

Rudby Parish Council: Chairman's Report to Annual Assembly – April 2023

A new five years term of office for the Parish Council began after the May 2022 elections. Ten of the sitting councillors stood for re-election, leaving one vacancy which was filled shortly after the election by the co-option of Cllr Stones. Two councillors (Cllrs Webster and Collingwood) resigned during the year for personal reasons and were replaced by the co-option of Cllrs Barker and Titterton. I would like to start by thanking the retiring councillors for their service, and to welcome the new members to the council.

Thanks also to the many volunteers who worked with the council on a variety of activities and projects including organising the jubilee celebrations, helping with the landscaping and repairs to the wall at the linen mill, and providing equipment needed to the put up the Christmas tree.

It is pleasing to see strong candidates coming forward each time vacancies have arisen on the council, but I would also like to thank the excellent but unsuccessful candidates who applied for the vacancies. Unfortunately, the council cannot co-opt more candidates than there are vacancies, but your willingness as members of this community to come forward and offer your time and skills is greatly appreciated. Many parishes struggle to fill seats on their councils, and without a full complement it is difficult for a council to operate effectively. There will be other opportunities in the future, so please consider applying again the next time the council has a vacancy.

Thankfully the disruption to Parish Council activities from Covid seems to be behind us. All meetings in 2022/23 were conducted 'in person' and a full programme of activities was carried out. A very successful Village Event to celebrate the late Queen's Jubilee, and the bonfire night fireworks being amongst the highlights.

Unfortunately for reasons outside of its control the Parish Council has not been able to make any progress on the Neighbourhood Plan this year. It remains the intention to complete the Neighbourhood Plan and bring it to referendum when the situation allows. The other big disappointment is the ongoing saga of the Chappies Field footpath. Residents continue to raise concerns, and although the Parish Council has been in contact with the landowner's representative, there is, as yet, no resolution.

Other projects are moving forward. After resolving various technical issues related to the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs, the equipment has now been procured and installation will be completed shortly on the main approaches to the village. Speeding is one of the most frequent concerns raised by residents, so the Parish Council felt it was appropriate to take this action, but it understands that the signs are not popular with everyone. The landscaping and wall repairs at the old linen mill are progressing well. The re-seeded grass is established, and a new seating area has been installed with help from community volunteers. The feedback on this project is very positive.

The routine work of the council includes dealing with issues raised through correspondence and at meetings, and the care and maintenance of public land in the village. Please write to the clerk or come and share your views at a meeting if there is something you think the Parish Council could or should be doing. In the last year 283 items of correspondence were considered and the council commented on 47 planning applications. The Parish Council decided to withdraw from a scheme where it arranged the cutting of some highway verges on behalf of North Yorkshire (County) Council. For 2023/24 the Parish Council will now only cut grass on land which it owns or leases.

Cllr Thompson as Treasurer and the clerk as Responsible Financial Officer have kept our finances in good order throughout the year. The council has healthy financial reserves, but these are mostly allocated to projects which are moving forward, and it was not considered sustainable to absorb inflation so there is an increase in the precept for 2023/24.

I want to thank all my fellow Councillors for being available, responsive, and willing to lead or participate in a range of recurring and one-off project activities to support the parish over the year. The council could not operate effectively without their commitment of time, energy, and enthusiasm to try to make the Parish a better place.

Special thanks go to our clerk, Emma Wiles for her dedication and the highly professional support she provides to councillors. She makes the job of chairing the council much easier than it might otherwise be, and she is a huge asset to the council.

As we enter the 2023/24 council year, the new unitary authority, North Yorkshire Council, has just come into effect. It has taken over all the functions and services formerly provided by a combination of NYCC and HDC. Fortunately, in this parish we have continuity from the long serving and hard working Cllr Fortune who has represented the ward at HDC for many years and at NYCC during its final year. Access to her knowledge and experience is very helpful to the Parish Council, but under the new structure we have only one person as a link to NYC. Cllr Fortune has a big patch to cover and many more responsibilities than was the case under the old regime. This year will be a period of continuing change for the Parish Council as we develop our relationship with the new unitary council while it settles in and establishes its processes.

Best Regards and a safe and prosperous 2023/24 to all residents of our Parish.

Allan Mortimer
Chairman