



Tockwith with Wilstrop Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2018-2019

The Parish Council plays a vital role in representing the interests of the community and to improving its quality of life and the local environment.

We have two vacancies on the Parish Council, one in Cowthorpe Ward and the other in Wilstrop Ward. Whilst we are still able to carry out our functional responsibilities it would be most welcomed if someone from either of those communities could indicate a willingness to become a Parish Councillor. These positions can be filled without the requirement to hold an election so if you are interested then please contact the Clerk.

We are indebted to the hard work and efforts of our Clerk Joy Richardson in keeping us on the 'straight and narrow' and for maintaining her professionalism at all times. Through her guidance we have introduced several new policies and reviewed others. The Clerk has a key role in advising the Councillors on governance, ethical and procedural matters. She is now well established in post and she has been a great asset to the Council.

Throughout the past year the Parish Council has been working very hard on your behalf. With such a diversity of expertise and depth of knowledge amongst your councillors, we are well able to deal with most of today's issues.

Communication with North Yorkshire County Council and the Highways Department has improved during the year. Sometimes it can take more than twelve months to carry out even the most minor works. The state of our local roads is a major bugbear to electors. Locally we have seen improvements to South Field Lane. We are told demand for service across the District exceeds available resources. Some temporary repairs, although not aesthetically pleasing, have been carried out on other roads in the Parish. NYCC promise to continue to assess local roads and ensure they are properly considered for funding for more substantial repairs. We have raised concerns about Cattal and Rudgate Crossroads, both of which appear to have an unacceptable number of accidents. A programme of work to improve signage and junction markings has been carried out.

The Parish Council listens to and puts forward the opinions and comments of local residents on a wide variety of matters. We live in a large parish. Planning Applications are sent for consideration and

discussed by the Parish Council. The Council monitors all planning applications and comments where appropriate. It should be noted that the Council does not take any planning decisions. It is a statutory consultee to the Planning Authorities, who must take the Parish Council's view into account (but not necessarily accept it) when making their planning decisions. The Parish Council has put the case forward to Harrogate Borough Council Planning Officers regarding two large applications that there would be an over development of the village with no apparent strategy to invest in improving the infrastructure of the village. It is for this reason that the Parish Council has opposed proposed developments by Bellway Homes (South Field Lane) and Mulgrave Properties (Church Farm).

The Parish Council has its own dedicated website where you can find the minutes of previous meetings and offer links to other community websites. We encourage you to take a look at www.tockwith.gov.uk. We also put a monthly update of the Parish Council's activities in the Tockwith Village and Parish News.

Presently meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month (excluding August and December) starting at 7.30pm in Tockwith Church. Members of the public are most welcome to just come along to listen, to raise a subject or ask questions during "public participation", which is during the early part of every meeting. We endeavor to maintain a Parish Council that is both transparent and welcoming to any parishioner who has a need to raise an issue during Public Participation. Our aim is to represent peoples concerns fairly and without bias. It is difficult to appease everyone, especially when there are very strong differences of opinion between members of the public, but we do our best!

The Village Hall is owned by the Parish Council and is administered by the Village Hall Management Committee who are representatives from each of the groups or clubs that regularly use the facilities. The Parish Council would like to thank each and every one of the volunteers for their support and efforts in maintaining this important focal point within the village community.

Westfield Green is maintained by the Parish Council for the benefit of the whole community and not just the residents of Westfield Green. The area does suffer from people indiscriminately discarding litter in the area which the Parish Council has to pay to clear up. We are very grateful to the village school children, Marston Moor Scouts and the Community Hub for organizing periodic litter picks in the village. If people could be more considerate then litter would not be such a big issue.

Dog fouling is a problem which causes great irritation to residents and we have had to enlist the help of the dog warden service to carry out enforcement in order to report irresponsible dog owners. We have been unable to secure extra dog bins for the Parish as Harrogate Borough Council do not have the capacity to service them.

The Parish Council has a Community Resilience Plan for Tockwith village. This is our own plan to deal with local emergencies. Cowthorpe is looking at taking into use an abridged version of the Tockwith plan.

The Parish Council allotments are fully tenanted and enthusiastically tended by keen gardeners. A programme of tidying unworked plots has been undertaken by the Parish Council to make them more rentable and some plots have been reduced in size which has enabled the Council to reduce its waiting list. It also intended to repair some plot boundaries on the Bridle Path Allotments.

Rural communities are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis as vital services, transport links and facilities disappear slowly chipping away at their sustainability.

In my report in 2012/2013 I stated, *“Our village is facing a mass exodus of young people in search of housing and better paid jobs. A combination of swingeing cuts to local authority budgets, soaring house and petrol prices that far outstrip wage growth and the disappearance of cherished pubs, post offices and village shops have left many village communities on the brink. Tockwith is lucky in as much as we still have most of the things that make it a viable community but it has lost its mobile library service, the number of buses has been reduced, the youth services have been cut back and as a village there are less grants available as it is not considered an area of deprivation. More recently we have been told that grass cutting of road side verges is being reduced. Whatever we get we have to fight for. As a rural community we pay higher council tax bills per dwelling, receive less Government grants, and have access to fewer public services than our urban counterparts. We need more funding for councils in rural areas, faster roll-out of high speed broadband, more assistance to help young people to stay living in the community in which they were brought up.”* Sad to say, all the afore mentioned issues are as relevant now as they were seven years ago. Thank fully people are now waking up to the fact that there can be rural as well as urban depravation.

Being a Parish Councillor is more than turning up for one meeting a month – it is a commitment to work for the good of the Parish and that involves external meetings, coordination, leading, networking and at the end of the day getting the job done.

I am grateful for the support and expert guidance of fellow councillors, who give their time willingly and freely, to help with the development of community projects in order to improve elements of the Parish.

There are several unsung heroes in the Community voluntarily helping to maintain the Children's play areas in Marston Road Tockwith and Cowthorpe and the Community Fields in Tockwith, the cost of which would have to be borne by the Parish Council were they not to do this. Thank you to each and every one of you. You know who you are.

Lastly, a big thank you to all the organizations and individuals who make village life more enjoyable and community orientated and ask everyone to remember that the people who make things happen are all volunteers and need your continued support. Please feel free to attend any of our council meetings.

Norman Waller

Chairman

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