

## **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR ELECTORS OF TOCKWITH, COWTHORPE AND WILSTROP**

### **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 16th April 2008 in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.**

**Chairman:** Councillor N Waller (Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council)

**In attendance:** Parish Cllrs. Mrs Wardman, Mrs Scholey, I Robinson, C Billenness, P Kirby, R Ward-Campbell, P Pick, M Kennett, Internal Auditor Mrs J Bygate, Parish Clerk Mrs G Firth, Mrs Steed (VHMC Chairman) 2 members of the public.

#### **1. Chairman's Report (Cllr Saunders had sent a report, read out by Cllr Waller)**

I most sincerely apologise for not being present in person this evening, especially as this is the last meeting of the current Council and for some members their last meeting as Councillors. This was my first year as your Chairman, taking over from the very able Councillor Kennett who had been your Chairman for over a decade and he has certainly been a hard act to follow. I wish to record my undying gratitude and thanks for the help and support that Mark has given me in my first tentative steps as a Parish Council Chairman. Without his support and advice I am sure I would have floundered. Mark is not standing at the forth-coming election and I believe the new Council will be poorer without him. Mark has given many years service to Tockwith and the Parish Council and he will certainly be missed. I'm sure that you all, along with me, wish him all the best for the future. Thanks Mark. Well it has certainly been a busy year. The saying about being thrown in at the deep end rings very true with me on this occasion, with a number of issues which have come up during the year requiring our input and will indeed continue to require the Council's input for some time to come. There has been a considerable amount of business to get through during the year and I feel that sometimes parishioners do not realise the hard work and dedication that goes into being a Parish Councillor. I would like to record my personal thanks to all Councillors for their hard work, support and encouragement over the past year, with special thanks to my Vice-Chairman, Councillor Waller, who has been a great support to me during the year. Thank you Norman. Thank you all. I would also like to record my thanks to the Village Hall Management Committee for the work they have carried out on behalf of the Parish Council. I am aware their hard work is not always appreciated by everybody but on behalf of the Parish Council and myself, thank you. The work of this Parish Council would, in my opinion, be more difficult to manage without the excellent support, dedication and hard work of our Parish Clerk, Gill Firth. I believe that Gill works well above and beyond the call of the duties required of her as a Parish Clerk and I'm sure you all, along with me, would offer her our heartfelt thanks for all she does. Thank you Gill. Finally, whatever the outcome of the forthcoming election, I hope this Parish Council continues to go from strength to strength for the benefit of all the Parishioners of Tockwith, Wilstrop and Cowthorpe.

#### **2.1 Report by Village Hall Committee representative (Mrs Firth)**

The VHMC remains small in number but great in enthusiasm, effort, commitment and application. Planning permission has been obtained for an extension to the Village Hall, which, together with refurbishment, will improve the community facility. Unfortunately the Big Lottery Fund application was turned down shortly before planning permission was obtained which led to a rethink on the possible way forward, as refurbishment of the present Hall is becoming a priority, especially with regard to the old Victorian building. Other funding is continually being sought and researched. Following a disappointing attendance at a recent Public Open Meeting it has been decided to undertake a definitive survey of Tockwith and surrounding villages to see how much support there is to continue trying to run/refurbish/extend the Village Hall. The Lease is nearing completion and is only awaiting the completion of a photographic Statement of Condition before final amendments to the clauses in the Lease. Works to the Hall during the year include new internal doors, external locks, repair and replacement of faulty/damaged windows, interior and exterior lighting and internal decoration. A major problem during the year was the central heating

system. The boiler is OK but a leak in the system cannot be located. The Parish Clerk visits regularly to re-pressure the system and adjust the heating controls as necessary. There are still problems with the use of the building by the Youth Club. A meeting has been arranged with the Youth Club Leader, his Line Manager, the VHMC Chairman and the Parish Clerk to try and have a frank discussion on what is expected/demanded of user groups if hiring of the building is to continue. Fund raising continues, though is increasingly difficult with so few helpers, – Quiz nights, Fairs and Social events are included. The VHMC meets monthly at least and there are Development and Fund Raising Committee meetings also. The VHMC AGM is on Wednesday 14th May at 8pm. The VHMC is grateful for the support and encouragement of the Parish Council.

The PC was concerned that other fund raising within the village impinges on the VHMC fund raising.

## **2.2 Sportsfield Trust Committee representative (Cllr Billenness)**

2007 has been another busy and successful year for the Sportsfield Trust.

Although none of the sports activities have led to trophies, all the groups have enjoyed a busy year, with the 1st Football Team now playing in the York Premier Division.

Financially, the Trust is in a healthy position and has not been obliged to run any additional fund-raising events this year.

