

AYSGARTH & DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Parish Council held on 26th September 2025 At Aysgarth Institute at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Cllrs: Robert Walker (Chair), Linda Cooper, Rob Cromey-Hawke, Chris Parker, Alison Sayer, Peter Windle, David Wood

In Attendance: Mrs F Cartwright - Parish Council Clerk

Members of the public: 1 (Operations Manager, Aysgarth Falls Hotel)

1. **Consideration of Apologies for Absence** - Cllrs Frances Colston, John Dinsdale, Sandra Wilman
2. **Declaration of interest** - None
3. **Parish Council Objection to BR Aysgarth Ltd Application to Vary Premises Licence No 12/00568/PREM**

The Operations Manager representing the Brook Group/Aysgarth Falls Hotel was welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were given for Mr Brook (Brook Group) who had been delayed by an accident on the A1M.

- **Correspondence received from The Brook Group**

Cllr Cromey-Hawke requested to address the meeting and shared the following statement:

‘In the interest of transparency, I want to set out my recollection of how the objection to the licensing application came about, to address the applicant’s questions and also to challenge his suggestion that a member or small group within this Parish Council pursued a personal agenda unchallenged. I consider that remark disrespectful to us all, regardless of who it was aimed at.

My approach to serving on this Parish Council is shaped by my background: 12 years as an Army officer, over a decade chairing charities, and three years as a parish councillor. I live by the values of honesty, integrity, and selflessness, and strive to ensure that objectivity and fairness guide every decision.

I want to stress that neither I, nor any councillor or the clerk, had any intention to bypass proper governance. As a small council with a part-time Clerk and volunteers across five villages, our usual practice is for emails to be circulated and then placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Where quicker action is required, the Parish Council uses email with all members copied in. This is a practical necessity, as it is not feasible to hold an extraordinary general meeting for every piece of correspondence, though not a substitute for formal meetings.

The Parish Council recognise that an inadvertent procedural error occurred when the objection was submitted before ratification at a formal meeting. The unanimous decision was subsequently unanimously ratified and minuted at the 04.09.25 Parish Council meeting.

Recollection of events:

- Complaints from Aysgarth residents were circulated; two of the three Aysgarth councillors felt an objection should be made. The licensing policy link was shared so we could all interpret it ourselves in the absence of further information from the applicant.
- I drafted a possible objection, highlighting where the policy conflicted with the applicant’s claim that the change was only to allow minibars.
- All councillors reviewed and refined the draft, unanimously agreeing it fairly reflected community concerns, the applicant’s wording, and their individual interpretation of the licensing guidance. Fran Cartwright as

Clerk was then instructed to submit it along with the Licensing Department representation form. The error was that this happened before a formal meeting could ratify it.

If any of this is factually incorrect, Cllrs please say, so that it is recorded accurately in the minutes of this EGM.

I regret that the objection was submitted in this way and apologise to the applicant for the inconvenience caused. In hindsight, I believe the situation could have been avoided if there had been clearer engagement and transparency from the applicant with both the Parish Council and the community, especially given previous assurances about licensing (at the planning application stage). Looking ahead, we must ensure decisions of this nature are only made at properly convened meetings or under clear delegated authority, which will be covered in the next agenda point'.

All Councillors agreed with Cllr Cromey-Hawke's statement.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to summarise the questions from Mr Brook's correspondence dated 13th August and 8th, 16th and 21st September. The Parish Council had previously responded to the correspondence but Mr Brook had requested additional details.

Question - 'Which individuals took the decision to submit an objection on behalf of the Parish Council'

Following objections received from Aysgarth residents, all 9 Aysgarth & District Parish Councillors were involved in reaching the unanimous decision to submit an objection to the Licensing Application.

Question - 'Who prepared the objection'

As Cllr Cromey-Hawke has already stated, he with the input from Aysgarth Councillors prepared the letter which accompanied the Licensing Department representation form. Fran Cartwright the Clerk completed the administration on the representation form. The representation form and objection letter was unanimously approved by all 9 Parish Councillors prior to the Clerk being instructed to submit it. The Parish Councillors are listed on the Parish Council website and in the interests of transparency were read out at the meeting. Aysgarth & District Parish Council has 10 Parish Councillor positions but there was a vacancy for the Newbiggin Councillor at the time the objection was prepared/agreed/submitted.

