

Rudby Parish Council: Chairman's Report to Annual Assembly – April 2024

This is my Chairmans's report on the second year of the council's five years term of office which started from the May 2022 elections. It is my 3rd annual report as Chairman.

At the last annual assembly, the council had one vacancy which was filled shortly afterwards by the co-option of Cllr Puttick. Cllr McClusky resigned due to work commitments and was replaced by the co-option of Cllr Horvath. Following the recent resignation of Cllr Stones, there is once again a vacancy which is expected to be filled by co-option shortly.

I would like to start by thanking both of the retiring councillors for their service, to welcome the new members to the council, and to thank everyone who expressed interest when there have been vacancies. The council cannot co-opt more candidates than there are vacancies, but the willingness of members of this community to come forward and offer their time and skills is greatly appreciated.

This year we also welcome a new Parish Clerk, Hilary Cope-Graham and at the time of writing the transition period from her predecessor, Emma Wiles, is nearing completion. On behalf of the council, I would like to thank Emma for her excellent service to the council over the last few years and to wish her well for the future. The clerk is at the heart of everything the council does, and it is a varied and challenging role.

Completing the list of personnel changes this year, is the return of Cllr David Hugill who became our divisional councillor at North Yorkshire Council following a by-election last year. David is an old friend of Rudby Parish Council, having previously served under the old County Council structure.

The council is grateful to the many volunteers who have worked with the council on a variety of activities and projects including organising the coronation celebrations, helping with the landscaping and repairs to the wall at the linen mill, providing help and equipment needed to put up the Christmas tree and lights, participants in the litter pick, and for work on footpaths and environmental projects.

Once again, a full programme of activities was carried out. A very successful Village Event held to celebrate the coronation, 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. However, there are some indications that the planning application which is the "road block" in the process may be moving towards a determination and the council has recently had constructive dialogue with the landowner. It is hoped that by the next annual assembly there will be more positive news to report. 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 have moved forward and some new projects have been launched. After resolving various technical issues related to the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs, the equipment was installed and is now operational. The landscaping and wall repairs at the old linen mill are almost complete – the main issue outstanding is sourcing suitable coping stones. Some preliminary landscaping work has been carried out on the burial ground extension. The council is investigating what role it can play in ensuring there are adequate EV charging facilities in the Parish, and has set up a working group to co-ordinate biodiversity improvement projects on public land in the Parish.

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 hundreds of items of correspondence were considered and the council commented on dozens of planning applications.

Cllr Horvath who has a background in public sector finance has taken over the role of Treasurer previously filled by former Cllr Thompson. She also acts as our Responsible Financial Officer. The council's finances remained in good order throughout the year, but drawing on her experience Cllr Horvath is introducing improvements into the council's budget monitoring processes and long-term financial planning which will be of benefit to the council. The council has healthy financial reserves, but these are mostly allocated to projects which are moving forward, so it was not considered sustainable to absorb inflation so there is once again an increase in the precept for 2024/25.

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.

As we enter the 2024/25 council year, the new North Yorkshire Council unitary authority which replaced both Hambleton District and the old County Council is finding its feet. The new council is in the early stages of a review of divisional boundaries, and it has also started work on a new Local Plan which in due course will replace the recently adopted Hambleton Local Plan. There is further change in the pipeline from the creation of the new Combined Mayoral Authority for York & North Yorkshire earlier this year which will see a directly elected mayor taking office on 2nd May.

Best Regards and a safe and prosperous 2024/25 to all residents of our Parish.

Allan Mortimer
Chairman