

**THORP ARCH PARISH COUNCIL  
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Minutes**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: N Midgley (Chairman), S O'Loughlin, David Hartley

**OTHERS:** 20 Residents, Neil Brooks – (Tennis Club), Mark Granger (Carter Jonas for Hatfeild Estate), Adam Gough, Simon Gawthorpe (TABS) Vicki Elliott (Village Society), Fiona Spence (YCA), Alasdair Bruce (British Library), Ward Cllr Alan Lamb

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr I Grainger, Cllr A Surtees, Ward Cllr Linda Richards, Katie Barnett – (Headteacher Lady Elizabeth Hastings School), Erica Swales – Chair of Governors – (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 2022, 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:

This is my second report as Chair during a year that has been extremely frustrating from my point of view with some external factors delaying work I had hoped we would have completed. I have also felt at times personally attacked and the work of the council disparaged; so much so that there has been more than one occasion when I was tempted to resign. It is often a thankless role and can be very wearing. However I still care deeply about our village and don't want the actions of some and inaction of others to frustrate the work that needs to be done.

Some of the areas I spoke about last year have changed little so I will summarise the work we have undertaken over the last year and try to explain where things have not progressed as we would have wished.

**Councillors and Clerk**

I said this last year but will say again 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. So please don't resign Tina!

I'd also like to thank our councillors 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 will be losing both Ian Grainger and Amy Surtees both of whom are not standing for re-election in May. I'd like to thank them both for their extremely valuable contributions to the council: Ian has worked tirelessly on improving the environment in Thorp Arch. He has been responsible for ensuring all our green spaces and verges are kept trimmed and tidy. He has also led our floral display project, liaising with Leeds City Council and local plant providers. We feel that the village is most certainly looking more attractive as result of Ian's work; Amy has brought a youthful flair to our work, encouraging us to update our social media and website. Amy helped set up our Facebook page and has been instrumental in improving our communications including producing some extremely professional leaflets and posters. I also want to thank both Steve and David for their sterling work over the last year. Their contributions have been instrumental in our achievements and are too many to itemise here. I am also very pleased to say that they have both put themselves forward to be councillors again. It has been a long process started almost a year ago but now – due to the large number of additional homes in the parish – we are allowed an extra councillor so we will potentially be 6. We have had 5 people put themselves forward for the new council in May so there will not be elections which is a real shame as I would rather candidates were actively voted for rather than simply being on the council because no-one else made the effort. In addition to this there are some who are very active on social media with their complaints but have not put forward any positive suggestions. I will put on record now that the PC will not usually respond to negative comments on social media.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is really a double-edged sword. Whilst it brings significant sums to small parish councils to be spent on infrastructure it significantly increases the workload of councillors including ensuring all relevant legislation and reporting are adhered to and, for example, putting contracts out to tender. It also brings other challenges such as responding to residents who query what, why, when and how the money is to be spent and in some cases requesting it is spent in a certain way. As a reminder we surveyed all residents in February 22 and are very grateful to the 143 who responded. A criticism we have received is that some residents didn't know about the survey and therefore it is not representative. Leaflets were hand delivered to every house in Thorp Arch and huge banners put up in Thorp Arch village green, on Walton Rd near Woodlands and on Grange Avenue so frankly I'm not sure what else we could have done to publicise it.

I had hoped that we would have made a good start on the projects identified as being most popular. Unfortunately anything we do has to be approved by LCC and to say they are slow to respond is perhaps the understatement of the year. We have obtained quotes for the Ebor Way footpath up Wood Lane but without Highways letting us know what permissions we need we cannot proceed. The process of liaising with them started last May and we have only just been made aware of the many additional hoops we need to attempt to jump through in order to progress the project.

Another project identified in the survey was the continuation of the cycle path Lovell are now constructing down Grange Avenue and past the prison. Once the cost was factored in this project became less popular but the council still feel this could be a useful addition to the cycle routes in the area so we will be exploring options of external funding. We have also had discussions with Sustrans about the crossing near Station House which can be quite dangerous. They are looking at making this safer and we may be able to fund improvements they identify from the CIL monies. One final project that has also taken some time are new cycle path signs which will be replacing the 5 very old and mostly illegible signs in the parish.

