



Horsforth Town Council

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Horsforth Annual Town Meeting Thursday 1st May 2025 at 7pm St Margaret's Parish Centre, Church Lane, Horsforth

Present: E Bromley, D Brosnan, S Dowling, M Fletcher, F Gains, G Garvani, J Garvani, C Gillinder, R Hardcastle, E Hyndes, R Jones, E Richards, T Stones, A Wishart,

Apologies received and approved: B Cousins, A Goulden, J Tumalan

In attendance: Town Clerk – Becky, PC Russell, Katie White MP OBE and ten members of public.

ATM/25.1 Introduction and welcome from the Chair, Simon Dowling

Cllr Dowling welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He informed all that the Annual Town Meeting is a time to reflect on the activities in the past year and plans for the future. It was noted that the meeting was being recorded.

ATM/25.2 To approve the minutes of the 2024 Annual Town Meeting

Resolved to approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 9th May 2024 as a true and accurate record.

ATM/25.3 Guest speakers:

25.3.1 Katie White OBE MP

Katie White MP attended the meeting and shared her reflections on her first ten months in office. She expressed how much she has enjoyed being part of Horsforth Town Council's activities, particularly highlighting the Remembrance Service, which she found especially moving.

Katie praised the work of the Town Council, noting that it does a "great job across the board" and spoke warmly about Horsforth's vibrant community, including its diverse range of restaurants, strong network of community groups, and fantastic residents.

She shared that her decision to become an MP was rooted in her personal connection to the area, having grown up locally. Motivated by a desire to give back and use her expertise—particularly in climate change and mental health—she felt it was the right time to stand for Parliament.

Katie is now in the final stages of setting up her constituency office, which will be based in Horsforth. Once appropriate security measures are in place, the office will open to the public. She looks forward to holding regular surgeries, which she sees as a privilege and a valuable way to connect with and support constituents.

She also raised concerns about the impact of social media, stating that it often hinders debate. She emphasised the importance of finding better ways to have serious conversations and welcomed feedback on how she can best communicate and engage with the community.

In response to a question submitted by a councillor in advance regarding the Horsforth Neighbourhood Plan, Katie stated that while she had not read the document in full and therefore could not endorse every detail, she supports the principle of Neighbourhood Plans. She emphasised the need for such plans to work in tandem with national policy, noting that infrastructure must be planned alongside development. She does not foresee a conflict between local and national planning frameworks and acknowledged that the system has been struggling.

Another councillor asked whether Katie would support the Town Council's call for the return of remote attendance and proxy voting for town and parish councils, as was allowed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Katie agreed that while in-person engagement is valuable, meetings must also be inclusive and accessible. She confirmed that she supports the initiative and would be happy to make a representation.

A member of the public raised a past climate meeting invitation that did not go ahead and asked if it would be reconvened. Katie responded that she would be happy to arrange another meeting.

Cllr Dowling thanked Katie White MP on behalf of the Town Council.

25.3.2 A representative from Outer North West Neighbourhood Policing Team

Cllr Dowling welcomed PC Russell and informed attendees that representatives from the Outer North West Neighbourhood Policing Team regularly attend Full Council meetings to provide updates on local policing matters.

PC Russell reported the latest crime statistics in Horsforth, which include: 6 attempted burglaries, 1 theft of a vehicle, 1 theft from a vehicle and 7 incidents of criminal damage.

Recent concerns have been raised about anti-social behaviour involving nuisance youths in the area. A group of 20 young individuals has been identified, and home visits have been conducted for 17 of them. Most are under the age of 16, making enforcement more challenging and a slower process.

A previous spike in vehicle thefts in Horsforth and the surrounding areas was addressed with the identification and prosecution of two offenders, who have since received custodial sentences. These crimes have since ceased.

Unfortunately, there are no plans to increase neighbourhood officer numbers in the near future, as recent funding has been allocated to other areas such as the city centre. Changes at Leeds Bradford Airport mean that there will no longer be PCSOs stationed there. As a result, Horsforth now has three PCSOs and PC Russell.

