

ALDWARE AREA PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 23 September 2025 at 7.00pm

Present: Richard Padgett, Matthew Cliff, John Topliss

In attendance: Alison Pollock (Clerk and RFO), Cllr Nigel Knapton, North Yorkshire Council
Several members of the public joined the meeting, as did Mr Alex Bell, owner of Aldware Tollbridge, for part of the meeting

Apologies for absence: Sarah Robinson, Andy Follington

Minute (note that year notation runs from the annual council meeting, hence “25” refers to the 25/26 year)

14/25 Declaration of interests in agenda items – none

15/25 Minutes of the Parish Council and Annual Council meetings held on 6 May 2025, and the revised minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025 – all were approved. No matters were arising not on the agenda.

16/25 Aldware Tollbridge

Mr Alex Bell, the owner of Aldware Tollbridge, attended the meeting to provide an update on his plans for the bridge going forward following approval of the toll increase by the Secretary of State for Transport. Staff wages are the single biggest regular expense for the bridge, excluding the refurbishment costs, and in order to make the operation as efficient as possible, Mr Bell is looking at installing barriers and traffic lights with a payment reader. Any installation is probably 12 months away as there are technical and software challenges to be overcome. If installed, charging would become 24 hours a day with payment by bank card/phone. There would be limited or no staff attendance on the bridge. In the meantime, pre-paid green tickets will be honoured. If anyone has tickets remaining once an automated system has been installed, they will be refundable at the original purchase price. Mr Bell has agreed to share traffic and financial data with the parish council so it can see the effect of the toll increase both in terms of usage and income for the bridge. Under the terms of the Act of Parliament covering the operation of the bridge, the owner is restricted to a return of 10% on the capital employed, and Mr Bell has agreed to look at the possibility of discounting the cost of crossings if the bridge operation starts to accrue a surplus. The council will stay in touch with Mr Bell and will request updates on usage and costs/income every 6 months.

17/25 Public forum – a member of the public had asked if a flagpole could be purchased and sited in Aldware. The councillors decided against the suggestion owing to lack of a suitable site and insufficient spare funds. In response to a suggestion by another parishioner, it was confirmed that the owner of the Aldware Arms had been approached, to suggest some form of barrier to restrict access or illegal use of the car park area. No action has been taken, however.

18/25 Finances – receipts and payments, CIL monies and bank balances were noted

Signed.....Chair.....Date

19/25 Clerk pay scale – the council resolved to adopt the national salary scale increase for the clerk and to uprate the working from home allowance to £130pa, both with effect from 1 April 2025. The working from home allowance will in future be increased annually on 1 April in line with CPI.

20/25 Roads/speeding – John Topliss advised that he will get in touch with North Yorkshire Council about the Vehicle Activated Speed sign which does not rotate as it should owing to the incorrect way it was installed. He also noted that there had been complaints about noise from speeding traffic. Councillors also noted that some tractor users were using handheld phones while driving. It was resolved to re-engage with North Yorkshire police.

21/25 Aldwark play area – Matt Cliff has obtained a few quotations for replacement of stumps and will chase up outstanding ones. The prices vary but are in the region of £3,000. Further sources of funding will be investigated, to supplement use of the council's reserves.

22/25 Date of next meeting – 2 December 2025 at 7pm

Signed.....Chair.....Date