### **Community Space**

This time last year we also faced criticism that we had not included the provision of a community hall in our survey and that the whole of the CIL monies should be put towards such a building. I will repeat again that we only included projects that we thought were viable and could be costed. However a village hall steering group was formed of local residents to try to take this proposal forward. After nearly a year of exchanges they issued the following statement:

*“In the light of proposals announced by TABS in December, which include the provision of a new pavilion with village hall function facilities on Dowkell Lane, the Village Hall Project Group advised Thorp Arch Parish Council that it will not be taking its enquiries regarding a possible village hall further at this stage, pending the TABS proposals being developed.”*

The possibility of moving TABS mentioned above is at a very early stage and no financial or other support has been sought from the council. We have only communicated the information TABS has given the council. However, there has been a lot of speculation causing unfounded rumours. But TABS are speaking later and may be able to answer any questions residents might have.

Following discussions with the school we are very pleased to be back here and the hall will now be available for community use outside of school hours. Thanks are due to both the school and the two local volunteers (myself and my husband) who have offered to be key holders.

The British library gave details of their exciting expansion plans last year. As a result of this there may be community space available in the existing reception and reading room areas. But these plans are at a very early stage.

### **Highways and Speeding**

This is the issue we continue to have the most complaints about. Along with Roland Blackburn who often volunteers his time we have produced a road safety report and there are copies available here tonight should you wish to have one. We are, however, now beholden to LCC highways to take action on the main areas we have identified. As an example of their tardiness it took 2 years for 2 kerb stones to be repaired on Bridge Foot. The issue of parking inconsiderately on The Village was first raised with them in March 2020 and we finally have a plan where yellow lines might go subject to consultation locally. We are, however, finally getting some drop kerbs so those with pushchairs and wheelchairs can move around more easily.

We have two speed indicator devices (financed by the parish council) one located on Church Causeway and the other on Walton Rd. I download and analyse the data every 2 months. Data shows over 75% 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. I reported last year that the device on Church Causeway was going to be relocated to register speeds coming into the village as we felt this was more relevant but it will be no surprise to know that this has not yet happened despite numerous reminders from us. We also regularly use the mobile device owned by Clifford and Bramham PCs to monitor speeds in “hot spots”. As an example monitoring at the bridge showed 90% exceeding the 20mph limit and only 2% adhered to the 15mph advisory limit. The maximum speed recorded was 39mph! However when the police record speeds there they rarely catch anyone as they are so visible. We want to make more use of the mobile device and would welcome residents volunteering to help with this.

### **Lovell development**

This is almost complete now and we have many new residents who we welcome. Some allotments will be handed over to the council in the summer and if you should wish to be considered for one please contact the clerk who will put your name on our waiting list. An allotment meeting will be held during the summer to look at the waiting list and to discuss development of an Allotment Association.

### **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.

We have finally received permission from LCC to install 3 new planters – 2 on Church Causeway and one on Walton Rd. We are restricted by their licence agreements. We hope the new planters will be ready for the summer.

We also purchased some hanging baskets for the lamp posts this year. These were not a huge success partly due to the hot summer and partly due to the plants themselves. The baskets are currently planted with winter foliage but we will review the summer planting and watering schedule to try to make a better display this year.

### **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 will be halved for this financial year although we expect it to return to the level levied in 22/23 next year.

### **Community**

We arranged for more Christmas lights this year as residents had requested this in our survey last year. We again ran the "switch on" event with mulled wine and mince pies in the Pax. With regard to the Pax we now have a new couple running it and we welcome them to the village and wish them every success.

We thank the Ward Councillors for all they do for the community. They commissioned the new Queen Elizabeth jubilee bench that is now on the land at Thorp Arch Grange. We have already had a lovely resident thanking us for the bench and saying she's quite happy watching the kids play football now.

I'd like to thank our local community groups for all they do. They have been invited along this evening to give us an update and those that are here will talk to us later. We were very pleased to fund the Jubilee celebrations for the village and thank the village society for a fabulous day. We are also funding the big tea for the King's coronation. We have also given a grant to TABS for repairs of the roof over the changing rooms. All local community groups are welcome to apply to us for funding for events and capital projects.

