

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2022/23
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 3RD APRIL 2023**

It is a pleasure to report on what has been, once again, a very busy year for the council. In April Cllr Jane Wright resigned from the council due to other commitments and Victoria Kirk Brown was co-opted to take her place. Later in the year Cllr John Flynn had to resign due to health reasons and Linda Young was co-opted on to the Council. We thank Jane and John for their valuable contribution and hard work for the Council over several years and Victoria and Linda are already proving to be valuable members. Of course, this meeting marks the end of the four year term of office for councillors and elections will be held on the 4th May to determine the make up of the Parish Council for the next four years. Cllrs Anne Powell and Andrew Mate have already stated that they will not stand for re-election and I would like to record our thanks to them for 20 years' and 8 years' service respectively. Anne was our Chairman for several years and steered the Council through some quite difficult times, for which I, for one, am very grateful and Andrew has always been a passionate advocate on Rufforth issues in particular. Our sincere thanks to you both.

In reviewing the activities of the last twelve months I would also like to take the time to reflect on the achievements of the Parish Council over the four year term. Our Neighbourhood Plan had just been adopted and the policies and community actions in that Plan have guided the Council in our decision making throughout the term.

Your Parish Council has dealt with numerous planning applications over the past year and I am delighted to say that in every case CYC planners have taken full account of the policies set out in the Neighbourhood Plan when arriving at planning decisions, most notably in the rejection of the Telecomms mast. Furthermore the York Local Plan which has just completed the final stages of consultation confirms a Green belt consistent with the Neighbourhood Plan, meaning that other than the development behind the school which has already been approved and a small development in Knapton, the remainder of the Parish is in the Green Belt with no further significant development planned for the next 15 years, a real win for our negotiations when producing the Plan.

During the last four years we have seen the completion of the changes that we negotiated to the entrance to Harewood Whin which prevent vehicles turning right through the village and through the Liaison Group which meets with Yorwaste three times per year we have developed an excellent working relationship which enables any issues to be dealt with promptly and effectively. The cycle path link between Knapton and Rufforth was completed, the Pinfold in Rufforth was fully restored, Southfield Lane drainage was repaired and the lane resurfaced and VAS signs were installed in Rufforth.

Turning to the last twelve months, the children's play area on Knapton Recreation field has been completed and opened. This was funded by grants obtained from CYC, a generous donation from Barret Developments and a significant contribution from Parish Council funds. I must thank John Flynn for the enormous amount of work he put in to this project.

2022 finally saw the new allotments in Rufforth completed and opened. This project involved a tremendous amount of lobbying and chasing of CYC by the Parish Council but we have ended up with an excellent facility. Aided by a ward grant the Parish Council funded the erection of the communal shed for allotment holders the cost of which will be recovered over time from allotment rents. It is pleasing to hear that all bar 2 of the 30 plots have been taken.

Community Speedwatch has been active throughout the year and we thank Terry Edmunds for taking on the role to enthusiastically lead this important activity. Data obtained from Speedwatch and the VAS equipment has enabled us to lobby CYC for additional speed limits and agreement has been reached (subject to the normal consultation process) for a new 40mph stretch on the approach to Bradley Lane, a 20mph limit between the chicanes outside the school, and for warnings of upcoming 30mph on the Wetherby Road approach. Our thanks to Cllr Nick Murray for leading on all our traffic management matters.

As residents will know, the 412 bus service came under threat of withdrawal last autumn. The Parish Council engaged with the bus operator and neighbouring parish councils and intensively lobbied CYC including speaking at a full council meeting. As a result the 412 has been saved for at least the next two years. The service previously received no public subsidy but CYC and North Yorkshire have now agreed to put funding in place to maintain the service.

Within the past few weeks we have seen the pre-planning consultation for the proposed solar farm between Hessay and Rufforth. The Parish Council will agree its response when and if a full planning application is submitted. However our initial view is that whilst understanding the need for renewable energy, we are concerned about the effect of this proposal on the countryside and particularly on the views from the cycle path and that there are more suitable sites available, such as Harewood Whin.

The Burial Grounds and in particular the Natural Burial Ground have been busy this year and as well as performing a vital service to the local community the income generated has enabled us to fund many of the initiatives which I have described. Our thanks to Cllr Helen Butterworth for her hard work and passionate custodianship of the Burial Grounds over many years.

As a result we have been able to set the Parish Council tax precept for 2023/24 at £26.13 for a Band D property which we trust you will regard as good value for money.

Our special thanks go to the Parish Clerk, Stephanie Warden, for all her hard work on behalf of the Council and administering the Burial Ground facility. Steph, as always your efficiency has shone through and we value your advice on all legal matters affecting the operation of the Council.

My thanks go to all my fellow councillors for their hard work and personal support over the last twelve months and I hope that residents feel that your Council has delivered for you over the last four years.