisions of the Town Council at the September meeting. The agenda item

offers the opportunity to consider a strategy that will be sympathetic to the objectives of all parties and the Biodiversity Policy.

Peter Winter made representation on behalf of Ryedale Environment Group (Notes appended to the Minutes). He explained that in his experience the subject of grass verge management is often emotive and controversial. It is necessary to publicise information to improve understanding and educate people on the need for, and how to promote, biodiversity. The display of Blue Hearts, accompanied by access to corresponding information, offer a good demonstration of the project intentions. The project will be better appreciated by the public if more information is made available and there is a better understanding of the need to promote biodiversity.

Jean Illingworth explained that it is necessary to focus on the A170 as it has been identified by NYMNPA GrubsUp! as a pollinator corridor. The clear divide between uncut and regularly cut grass offers a clear demonstration of intention and can look smart. Perhaps a broader width of cut grass from the road verge, paired with longer grass closer to the hedge/fence line would offer a suitable compromise.

Cllr Riby repeated his objection to any area of the A170 verge receiving less frequent cuts and proposed that consideration be given to alternative locations, as suggested.

Cllr Dowie welcomed the suggestions made by Cllr Riby and agreed that they warrant consideration. For the avoidance of any further confusion, she drew attention to the absence of any reference to the A170 in the wording of the agenda item. The intention of the agenda item is for consideration of a variety of approaches in order for the Town Council to establish a Biodiversity Action Plan.

Cllr Dowie referred to the support of the Blue Hearts campaign by many landowners between Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley, which provides a broader view of progress made locally. She suggested that the stepped approach, referred in agenda item 7d. offers a clear distinction between the area of regularly cut grass and the uncut areas whilst also satisfying road safety considerations by keeping the visibility splays clear in the interest of pedestrian and motorists' safety.

Revisiting the processes involved in the wildflower project to date, Cllr Dowie summarised the benefits of yellow rattle and explained that there has been considerable participation by volunteers. She refused any suggestion that the Town Council's execution of the project had been ill informed explaining that there has been a significant amount of information received and considered by the Town Council and the process has been adapted according to the results at each stage. The project was guided by the principles of the NYMNPA GrubsUp! Campaign. Guidance from North Yorkshire Council and partnership organisations including Plantlife were also referenced. Furthermore the success of the project is quantified by the findings of the most recent survey which identified a 50% increase in species of plants and insects in these areas. The increased variety of plants results in more pollinators. Cllr Dowie defended the intention of the project to help pollinators and improve biodiversity in conjunction with the NYMNPA GrubsUp! Campaign. She encouraged informed consideration of what the Town Council can do to encourage biodiversity and formation of a Biodiversity Action Plan, including:

- The practice of cutting hedges on a two or three year rotation was suggested, as a recommendation by Holly Ramsden, NYMNPA, to improve blossom and berry production.
- Reducing the number of cuts and only cutting when necessary. Cllr Dowie recalled that in 2025 when there was hardly any rain the grass on the area of verge outside the sports field was brown because it had been cut unnecessarily but hadn't had a

chance to grow. Despite the dry season 14 cuts were carried out. By contrast in 2024 it was particularly wet and the same amount of cuts were carried out.

Cllr Coughlan invited feedback from the appointed grass cutting contractor, Phil Gospel.

As a contractor it's difficult to agree a flexible approach to a grass cutting (or any works) schedule because it's necessary to know how many cuts will be allowed and to have agreed the number of cuts for tendering purposes. The first cut, weather dependent, is carried out at the end of March or beginning of April.

Phil Gospel explained that he has always practiced considerate mowing, deliberately cutting around swathes of flowers and taking care to wait until the daffodils have died back naturally to allow the bulbs to absorb nutrients for next spring's growth. Where grass is more sparse and it's not necessary to mow regularly, the areas are left for longer periods so that other plants are given the opportunity to thrive. For example, at Old Road play area there is an area under the trees along the east boundary that lends itself perfectly as a nature area. The area is deliberately not mowed regularly and as a result cowslips have been able to thrive, which attracts beneficial insects like hoverflies.

Regarding the area outside the sports field, the grass here will always be susceptible to drought because there is so little soil, regardless of the number of cuts. Phil explained that width of the machinery used for verges cutting is 5ft wide. On the wider verges it is possible to complete up to 5 lines i.e. a width of 20 – 25ft, which would be wide enough to practice a stepped approach to cutting.

