**CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT. 2018 to 2019**

**STILLINGFLEET PARISH COUNCIL**

On the 25th May 2018, Paul Elmhirst was appointed chairman, John Cook vice-chairman and David Swinglehurst Village Hall Committee representative. The other councillors were James Atkinson, Lesley Collingridge, Richard Daniel, Sally Lewis, Terry Harrison and Michelle Dixon.

**What the Council does**:

The Parish Council is the bottom rung in the ladder of local government administration. We normally have nine councillors. Our clerk is Ruth Swales (on whom we depend for the smooth running of the Parish Council and its meetings).

Our meetings are open to the public. We own and administer the village green with the benefit of a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for which we receive a grant. The grant just about covers the cost of mowing the green.

We maintain and pay for footpath lighting (except Dale’s Court). We have a range of statutory powers including the right to raise a precept (our precept forms part of the council tax which is collected from residents by Selby District Council) to pay for what we provide. It amounts approximately to £4,000.00 per annum.

**Police and Community Action**:

North Yorkshire police now operate the North Yorkshire Community Messaging scheme. This is a free service for which any person can register. It enables you to receive notification on crime and community news by phone, email or text. The Selby District (Eastern Area) Community Engagement Forum gives every parish council in the district a chance to raise issues face to face with Selby councillors and officers.

**Planning Matters**:

All parish planning applications receive close attention from the Parish Council. Our Village Design Statement (see the Parish Council website), which has been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Selby DC, should ensure that all developments within the village comply with its provisions. However, Selby DC does not always insist on full compliance, which is disappointing. The Parish Council also checks all planning applications within the Stillingfleet Conservation Area to ensure that they comply with the conservation and planning policies of Selby DC.

Selby DC has a Core Strategy which forms the basis of local planning law. The need for more housing and the wish to protect the local environment remain difficult matters to balance. Intensive opposition (including from neighbouring parishes) is being directed to proposals to develop a waste disposal plant at the former Stillingfleet mine site (which should have been restored to agriculture). We are also watching proposals by Plasmor to exploit the old clay pits adjoining the A19 both of which schemes would greatly increase HGV traffic on the road from Stillingfleet to the A19.

**Risk Assessment**:

This is a sensible precaution to help prevent accidents as well as being required by our insurers. Every year the Parish Council completes a risk assessment of those items (including trees and footbridges) and areas within the village which could become hazardous. Every effort will be made to spot new health or safety hazard throughout the year, but it would be appreciated if residents could also report potential problems to the Parish Council.

**Flooding:**

Although Stillingfleet flood defences held firm in the recent floods, flooding remains a live issue. In the event of serious flooding; please note that Terry Harrison is the contact. He is designated by The Environment Agency as Flood Warden for Stillingfleet and contact for inhabitants on the north side of the beck (his Tel No is 07980 451537) and Richard Daniel is the contact for those on the south side.

**The buses:**

Thanks to John Cattenach’s negotiations, a Saturday evening and Sunday bus service is operating between Selby and York (via Cawood). Please use it as much as possible so it remains financially viable.

**The Village Green**:

The Green gives Stillingfleet its character and makes it stand out from all other villages in the district, but it does not look after itself. The management of the village green is currently carried out under the terms laid down in the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme by Natural England, for which we receive a grant of around £2,300. p.a. The terms include grass cutting dates, grazing methods and other works, which are intended to create a species rich grassland providing a habitat for a variety of insects, birds and other animals. Unfortunately no grazier is currently willing to graze sheep on the green because of dog poo which leads to abortion in ewes. Without the grant from Natural England there would have to be a substantial increase in the parish rate to cut and bale the green especially in years when the hay produced is of doubtful quality.

The Parish Council owns and administers the village green (including the road verges) for the benefit of all residents. Please note that parking on the green and verges is not permitted (designated car parks excepted). Residents are however permitted to mow their verges to keep the green looking tidy.

Fortunately, the Green does not suffer from dumping of household rubbish. While most of the village dog owners pick up after their dogs, a very few do not, which is unpleasant for everyone else and is a disease risk. The Council has therefore acquired four new red bins for dog poo which have been placed around the green. Please use them and please remember to go equipped when dog walking.

Another perennial problem is domestic drainage. There are numerous drains under the green taking run off from septic tanks and treatment plants into the beck. Some of these are ancient and some are shallow and some are prone to blockage. Many are uncharted. The problem is exacerbated by surface water run-off, springs and underground run off from soakaways and land drains. The Council is considering affordable ways in which to tackle this problem. Residents are reminded that it is their responsibility to keep their own drains in good working order including existing pipes under the green.

**Play facilities:** A group of residents have constituted themselves as ‘Play Stillingfleet’ with the objective of improving community activities and play facilities. Extensive enquiries have been made by the Parish Council to find a suitable plot of land for a play area. The council continues to search for a play area elsewhere in the village so any suggestions would be welcomed. Play Stillingfleet has also been a key player in raising money and enthusiasm for a defibrillator which has been installed on the village hall.

**The Charity Field**.

The Parish Council is the trustee of a charity which owns a field. The rent from letting that field is to be used for charitable purposes for the benefit of the inhabitants of Stillingfleet for which provision is not made out of public funds.

**The Website:**

The Parish Council has its own website [www.stillingfleetparishcouncil.org](http://www.stillingfleetparishcouncil.org/) . It contains a lot of information about the parish council and our proceedings. The minutes of our regular meetings can be found on it.

**The Church:**

The Parish Council is not responsible for the administration of the Church yard. (That is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council) However, the Parish Council does currently contribute to the cost of upkeep of the churchyard and cemetery.

**The Future.**

The Parish Council welcomes suggestions to improve facilities in the village (starting with a thriving pub), but resident groups and individuals are also encouraged to take the initiative with their own projects to improve community life.

Finally, my thanks to Ruth Swales (our clerk) and to all my fellow councillors for their help and good humour over the past year.

Paul Elmhirst (Chairman, Stillingfleet Parish Council)