The new junior playing fields are well-used by more than 100 young people, some of who are good enough to play for York City Football Club's under-11 football team.

One particular cause for celebration this year has been the award of the Football Association's title of Groundsman of the Year to our own Joe Wilson. Joe got his award from Trevor Brooking last September, and this means that Tockwith Football Club officially has the best pitch in the UK at level 7.

It is ironic that just as we celebrate this award, the Sportsfield is faced with the threat of pollution from the proposed incinerator on the Business Park. Team members have been active in lodging objections and taking part in photo opportunities to fight against the proposals.

The function room on top of the pavilion continues to attract a wide range of activities, the latest being a dance school, and as such provides a valuable community facility.

Finally, the Trust would like to assure the Parish Council that we do make regular attempts to prevent people parking inconsiderately on the verges.

## **2.3 Report by WARDEN representative (Wetherby Area Rural District Environment & Nature Group)**

The only WARDEN meeting held this year was the statutory AGM, at which Officers were appointed and a decision was made to oppose the BCB planning application at Marston Moor Business Park.

## **2.4 Report by Ainsty Conservation Society representative (Cllr Mrs Wardman)**

Sandhole Wood Maintenance has continued during the past year. Work sessions have been organised to clear some patches of brambles and self-sown Ash saplings, which were becoming a nuisance, to remove mulch mats from the base of trees, clear some pieces of brick which came with the original soil infill and keep the pathway in the wood strimmed. Some Dogwood has also been planted to separate the wood from the hedge.

Last Spring permission was given to move some bluebells from a local wood to Sandholes. These were planted in three locations. In addition some seed was collected and has been sown. In October, children from Tockwith Primary School went and helped to plant some more of the bulbs, hopefully increasing their interest in the area. The bluebells are now growing well and there is evidence of wild garlic and wood anemone among the transplants.

The wood is well worth a visit, especially as the Cherry blossom is beginning to come out.

One area of concern at the moment is the difficulty of ascertaining ownership of the surrounding hedges to enable further maintenance.

### **2.5 Report by Youth Club representative (Cllr Mrs Wardman)**

In conjunction with the Youth Club Leader, a report is being prepared for the next Parish Council meeting.

### **2.6 Report by YLCA representative at Harrogate Branch meetings ( Cllr Mrs Wardman)**

Councillors Saunders, Ward-Campbell and myself have attended, subject to availability, three YLCA meetings during the year.

At the AGM in June 2007 Cllrs Fawcett and Leather were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. Additionally items reported on/discussed included North Yorkshire County Council's bid for a Unitary Authority, planning concerns and council training sessions.

The Chief Executive and Leader of Harrogate Borough Council attended the October 2007 meeting giving an update on the work of the Council and answering questions. Many of these highlighted common concerns among Parish Councils, such as plastics recycling (which is planned) and lack of notification of "minor matters" with regard to planning applications.

At the February 2008 meeting, a presentation was given by Mel Greaves on the subject of Anti Social Behaviour in the District, its' problems, the agencies involved and the work being done towards solutions.

These are useful meetings, although, on occasion, are not always well attended by other Parish Councils' representatives. In addition, advice can be sought from YLCA on various matters, a recent example being the definitive legal position regarding reclaiming of VAT on behalf of other organisations given to our own Parish Council.

### **2.7 Report by CaP Group representative (The Clerk to the Council)**

Mrs Firth has not been able to attend any meetings this year as they always clashed with other commitments. However, the Minutes of all meetings are circulated in the correspondence file for councillors to read and comment on if they wish. Cllr Waller's report from the AGM was circulated last month. It is sincerely hoped that the latest incarnation of Safer Neighbourhood Teams will address local issues better.

### **3.0 Statement/Report by County and District Councillor**

In Cllr Savage's absence his report was read out by the Clerk.

As your County Councillor and District Councillor it has been a very busy year, indeed, the bulk of my time seems as though its been taken up with the application by BCB but thanks to the work of both the Parish Council and the Tockwith Resident's Association we have had encouragement from Harrogate Borough Council objecting to the proposal plus many 100's of local people, every Parish Council in the Marston Moor Ward plus Town Councils and Parish Councils outside the Ward.

NYCC the planning authority for this application still have not given a date as yet but will update everybody when I have more news.

Skewkirk Bridge appears a little nearer to us all crossing the Nidd, the bridge is in store and £130,000 is secured for various ground works etc, talks are still ongoing between NYCC and the land owners.