### **Communication**

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 now have a page the Thorp Archway so I'd encourage you to follow us. We will also continue to periodically survey our residents with regard to their spending priorities.

### **Conclusion**

I'd like to finish by paying tribute to all our former councillors who gave up their time to help shape our lovely village and also to thank those who have put themselves forward to be new councillors. I hope that when our new council is formed in May we can continue with enthusiasm.

### **Addendum**

This is not strictly related to work this year but given that some residents seem to have such high expectations of what the PC can or should do I thought I would clarify this.

As I said above everything we do complies with legislation and we are duty bound to follow procedures and practices. It was disheartening to note that those who have been vocal with criticism have not put themselves forward at this year's election. If you want a say in how your community is run then you have to get involved as I and my fellow Councillors have done. We do everything with good intention and to the best of our abilities. Many of us are working almost fulltime trying to do our best for the village. It would be wonderful if more people supported us rather than offering up criticism without positive solutions.

Being a councillor is time consuming and we have had previous councillors step down when they felt they could not do the role justice. I appreciate that not everyone has the time or energy; however, we always need volunteers to help us. For example, although he says he does not have time to be a councillor, Roland Blackburn has been extremely active producing our road safety report and is now positively suggesting other areas we could look at. So if you think something should be considered by the PC please don't bring us demands and say it is something that we have to do. In the words of one of my former managers don't bring us problems bring us solutions. So by all means suggest the parish could benefit from some new facility but don't expect the PC to do all the leg work. No resident needs a mandate from the council to make

suggestions and develop feasibility assessments and costings. So even if you don't think you can be a councillor, please work with us and not against us to make our village a pleasant place to live and the work of the PC less stressful.

I'll finish by taking and altering a quote from JFK "My fellow Thorp Archians ask not what your council can do for you, ask what you can do for your council".

#### **4. British Library**

Alasdair Bruce provided an update on development plans for the library:

Plans will include state-of-the-art, archival-standard storage facilities and de-commissioning of 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 collections would be at risk of deterioration and damage. The library would run out of space for books by 2026.

Plans include upgrading office accommodation for the 550 staff who have currently been moved to satellite buildings around the site. Sustainability will be an integral part of the project and the development will be as low carbon as possible with an emphasis on energy conservation. 1500 solar panels will save 30 carbon tons per year. A ground source heat pump and planting around the site will help keep the development sustainable. Construction will commence in July and finish in 2025. To date, only demolitions have taken place.

Unfortunately, the public access part of the proposals had to be scaled down. A public viewing gallery and reception area however will be retained. Details around public areas are not yet finalised.

#### **5. Village Society**

Vicki Elliott summarised the work of the Village Society over the last year:

The Society exists to: *conserve the village and to organise events to bring residents together – where possible at no cost.* Terms of reference were updated in March for the first time since the 1990s. Going forward the Society will work more closely with the Tennis and Cricket Clubs, Church, Friends of the School and Parish Council, each of which have been asked to become members of the Society.

500 bulbs were planted in autumn last year on the Green and near the entrance to the football ground. They add to those planted in previous years.

In March a group of volunteers collected 25 bags of litter, and several car parts! These events will run next year. Volunteers are always needed.

In June, 250 residents attended an event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Children enjoyed a bouncy castle and slide and made some amazing crowns. The Tennis Club ran the bar. Thanks to the Parish Council (and a national grant) for financing it.

In November the annual bonfire and fireworks display was held. Thanks to the West family for fireworks and Tom Kilby for the bonfire and use of his field.

Christmas saw a nativity tea as 30 senior residents watched the dress rehearsal of the school's nativity play followed by tea and cake from the Society.

Storage has been a big issue over the years, but thanks to the Parish Council, the Society now has storage space on the Trading Estate.

Thanks were extended to all residents of Thorp Arch for their support over the last 12 months; to Tom Kilby for the use of his field; the Tennis Club for running the bar; for the financial support provided by the Parish Council and to the committee who have worked hard to make these events happen. Particular thanks to Gill Johnson who chaired the Village Society until early last year. Shirl Davies who is stepping down as treasurer and Gaby Morrison who is stepping down after 10 years as a member. Shirl and Gaby will be greatly missed but they will continue to be very much involved in village activities.