The policing team remains responsive to the specific needs of Horsforth. PC Russell noted a rise in drug-related activity, including visible drug dealing. He intends to focus more on this issue when not responding to other incidents.

A resident raised concerns about youths gathering near Drury Field and Stanhope Drive after school. PC Russell agreed to increase police presence in these areas. He also clarified that while the police cannot take action unless crimes are being committed, any signs of drug use or offensive behaviour would be grounds for intervention.

Another member of the public asked about reporting non-emergency suspicious activity. PC Russell advised using the live chat service, calling 101, or reporting anonymously to Crimewatch, especially if specific details like vehicle registration plates or names are known.

A resident expressed gratitude to PC Russell for resolving the recent spate of vehicle thefts, but also noted a reduction in police visibility on Fraser Avenue near Hall Park. He highlighted concerns about use of the one-way entry and speeding during peak hours. PC Russell said he would attend the location with a speed gun.

Cllr Dowling thanked PC Russell on behalf of the Town Council for his continued work and reminded residents to report crime directly to the police rather than via social media. PC Russell echoed this point, explaining that reporting allows patterns to be identified and resources to be better deployed.

ATM/25.4 Annual Report

To receive a report on the activities of the Town Council over the past year from the following Councillors:

25.4.1 Cllr Dowling, Chair of the Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee

Cllr Dowling reported that Horsforth Town Council (HTC) made the difficult decision this year to increase the precept to approximately £20 for a Band D household. The precept is the Town Council's income which is added to the Council Tax set by Leeds City Council. This increase was unanimously supported by councillors and despite the increase, HTC remains in the bottom 10 local councils across Leeds in terms of the precept amount charged to residents. The Council remains committed to delivering value for money.

HTC also receives Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding from Leeds City Council, generated by charges on larger developments in the Horsforth area. This funding is reinvested into community enhancements. Over the past year, the Town Council has allocated a significant portion of CIL funds to the following projects: Installation of waste bins at various locations, new paths around the bandstand in Hall Park, new benches and picnic tables in Hall Park, installation of goalposts at Woodside Recreation Ground (next to Miller & Carter) and benches at the Old Ball Roundabout

Cllr Dowling was pleased to confirm that plans to transform No. 3 The Green into a community space have been finalised and work has now commenced. During the early stages of renovation, some historic architectural features were discovered, and the Council is committed to retaining and showcasing as many of these original elements as possible.

The vision for the space includes hosting community information mornings, youth groups, and other activities that will benefit the wider community. Regular updates on the renovation will be posted on the Town Council's Facebook page and website.

Cllr Dowling closed his report by thanking all committee members for their hard work and continued commitment to the community.

25.4.2 Cllr J Garvani, Chair of Staffing and Employment Committee

Cllr J Gavarni provided an update on staffing within Horsforth Town Council and expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Council's staffing team.

He explained that Becky, the Town Clerk, originally joined the Council on a temporary basis during a period of staffing challenges. She later accepted the permanent Clerk position, and shortly afterward, Steph joined as the Admin Assistant.

Over the past year, both Becky and Steph have worked collaboratively and effectively, supporting Councillors across various Committees and Working Groups.

However, in late 2024, Steph had to step back from her duties due to health reasons. During this period, Becky took on Steph's workload to ensure continuity of service.

Cllr J Gavarni was pleased to report that Steph is now on the road to recovery and has returned to work, currently on reduced hours. He expressed his gratitude to both Becky and Steph for their continued hard work.

He also commended Becky for her role in helping Horsforth Town Council achieve the Silver Award under the Local Council Award Scheme.

25.4.3 Cllr Hardcastle, Chair of the Planning, Licensing and Traffic Committee

Cllr Hardcastle reported the following:

His report on the activities of the Planning, Licencing and Traffic committee covers the period from April 2024 until March 2025.