Parking at Cattal Railway Station still defies belief, after various communications with NYCC and others we still await the Railway Company to sort out this problem, as a rail used at Cattal it is a nightmare some days and if we are to take vehicles off the roads we need a far better integrated transport system perhaps with "The Little Red Bus Company" involved. I'm meeting Teresa Villiers, Shadow Minister for Transport on the 18th April to discuss all aspects of the York to Harrogate line plus other transport issues in our area.

NYCC are working on further safety schemes on the increasingly dangerous B1224 and its great to see the road improvements/safety scheme in Cowthorpe.

Working with the EA regarding flooding in Cowthorpe, on a site visit I was shocked to see how the bank on the eastern side has been eroded thus taking all defences with it, still waiting for a reply from the EA as to what action can be taken.

During this year as last it was a pleasure to donate a contribution from my NYCC area allowance to the village hall committee whose tasks for money raising seem endless.

Have helped various families in the area to obtain nursing care for dependents plus respite care, obtained a place for a child with various problems in a specialist residential school at Barton on Humber.

Rubbish is a major concern to both Harrogate and NYCC, North Yorkshire producing some 400,000 per year. Due to increasing tipping charges due to taxes and EU legislation, recycling is paramount to both councils and as such Harrogate's figures are very encouraging plus plastics and cardboard are to be collected next year. As a nation we have a long way to go to catch up with recycling as in the rest of Europe and lessons must be learnt fast, on the waste hierarchy recycling is top and at the bottom incineration and tipping are the least favoured but easy options, incineration to be avoided at all costs.

Harrogate plans for further development in Tockwith and area appear very unpopular to most people and the feeling appears that new housing in rural areas should be on brown field sites. The infrastructure in Tockwith cannot cope with the proposals as is muted for the site with 150 and I feel the planners must look again at more suitable sites.

At NYCC I'm Chairman of Economic and Regeneration O & S, amongst other things we are doing an in depth survey in how we can help farmers, a very challenging task and one that changes on a daily basis, details can be found on the NYCC web site. At our last meeting we had representatives from the NFU, Churches Regional Commission, Farmers Crisis Network, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Society and Tenant Farmers Association. Prior meetings we've had Yorkshire Forward, Trading Standards and many other organisations all with one objective, how do we help the North Yorkshire Farmer and the rural economy? I also sit as a Member on Corporate affairs plus many other sub groups.

At Harrogate I'm on several committees ranging from Licencing to Corporate and have spoken against the BCB planning application, 150 members of the public made their presence felt and Harrogate changed their objection to strongly object, the vote was unanimous.

Working with the EA and Environmental Health regarding smells and noise from the various activities on the aerodrome and Industrial Park, a very difficult and frustrating process as my predecessors will remember well! I'm a member sitting on North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and

it's a privilege to work with an organisation who are committed to providing the best service that can be delivered with a dedicated team of people who risk their lives every day for all of us.

I hope the above gives a flavour of my years work which I've thoroughly enjoyed plus meeting the super people who make Tockwith, Cowthorpe and Wilstrop a great area to live and really worth fighting for when we have the problems we are facing today.

#### **4. Report from Internal Auditor**

This report covers internal audit activities from 1st April 2007 to 4th April 2008 including the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2008 on an Income/Expenditure basis.

The overall audit risk within the Council was assessed as low and the Internal Audit activity has been confined to:-

1. Monitoring of authorisation of and reports of expenditure throughout Parish Council meetings
2. Intermediate review of financial records of the Parish Council on a Receipts and Payments basis
3. A year-end test on the accuracy and completeness of the financial statements

No matter has arisen during my work which is required to be drawn to the attention of the External Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission. No matters have been raised by the External Auditors requiring action by me as Internal Auditor.

#### **5. Report by Responsible Financial Officer**

The red Receipts and Payments ledger, having been balanced, was presented to the Council, along with the un-audited accounts for the year, for ratification and the Chairman for signature. Questions were invited. The balance carried forward at 31st March 2008 was £7,934.13 Resolved that the Chairman sign the red ledger and other accounts papers as required.

**The Chairman invited questions/comments from those parishioners present.** Concern was again raised about the increase in the amount of dog dirt fouling the pavements in Tockwith. At a Neighbourhood Watch meeting last night it had been raised and new stickers for the lampposts were to be provided and the concerns passed on to the Dog Wardens of HBC. The problem is a perennial one and the public has to be prepared to report on incidents, provide evidence and be willing to go to court if prosecutions are to be successful. Residents were asked to be vigilant and report problems to HBC or local councillors. It was suggested articles could be put in the Parish Magazines to remind dog owners of their responsibilities. The Parish Council had written to HBC Environmental Health last month about the matter.

The Chairman thanked all councillors for their work during the past year and declared the Annual Parish Meeting closed.