With regards to hedgerow management, within the Town Council's grounds maintenance contracts, the only hedge that this would be applicable to is the north boundary of Old Road play area for the length of hedge leading from the main gated entrance at the junction of Old Road and Howe End to the pedestrian gate behind the toddler play area. For this length of hedge it would be possible to rotate cuts to the top and front of the hedge however, it would be necessary to cut in around the bench and for the length of path leading past the toddler play area. The remaining hedges at Old Road play area must be cut at least once a year to ensure visibility of the entire play area, for safety purposes. Additionally, this approach would not be possible to any hedge next to a footpath. The current approach to hedge cutting involves only one cut per year.

He explained that he is aware of many individuals taking steps to promote biodiversity within their own gardens. His own approach to land management is biodiversity focussed having dug out a wildlife pond in a family owned field off West Lund Lane. The area is teeming with wildlife and his family would welcome individuals to visit and see the benefits of nature areas if it is of interest.

Cllr Riby again referred to the views made by members of the public at the September meeting in opposition to the designation of areas of the A170 and reiterated that all the grass verges on the A170 should be kept neat to showcase the town. There are many opportunities to promote biodiversity away from the A170.

Sam Newton, Ecologist, explained that from an ecological point of view connectivity throughout the landscape is desired. This is not necessarily linear, a mosaic approach is also beneficial and would include habitats in private gardens. It is not necessary to designate an entire verge. Smaller patches on any verge, of a size that can be managed and sustained, would be beneficial.

Cllr Coughlan thanked everyone for their contributions and directed attention back to the agenda at item 7c. for determination.

- c. Cllr Coughlan proposed to defer consideration at this time, in the absence of agreement to the motion to reduce the number of cuts. **Agreed.**
- d. A stepped approach to some verges as trialled in 2025 by North Yorkshire Council was considered. Cllr Coughlan proposed to defer consideration at this time. **Agreed.**
- e. The schedule of hedge cutting was **reviewed**. Cllr Dowie proposed the top and front of the hedge for the length of the north boundary of Old Road play area be cut on rotation, keeping the areas around the bin, bench and length of footpath behind the toddler play area clear. **Agreed.**
- f. The designation of Nature Areas where native wild flowers will be allowed to grow and management will be to cut and collect in Spring and late Summer was considered. It was **agreed** to determine the location of any proposed Nature Areas through public consultation.
- g. Installation of Blue Hearts in any designated Nature Areas, with QR Codes giving information about the initiative was **agreed**.
- h. Production of a poster showing the 40 native plants identified in 2025 on the bank adjacent to the A170 and West Lund Lane and publication of this information in the Moorsider and displayed on the main Town Council noticeboard was **agreed**.
- i. It was **agreed** to seek advice from Holly Ramsden (NYMNP) regarding a review of the Town Council's information boards for the Nature Areas
- j. Reimbursement of £55 to Kirkbymoorside In Bloom for the cost of application to the RHS Golden Rose initiative was **agreed**.

25183 Agenda item 8. The design proposal for the town logo and branding, as part of Kirkbymoorside Community Support Group's project funded by York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority VSHS Fund, was **received**, with enthusiasm.

Jean Illingworth, Kirkbymoorside Community Support Group, provided a precis of the design considerations. The centerpiece of the logo design is a contemporary 'K' monogram that functions as a sophisticated directional device. The subtle woven pattern in the vertical stem is a nod to the town's historical and Viking heritage, while the integrated arrow graphic creates an unmistakable psychological cue to "look here" and "turn here". This design expands on the "Gateway" concept to also direct people to discover the unique offerings of this hardworking, unpretentious market town. The palette pairs deep teal, representing the wild Moors, with a vibrant terracotta orange which is a nod to the red brick architecture and rooftops throughout the town. The intention is that this logo works as a brand and a dynamic navigational tool which can be tailored for use on a variety of display type e.g. on information boards, roadside signs and banners, merchandise etc.

Cllr Dowie referred to the image demonstrating the possible use of the logo on roadside banners directing visitors to the town centre from the A170 and commented that when the arrow segment of the logo is rotated away from the spine of the 'K' > it is not as effective as when joined to the spine to form a K.

The Town Council **agreed** support of the design choice, as determined by the partners of Kirkbymoorside Community Support Group's project funded by York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority VSHS Fund.

25184 Agenda item 9. Flood Response & Resilience

- a. The latest information from the Environment Agency in respect of the River Dove Natural Flood Management Project was **received**. This information is also featured on the Town Council website, via the link on the home page.

- b. The Town Council's correspondence, delivered to residents of Kirby Mills and Keldholme, pursuant to Minute 25160d, was **received**.