The next event is the *Coronation Party* on Sunday 7th May at Lady Elizabeth Hastings School.

The Society have space for a couple of new members. Their new email address is:

[thorparchvs@gmail.com](mailto:thorparchvs@gmail.com)

## **6. Tennis Club**

The primary aim of the tennis club is to encourage more people to enjoy tennis. The club currently has 35 family memberships and the cost for a year's subscription remains £55 for the whole family, £35 for individuals.

Courts can be booked online via the website:

<https://thorp-arch-tennis-club.reservio.com/>. The club is also featured on the Parish Council website. Our main event this year is the Annual Tournament and barbecue which will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> July.

Last summer the club provided coaching for children and young people during the school holidays. This was very well received and we hope to provide it again this summer. We will be targeting our new residents in the Lovells development and plan to deliver publicity about the club to every home.

Thanks were given to the Parish Council for their support and efforts through out the year.

## **7. Yorkshire Women's Country Association (YCA)**

Fiona Spence summarised the years meetings, events and activities:

The group has been affiliated to the Yorkshire Countrywomen's Association since 1983.

Membership numbers continue to flourish with a steady stream of new members. The group are particularly looking forward to welcoming members from the new housing developments.

The meeting venue is now firmly established at Boston Spa Methodist Church after the school stopped evening community bookings in 2017. The news that the school is now available for the village to use is welcomed.

This year's programme has been varied covering topics such as Flanders Fields, Dementia, The ladies of Harewood and The Linus Project. In February Mark Barrow presented a fascinating set of films about the Wharfe River and the underwater habitats and life that it supports. The group have also enjoyed helping the Boston Spa Brownies and in May 2022 helped them celebrate the Platinum Jubilee

Tours have included York Gate Gardens and other local venues.

The branch's delayed 90th birthday from 2020 was celebrated in July with an afternoon tea party. Thanks to the wider community for their support of the winter fair fund-raiser held at the Boston Spa Methodist Church rooms in November 2022. The event was well attended by the wider community.

The speaker programme for 2023 continues to offer a wide and diverse range of subjects, from the Leeds Angels to Women in War. Regular meetings and talks are always advertised locally and most are open to visitors and prospective members.

The Society continue to use social media to share news including Facebook, Nextdoor, and most recently the Parish Council website. The group can be emailed at [tawyca@outlook.com](mailto:tawyca@outlook.com)

## **8. Thorp Arch and Boston Spa Tennis Club (TABS)**

The club are celebrating 150 years this summer. They are one of the oldest Cricket clubs in Yorkshire. To mark the event a black-tie ball for 120 guests will be held at Boston Spa Village hall on 1<sup>st</sup> September. A barbecue will be held on the August bank holiday. Both events will aim to help to raise funds and celebrate 150 years.

Funding for the club comes primarily from membership, of which there are 199, juniors' men and women. Fundraising and sponsorship also provide some funding along with support from the Parish Council.

The summer months see a huge cumulative footfall of approximately 2000 as players go to and from the ground. It should be noted that the increasing footfall reflects the success the club has at a time when other sports clubs have seen dwindling membership. Unfortunately, further progress is restrained by poor facilities, lack of parking and balls in gardens. The ECB have commented that

on a health and safety basis the grounds are woefully small. Surrounding gardens are at increasing risk from balls facilitated by new bating technology. It was with this in mind that TABS decided to undertake a feasibility of its current facilities and to look at options including relocation to a field on Dowkel Lane. It's possible that an improved facility may provide a space for the Tennis club and a community space along with increased parking.

As yet the feasibility study has not taken place, but is likely within a couple of months. A timeframe will be published as soon as one has been established. Consultation has not yet taken place, even with club members. Until the feasibility study is complete it is difficult to say whether a move would mean housing development on the current site. The owners would either gift the site to the cricket club or give them a lease or funding to help build a new ground. No contact has yet been made with any planners. Further information will be provided on completion of the feasibility study.