

Chairman's Annual report 2022

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT. 2022

STILLINGFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

As we all know, the last two years have brought suffering and challenges to the whole world. As residents of Stillingfleet most of us have escaped lightly, but that is of little comfort to those who have lost friends and family to Coronavirus. The suffering of Ukraine is of course at a very different level.

Your councillors are currently, Paul Elmhirst, chairman, John Cook, vice-chairman, David Swinglehurst, James Atkinson, Lesley Collingridge, Richard Daniel, Juan Brooks, Joanne Sears and Emma Powell. Your clerk is Ruth Swales without whose input the council would not be able to function. Thank you Ruth for all your help and hard work over the past year.

What the Council does:

The Parish Council is the bottom rung in the ladder of local government administration. We normally have nine councillors. All our full meetings are now back in the village hall and open to the public although some committees may still make use of Zoom meetings which present their own challenges. We own and administer the village green (with the benefit of a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for which we receive a grant). We maintain and pay for street 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 by Selby District Council) to pay for what we provide. It currently amounts to some £5,000.00 per annum.

Stillingfleet Mine Site

After years of delay and adjournment this planning application for an industrial reprocessing unit was refused by the NYCC planning committee. We are not aware of any other plans by the owners at present.

Selby District Council Local Plan.

This is a radical plan looking to the future of Selby District and particularly to its housing needs over the next 20 years. Among many proposals, some as a result of Central Government directives on housing, it has put forward a plan to create a new town in the district. Three possible sites for 3000 units have been proposed. One at Burn Airfield, one at Church Fenton Aerodrome and one between Escrick and Stillingfleet called Heronby. The Parish Council has filed its observations which do not favour Heronby, but it will be some time before we hear which site will be chosen. The plan contains other proposals which are likely to permit further development in settlements around the district in smaller units and by the expansion of infill development.

Local Government Reform:

This will be a fundamental change to local government. Instead of District Councils, North Yorkshire and York will become two separate Unitary Councils (with a mayor each). The new North Yorkshire Unitary Council will consist of 90 new councillors to be elected in May (elections on 5th May) as a shadow Council until the exact format has been put to Central Government for final approval in 2023. Until that happens the existing District Councils will conduct their elections on the 5th May and will continue as normal (we presume).

The environment and global warming

The Council is looking into this matter at a practical level. Our street lights have now been converted from inefficient old sodium street lighting to LED lighting which will reduce our lighting costs. Flooding is an ever present issue in the Vale of York, but we are fortunate that recent protection works have kept the village houses safe even though local roads and surrounding agricultural land has suffered. A recent 3 session workshop by CPRE (Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England) helped those attending to consider the possibility of alternative energy generation in the village. Their report will soon be made available.

Mains Drainage.

We have been approached by Yorkshire Water which has accepted that it has a duty to provide a mains drainage system for Stillingfleet. A preliminary survey is being carried out following which a draft scheme will be prepared for general consideration. It is expected that the project will take some years to complete.

The Village Green

Although the Village Green is the jewel in Stillingfleet's crown it is not without problems. It is protected by its Bye Laws and is subject to the provisions of a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme as a wildflower meadow. It also lies in the centre of our Conservation Area. In addition to wildflowers it provides a habitat for a variety of birds and mammals including herons, kingfishers, barn owls, sparrow hawks, kites, weasels, foxes, badgers and bats. (see the Selby Biodiversity Action Plan)

However, it also suffers from leaking drains, unauthorised parking, vehicular damage including deep rutting and the perennial problem of dog waste (including discarded dog waste bags). Dog waste in particular increases the cost of maintaining the green. The hay cannot be productively sold because it causes abortion in sheep. The Stewardship Scheme provides funds for mowing the green once a year, but the indefinite continuation of the scheme remains uncertain.

The Play Area

The desire for a suitable site for a play area within the village and the desire to maintain the green purely as a wildflower nature reserve has divided opinions in the village for some years. After much soul searching the Council has allocated an area of land in the south west corner of the green for a play area. The Council is now working with Play Stillingfleet to create an unobtrusive environmentally friendly play area for young children. An application has been made for a change in Selby D C's designation of the Green from a Strategic Countryside Gap to an Open Recreational Space which should enable the play area to be installed without further difficulty. The Village Green Byelaws will be unaffected.

Planning, The Conservation area and the Village Design Statement

Although the Parish Council is consulted by Selby District Council on village planning applications, the Council is only asked for its observations. Selby make the decisions. Some applicants seem unaware of the rules that apply to our Conservation Areas (the central core of the village) and of our Village Design Statement, (which is a Supplementary Planning Document drafted under the watchful eye of a Selby planning officer before being approved by Selby DC. Planning). Applications which take note of the recommendations of Conservation and VDS are more likely to be received positively. Of course, Selby DC's draft Local Plan and the Local Government reform are likely to change the existing arrangements so the Parish Council will have to watch those changes carefully.

Telephone Kiosk.

Although the kiosk only cost £1.00 it was found that the costs of a professional restoration and levelling of the kiosk would cost £5,000, which was too much for the Council. However steps are being taken by a group of residents to try and raise the funds to have the restoration carried out.

The Queen's Jubilee.

Steps are being taken to organise a street party and associated events to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Suzanne McCloud and her team have taken on the role of coordinators for this event so please give them all the help you can.