Matters Arising from the January meeting, Minute 25160: the clerk explained that she had contacted the suppliers of the equipment used by the marshalls of the 10k event and arranged for provision of demo handheld radios. The clerk and Cllr Woodhams tested the radios which allowed good communication from inside the Moorside Room to the sports field and from there to the flood affected areas. Using handheld radios up to 5 watts will necessitate communication by relay between The Moorside Room and the affected properties, but this arrangement would be less complicated and more affordable than the alternative option involving more advanced equipment requiring a licence, designation of an individual license holder etc. A quotation for 6 hand held radios will be considered at the next meeting.

25185 Agenda item 10. Moorside Room

- a. The proposal by Cllr Dowie to host an exhibition of works by local artist Lewis Creighton as part of the programme to relaunch the Moorside Room was **considered**. Lewis Creighton (1918-1996) was a Yorkshire painter who captured the beauty of moorland in his oil paintings. It is understood that many of his paintings are owned by locals who have expressed an interest in lending them for an exhibition. The exhibition would ideally scheduled in the summer to coincide with other local events to guarantee an increased footfall.

Jean Illingworth explained the Music Festival will only be using the Moorside Room as a first aid base so there will be sufficient space to accommodate an exhibition on the weekend of the Music Festival, 1st and 2nd August. It would be a welcome addition to the programme of entertainment to also have an art exhibition.

The proposal to host an exhibition of works by Lewis Creighton was **agreed** and Cllr Dowie offered to initiate arrangements and liaise with interested parties. Further information will be considered when available.

- b. Other events to add to the programme to relaunch the Moorside Room will be **considered** at the next appropriate meeting.

25186 Agenda item 11. Utilities at the Sports Field and Moorside Room

- a. It was **noted** that energy network charges are forecast to increase significantly from April 2026. Corresponding news articles were **received**:

- I. [Energy Live News Article: From April get ready for 60% network charge rises](#)
- II. [Money Supermarket Article: Electricity standing charges for British businesses are planned to increase by almost double in April 2026](#)

- b. The recommendation to align the Town Council's energy contracts at the sports field and Moorside Room with the same supplier, Corona Energy, until 30/03/2031 was **considered**. The purpose of agreeing utility contracts to 2031 is to protect the Town Council against the imminent increases. Alignment of the gas and electricity to the same supplier and contract term for both locations, would have the added administrative advantage of consolidating the contracts. The rates secured by Energy Brokers Utilink Consulting retain the gas charges at 5.99p/kWh and the electricity rates, if fixed now would see only a modest adjustment, pre April 2026, as detailed in the supporting document.

It was **agreed** to align the energy contracts for the Moorside Room and Sports field to one energy supplier, Corona at the end of the existing term of contract with SSE (Moorside Room electricity), British Gas Lite and Engie (sports field electricity and gas respectively).

- c. The 36 month fixed term contract with Water Plus for water and sewerage the sports field was **agreed**.
- d. The terms and rates of energy contracts with Corona Energy and water contracts with Water Plus were **agreed** according to the recommendations received.

25187 Agenda item 12. The request by a member of the public to North Yorkshire Council Street Lighting for the addition of a shield to lantern LP3 on Crown Square was **agreed**. The request for reduced night light within the Conservation area was also considered. Cllr Dowie proposed that the Town Council's previous application to North Yorkshire Council for a review of the street lighting schedule should be revisited with a view to reducing the number of all night lights and requested an agenda item for consideration at the next meeting regarding Dark Skies. **Agreed**.

In the interest of expediency, Cllr Coughlan proposed to delegate authority to the clerk to respond on behalf of the Town Council in support of any/all future applications for the addition of lantern shades. **Agreed**.

25188 Agenda item 13. The revised date of the YLCA Ryedale Branch meeting at 7.00pm on Monday 9 March 2026 was **noted**. There were no agenda items considered for discussion.

25189 Agenda item 14. Cllr Woodhams reported attendance at the funeral of the late James Holt, which was very well attended as befitting a highly respected and prominent member of the community.

25190 Agenda item 15. The Town Clerk reported that two large Christmas trees have been sourced for the 2026 season. Arrangements will need to be made for transport of the trees from Thronton le Dale, requiring appropriate vehicle/machinery and enquiries are in progress.

Two of the radiators at the Moorside Room have been identified as faulty and replacement is in progress, under warranty. Painting of the Moorside Room will resume at the beginning of March.

25191 Agenda item 16. The Town Mayor **reported** no engagements since the last meeting. On Sunday 22nd February he will attend the Civic Service and Networking Event in Helmsley, by invitation from George Jabbour, Chair of North Yorkshire Council.

25192 Agenda item 17. There were no Questions to the Chair.

25193 Agenda item 18. The date of the next Ordinary meeting of the Town Council on 16 March 2026 at 7.30pm in Church House was **noted**.

The meeting concluded at 9.13pm.