

Thorp Arch Annual Parish Meeting 2022 – Chairman’s report

This report is being given at the first in person APM for three years during which Covid has disrupted our lives and resulted in the loss of many loved ones. We hope now that we can return to a little more normality in our lives.

This is my first report as Chair – a role I would not have thought I would have had a little over a year from being co-opted to the council. Almost a year ago I said:

“I’d like to thank my fellow councillors for putting their faith in me as the new chair of the parish council. We have a great team of councillors and I am looking forward to continuing working with them to improve our local environment and make Thorp Arch a pleasant place to live. One of my key priorities is to develop and implement a plan to spend the community money we will receive from the new housing developments in the village. This will involve consulting everyone in the parish on the best ways to use the money to further improve our village. I am also looking forward to welcoming the residents in the new housing developments built by Chartford Homes and Lovell’s and continuing to forge good working relationships with other local councils and groups especially the Boston Spa and Villages Green Group.”

These being my key priorities I will summarise the work we have undertaken over the last year with particular emphasis on these.

Councillors and Clerk

We could do nothing without the support of residents who put themselves forward to be councillors and without the guidance and support of our Clerk Tina. I’m sure people are unaware how difficult it is to be an excellent clerk like Tina and I could not and would not take on the role of chair without her.

I’d like to thank the whole council for giving their time, energies and expertise to make Thorp Arch a pleasant place to live. Please remember that (apart from Tina) we are all volunteers who choose to spend a lot of our time working on your behalf. We may not always make decisions you agree with but we have tried our best and Tina always ensures we follow the relevant legislation and make decisions together that are lawful. If you have an issue with work we have done please make sure you read agendas, minutes and sign up for the newsletter so you can see how and why decisions have been made. We often need new councillors so rather than complaining about something – put yourself forward to help. Speaking of new councillors we have said goodbye to Charlotte Dyson and hello and goodbye to Gemma Connelly-Spry both of whom we thank for all their contributions. Both left due to work and family commitments. We are very pleased to welcome David Hartley as a new councillor – so once again we are up to full strength.

Meetings

For almost the last year we have had to meet in person as the legislation allowing remote meetings was scrapped. This presents difficulties when some of the councillors have been shielding and are vulnerable. But we have managed to keep meeting with the use of lateral flow tests and masks and thank the church for making the building available to us.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) survey

The council would like to thank the members of the CIL sub-group who worked extremely hard to look at potential projects from the Neighbourhood Plan and from suggestions from residents. We could only include projects which we believed were feasible and could be approximately costed. The production of the survey, posters and delivery of leaflets to all households is down to their commitment and the skills of Amy Surtees with her brilliant survey and leaflet design. We also wish to thank the 143 residents who filled out the survey which represents a 22% return which is fantastic.

We had many suggestions from residents but we are often constrained by legislation and/or Leeds City Council (LCC) as to what can actually be achieved. With this in mind a summary of suggestions and possible (or otherwise) solutions will be prepared.

The results of the survey will be reported on later in the meeting and a full report is available on our website. A summary leaflet will be delivered to all residents shortly.

Highways and Speeding

This is the issue we have the most complaints about. Unfortunately we are limited by what Leeds City Council will do about the issues and their responsiveness. Any measures have to show proven accident reduction and if there are no accidents then measures will not be considered. Physical measures such as speed bumps and chicanes will also not be considered by LCC, but we are hoping to have some “softer” measures such as road markings and different coloured road surfaces. David Hartley already has a keen interest in road safety and will be working hard to implement those measures that LCC will allow.

We have two speed indicator devices (financed by the parish council) one located on Church Causeway and the other on Walton Rd. The speed indicator device data is downloaded every 2 months. Data shows over 70% of vehicles exceed the 20 limit on Church Causeway and around 45% exceed the 30 limit on Walton Rd. This data is regularly passed to the police. The device on Church Causeway is going to be relocated to register speeds coming into the village as we feel this is more relevant. We will also be looking to monitor speeds ourselves and passing breaches to the police.

We also have had many complaints about construction traffic to the Lovell's site. Whilst there is an agreed construction traffic route and we report any breaches of this to Lovell's

we are limited in what else we can do. Please continue to bring these matters to our attention.

Examples of how you can help:

- Limit your speed when driving through our village.
- If you witness any HGVs crossing the bridge take photos and report online – the link for this is on the council website.
- Volunteer to join our speed monitoring group where we will periodically measure speeds and pass information to the police. There is a sign-up sheet here tonight.

Planning

We continue to look at all local planning applications and whilst we may not like some of these we always try to hold LCC to account in planning terms. We follow closely the guidance laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan when looking at local planning applications and making decisions on them.

The land outside Leeds United at Thorp Arch Grange was the subject of an adverse possession attempt but this unauthorised action was quashed and the land is now available for all to enjoy.

New residents

We have welcomed new residents into the Chartford Homes development and residents are starting to move into the Lovell's development. Councillor Ian Grainger has taken charge of delivering a leaflet to all new residents and welcoming them to our village. We have met some lovely new people who are keen to get involved in village life.

Green matters

We continue to work closely with the Boston Spa and villages Green Group and thank Penny Stables for her continued efforts in all local villages. We also thank the Village Society for arranging litter picks and to those residents who litter pick on a regular basis. The council has tabards and litter pickers that can be borrowed and we can provide bin bags that can be left by any of our village litter bins and Leeds City Council will pick them up. The City Council Neighbourhood Team thank all local residents who litter pick and help keep our local environment clean and tidy.

Ian Grainger has taken charge of increased planting in the village and has delivered excellent results. Over 1500 new daffodil bulbs were planted at the North end of the village and outside North Lodge and crocuses provided by the Rotary club were planted on the greens in the old village. We are currently working on installing hanging baskets and planters for the summer and hope everyone enjoys the floral display.

Finance

The council continues to have a healthy bank balance helped mainly by the receipt of CIL monies. With this in mind the precept per household was again decreased slightly this year.

Community

A new village sign has been installed at the entrance to the village near Walton. The War memorial has been cleaned and the 3 bronze plaques re-patinated in time for the Queens Jubilee celebrations. We must thank Steve O'Loughlin for his excellent work in making these happen. The council has made a donation to the Village Society to provide a party for the Queen's jubilee on 6th June. We are very grateful to the village society for organising this.

We were delighted to offer increased Christmas lights, which have been very well received. In fact, many residents requested more lights in the survey. For the first year we had a lights "switch on" event with a good turnout followed by mince pies and mulled wine in the newly re-opened Pax.

I'd like to thank all our local community groups for all they do. They have all been invited along this evening to give us an update and those that are here will talk to us later.

Communication

We were very sad that Causeway ceased production after 43 years. Unfortunately none of the key positions were filled. Causeway was a major communication tool for the village and it will be sorely missed. The council continues to use noticeboards, its website and newsletter to communicate with residents so we would urge you to sign up for our newsletter at the council website if you have not already done so. For those on social media we hope to increase our presence there in the future. We will also continue to periodically survey our residents with regard their spending priorities.

Conclusion

I'd like to finish by paying tribute to our former Chair John Richardson whose hard work and dedication laid the foundations for a lot of the work we are continuing with now. I also want to thank all the formers Chairs and councillors whose time and efforts have helped shape our lovely village. I just hope I can continue their legacy.