The committee's major duties are to examine and comment on planning applications including planning appeals, to note any licencing applications and note and comment on any traffic management proposals.

During the reporting period the committee has examined and commented on around 140 planning applications and commented on 7 applications and objected to 1 appeal. They have also considered complaints from members of the public on planning and traffic issues and received presentations from major developers and others.

The committee has representation on the Leeds Bradford Airport Consultative Committee and maintains a close watch on airport developments.

The Committee has responsibility for the maintenance of the Horsforth Neighbourhood Plan. There is currently an active small subcommittee reviewing the plan to consider what changes are required for the revised plan for 2028.

Finally, Cllr Hardcastle thanked the Vice Chairman, Cllr Brosnan and all the committee members for their help and support during the last year. Additionally, he thanked the Clerk, Becky Crabtree and administration assistant, Steph White who have done so much to ensure the committee's smooth operation.

25.4.4 Cllr Cousins, Chair of the Community and Environment Committee

In the absence of Cllr Cousins, Cllr Dowling provided an update on the work of the Community and Environment Committee, describing it as the busiest of the Town Council's committees. The committee oversees a wide range of responsibilities, including organising events, awarding community grants, and supporting several working groups such as the Council of Sanctuary and the Editorial Working Group, which produces Horsforth Matters.

During the past year, the committee has awarded grants to a number of local organisations, including: Horsforth Hawks Women's Rounders Team, Horsforth Cricket Club, 7th Airedale Scout Group and Horsforth Churches Together

The committee also collaborates with local groups to enhance community. In October 2024, it worked alongside Penny and the Horsforth Litter Pickers to organise community litter picks across every ward each weekend—this was very successful.

Cllr Dowling also highlighted the Heart of Horsforth Award Scheme, which celebrates the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups in the community. This year's awards were presented at the Full Council meeting in January, recognising the hard work and dedication of those who make a real difference in Horsforth.

ATM/25.5 To invite the public to raise any matters of interest or concern

A member of the public informed councillors that the Community Garden officially opened in May.

Although the Lord Mayor was unable to attend the planned opening, an informal visit will take place on 8th May 2025 at 1:30pm, and councillors are welcome to attend.

Councillors were also made aware of an upcoming Nature Recovery Conference scheduled for 19th June 2025. Invitations have been sent. In addition, Horsforth Climate Action is organising a meeting at Leeds Trinity University on 10th July to launch a Horsforth Nature Recovery Plan. Invitations for this event will be issued shortly.

Another member of the public informed the Council that Dementia Friendly Week will take place during the week commencing 19th May 2025, with events planned around Horsforth, including attendance at the Farmers Market. Relevant information will be forwarded to the Town Council for promotion.

A member of public enquired about the Neighbourhood Plan and if the TC is carrying out a significant review where there will be consultations and budget allocated.

Cllr Dowling confirmed that the Town Council is reviewing the community actions set out in the Plan to determine their current relevance. Public consultations are part of the process, with one already carried out recently. Budget implications are still being assessed, but the Council is committed to ensuring any expenditure offers good value and community benefit.

Cllr Brosnan added that the Town Council wants to ensure the plan is being actively used by Leeds City Council (LCC) in planning matters. Cllr J. Gavarni, who sits on the LCC Plans Panel, confirmed he has seen planning officers refer to the Neighbourhood Plan in their work, and its use in submitted comments lends it additional weight.

Cllr Gains confirmed that all relevant committees and working groups are collaborating on the review, and a representative from LCC recently attended a Planning, Licensing & Traffic (PL&T) Committee meeting to offer guidance on the process.

Closing Remarks

Cllr Dowling thanked all attendees, including guest speakers PC Russell and Katie White MP, for their continued engagement and support.

He expressed sincere appreciation to Becky, the Clerk, and Steph, the Admin Assistant, for their behind-the-scenes work in supporting the effective running of the Town Council.

Finally, he extended thanks to all fellow councillors for their hard work and dedication over the past year, noting that their contributions are made in a voluntary capacity.