

**THORP ARCH PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Monday 25th April 2022**

Minutes

PRESENT: Cllrs: N Midgley (Chairman), S O'Loughlin, I Grainger, A Surtees, David Hartley

OTHERS: 20 Residents, Gill Johnson (Village Society), Fiona Spence (YCA) Ward Cllr Norma Harrington, Andy Appleyard and Alison Selina (British Library)

APOLOGIES: Neil Brooks – Tennis Club, Rev. Nick Morgan, Helen Dunn – Headteacher Lady Elizabeth Hastings School

IN ATTENDANCE: T. Wormley (Clerk)

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 26th April 2021, were agreed.

2. MATTERS ARISING

None

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Nicola Midgley summarised the years' work and paid tribute to Cllrs, staff and residents:

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.

4. COMMUNITY SURVEY

Cllr Steve O'Loughlin summarised work undertaken on the community survey:

The background to this was that we have now started to receive Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from Leeds City Council as a result of the new Chartford and Lovell Homes developments. Given that the total we should receive will be over £300,000 we took the view that we should affirm views as to what this money should be spent on. Two things are very important to stress. Firstly, that this survey in no way replaces or negates any aspect of the Neighbourhood Plan and second that the additional money is for infrastructure not for maintenance or renewal and so in that respect is different to the precept that the PC receives each year.

In the survey we took the time to ask about both infrastructure but also to take in opinions that would help to inform us. We should also note that that CIL funds need to be spent or to have a clear plan as to how it will be spent. It cannot simply be kept for unidentified future plans, nor to be clear, would we wish to do that. We also need to remember that over the next 12 months we will have 100 new households in Thorp Arch and so need to be mindful in anticipating their potential wishes.

We were pleased with the survey response which was more than four times the number of responses than we had been told to expect. Results were clear that the introduction of a new path from the village to the Ebor way turn off on Wood Lane and the introduction of traffic calming measures were the top priorities. These will be undertaken as soon as practical, although in the case of traffic, there is still more work to be done to establish what should be done to have most effect. Residents should understand that we do not have carte blanche to do anything we want and need to work closely with Leeds City Council Highways, who for example will not sanction speed bumps on any of our roads.

The second thing to emerge was that although the cycle path was deemed a priority when costs were not stated, when the likely costs were noted, it dropped down somewhat. Looking forward to the new households being built and the likely influx of children, the PC still feels that this is an important piece of infrastructure to consider, but we will look to establish whether there are cheaper ways of doing it or whether we can gain funding from other sources. In any case this is unlikely to progress in the next 12 months until the Lovell Homes development is fully completed and the cycle path that they will provide from Walton to HMP Wealstun has been completed. As a result of the survey, we will be increasing and improving our floral displays and also investing more in Christmas lights, taking on the views articulated. Full details of the survey results can be seen on the Parish Council website.

5. QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

A resident suggested that the whole of the CIL sum should be spent on a community meeting space in the village of Thorp Arch. The resident concerned had identified 5 potential locations but did not wish to reveal where in Thorp Arch they were. He felt that the PC should fully consider the feasibility of a Village Hall as he felt this would improve community spirit which he suggested was lacking since the school hall was no longer available for community use. He further suggested that there should have been a direct question in the survey about a village hall.

Cllrs explained that they fully supported the need for a meeting space in Thorp Arch, but not necessarily a new structure. The idea of a village type hall had been explored previously and for many reasons was not taken forward. The cost, the lack of available land and location, competition with Walton, guidance of the NP, but mostly the lack of an identified committed body of residents who could carry the responsibility of such a demanding project. Furthermore, the survey did not identify any demand for such a structure. However, the PC said they would discuss the issue at their next meeting despite this not being something raised by residents.

Cllrs felt it important to point out that the whilst the PC had not received any requests for a Village Hall (except from PCC representatives) they had received many complaints both on the survey and on a day-to-day basis about traffic issues. This will continue to be a priority for the PC along with the Wood Lane footpath.

6. BRITISH LIBRARY

Andy Appleyard provided a brief summary of future plans for the library:

Plans will include state-of-the-art, archival-standard storage facilities and de-commissioning temporary buildings that date back to the site's origins as a munitions factory in the 1940s. Without such urgent action, the printed materials and our collections would be at risk of deterioration and damage.

Plans include upgrading office accommodation for the 550 staff who work on this site while also improving public access so that many more people from the community, the region and beyond

can explore the collections through tours, curated displays and the Reading Room, along with a new restaurant and café. This improved public offer will develop in parallel with growing cultural and learning presence in Leeds City Centre.

We also plan to landscape the surrounding site in a way that retains and enhances the natural features and blends with the surroundings. Sustainability will be an integral part of the project and development will be as low carbon as possible with an emphasis on energy conservation. We aim to open our new spaces by 2025. Any problems experienced by residents during the work should be reported directly to the library.