Question - 'Which individual(s) were responsible for submitting the objection'

At the request of the Parish Council, the Clerk Fran Cartwright submitted the representation form and accompanying letter to the Licensing Department on behalf of the Parish Council.

The Clerk reiterated the Parish Council's apology for the inconvenience caused.

Mediation

The Operations Manager said that the Brook Group had offered three mediations via the Licensing Department. Councillors said that no mediation had been received in the correspondence from the Licensing Department. The Clerk confirmed that the correspondence had been as follows:

- Acknowledgement of receipt of Parish Council's representation form/objection letter
- Request for confirmation as to whether Parish Council would be in attendance at the 04.09.25 Hearing (LAR1 Form)
- Acknowledgment of receipt of LAR1 Form /confirmation of non-attendance due to prior commitments
- Decision Notice from 04.09.25 Hearing

Councillors added that the Parish Council had not been made aware of the BR Aysgarth Ltd Application to Vary the Premises Licence by BR Aysgarth Ltd or the Licensing Department. The Parish Council were made aware by objecting Aysgarth residents.

The Operations Manager said that the Brook Group would be following this up with the Licensing Department.

Councillors said that the Parish Council were given assurances from Brook Group at the planning application stage that there was no intention to amend the premises licence. Going forward it would be useful to hear about the plans for the Aysgarth Falls Hotel.

The Operations Manager said that the Brook Group would like to engage with the residents and Parish Council.

The Operations Manager queried that given the Clerk had said that the Parish Council were not able to attend the Hearing on 04.09.25 due to prior commitments why did Mr Dinsdale attend. The Parish Council confirmed that Cllr 'John' Dinsdale was not the Mr Dinsdale who attended the Hearing on behalf of Association of Rural Communities (ARC).

The Operations Manager said that the Brook Group had left the Hearing on better terms with local residents and some of them were dining in the restaurant tonight which was good to see.

The Clerk asked the Operations Manager whether the Parish Council's objection was heard at the 04.09.25 Hearing given the Parish Council were not in attendance. The Operations Manager confirmed that it was not heard but it was in the pack.

Cllr Walker queried Mr Brook's comments regarding the costs which had been incurred by Brook Group. The Operations Manager confirmed that it had been the Brook Group's decision to take professional advice but they may have decided not to, had the objections only been from residents.

Cllr Windle wanted to clear up a misconception in Mr. Brook's correspondence that a Licensing objection from a Parish Council carried more weight than an objection from a resident. Cllr Windle stated that this is not the case and they carry equal weight.

- **Parish Council Processes (Standing Orders and Delegation of Authority)**

Councillors also acknowledged the need for a review of the Parish Council Standing Orders and the need for a delegation of authority per the Local Government Act 1972 to be put in place for the routine drafting of parish actions and correspondence that has been agreed at a formal meeting. RESOLVED - This will be an agenda item for the 09.10.25 Parish Council meeting.

The Operations Manager reiterated that the Brook Group/Aysgarth Falls Hotel wanted to engage with the local community and the Parish Council going forward. The Parish Council agreed that better pre-engagement would assist the Parish Council to better support local businesses and the community.

The Clerk confirmed that the minutes from the 26.09.25 EGM would be approved at the next scheduled Parish Council meeting on 09.10.25. RESOLVED - Clerk to respond to Mr Brook's e mails addressing the questions as detailed at the EGM.

The Parish Council asked the Operations Manager if he had any further questions and whether he felt that the questions in Mr Brook's correspondence had been answered. The Operations Manager said that as far as he was aware (from the correspondence he had been provided with) and would take the answers back to check. There were no further questions. The Parish Council thanked the Operations Manager for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed at 7.55pm

Date of next scheduled Parish Council Meeting - Thursday 9th October 2025 at 7.30pm at Aysgarth Institute