7. Village Society

Gill Johnson summarised the work of the Village Society over the last year:

Despite Covid the Village Society did manage to organise a number of outdoor activities this year. On the 6th November we hosted what was probably one of our biggest ever events. We estimate that approximately 1500 people attended our little village bonfire and fireworks. It was a fine dry evening and people came from far and wide. Consequently, we very quickly ran out of hotdogs to the disappointment of many but overall, it was a great success.

Thanks to Tom Kirby for allowing us to use his field and for building the bonfire, thanks also to William West and his friend Sam for putting on a fabulous firework display.

Before Christmas we were able to hold our traditional carols on the green. There was a good turnout and Santa arrived right on time with a sack full of chocolate bars for the children. The committee ladies handed out warm mince pies and we had a collection for Martin House.

In the autumn the Parish Council acquired lots of daffodil bulbs and we planted around 1000 of them along Wood Lane. All our hard work paid off this spring with a wonderful display.

We also organised the annual litter pick. Lots of rubbish was collected from the verges and hedgerows.

Thank you to all those who volunteered either planting bulbs or picking up litter and everyone who supported our activities. Special thanks to the ladies of the committee for all their hard work.

8. YCA

Fiona Spence summarised the years meetings, events and activities:

We always welcome new members, particularly from younger women in the community who perhaps dismiss the group as being old fashioned and as a consequence miss out on the diverse subjects and activities, support and unconditional friendship a multi-generational group such as ours, can offer. We look forward to welcoming new members from the recent new housing developments within the parish, you can be sure of a warm welcome.

Despite the pandemic reducing the ability of the group to meet in person, we have continued to thrive since our last Parish Council update. Membership when we returned to face-to-face meetings in September 2021 was 60+, with a steady influx of new members since then and we now have members from all the villages and communities within the lower Wharfe valley.

During the pandemic the committee focused on ensuring all our members remained in touch with one another and that our more vulnerable members were looked after, sorting shopping, regular telephone calls and sharing a monthly newsletter where we encouraged members to share what they had done during lockdown.

We also enjoyed regular zoom calls where attendance was high, it was hard to get a word in edgeways at times and we had to instil some ground rules so that people all got chance to speak! We continued our programme of speakers via zoom and enjoyed some thought-provoking talks about spinal injury; The Samaritans, plus enjoyable talks about Birds in the garden and York Gate Gardens.

At the 2019 parish council AGM we shared our recent move to Boston Spa Methodist Church after the school stopped external bookings in 2017 where we had met for 87 years. The loss of the community meeting venue in the village is still keenly felt, but we are lucky that there are several suitable venues in close proximity to the village that can accommodate us. We continue to

support Thorp Arch school and many members enjoyed attending the school council organised coffee afternoon in September 2021.

Since starting to meet in person again in September 2021, we have enjoyed speakers on the Commonwealth War Graves, The Pendle Witches, the Great Sale of Wetherby and two members kindly reprised their zoom talks on their amateur dramatic shows and a talk about a 20+ year career in the oil & gas industry.

Since September 2021 we have organised several social coffee get togethers in local venues such as The Pax and Picolino's in Collingham as well as a late summer lunch at Wetherby Golf Club. A coach full of members had an evening trip to Mainsgill farm shop for a meal followed by private shopping. We managed to hold our annual Christmas party in December 2021 and despite the ongoing Covid concerns this was well attended by many members.

We are also organising trips to York Gate Gardens and hope to soon have a guided walking tour of Wetherby, which was postponed from early 2020. There are several jubilee celebrations planned for June and July and we are also looking forward to supporting Tockwith Show craft competitions, with several members hoping to again be in the prizes! We also celebrate the branch's 90th & 92nd birthday in July with an afternoon tea party. We're celebrating our 90th as it wasn't possible to do this in 2020.

We are just starting a project to complete an archive of the group to mark our 90th year, some of the photos and documents which show a remarkable insight to daily life in Thorp Arch and we look forward to sharing the finished project.

We'd again like to thank the wider community for their terrific support of our winter fair fund raiser held at the Boston Spa Methodist Church rooms in November 2021, this was the second winter fair we have organised, the first one being in November 2019. The event was well attended by the wider community and we hosted many talented local craft and art stalls as well as offering refreshments, a cake stall and huge raffle. It felt like a return to some semblance of normality after the ups & downs of 2020 and early 2021 and we look forward to the 2022 event on Saturday 5 November.

Our speaker programme for 2022 continues to offer a wide and diverse range of subjects, from Martin House via the ladies of Harewood House and Tadcaster Stingrays to some underwater footage of the Wharfe river and many other interesting topics. These talks are always advertised locally and are open to visitors and prospective members.

As society continues to rely on digital media to share information, we too continue to use social media to share our news. Please follow us on Facebook or look out for our adverts in the local social media groups or on the Nextdoor app, check out our section on the parish council website or email us.

To conclude, the group continues to thrive with another busy programme, despite reaching 92 years young the group remains relevant, vibrant and popular with local women and offers a great opportunity to meet new people and make long term friends in your community. We look forward to reporting at the 2023 Parish AGM about another busy year for the group.