

# Chairman's Annual Report 2023

## STILLINGFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Parishioners,

It is my pleasure to present the annual chairman's report of our parish council. The last 3 years have been challenging for us all, continuing to adapt to new ways of working and learning to live with Covid.

Dominating the headlines have been the cost-of-living crisis, political turmoil both nationally and globally, war in Ukraine, Platinum Jubilee celebrations closely followed by the passing of Queen Elizabeth and more recently, a devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria. So much has happened in the world.

In May 2022, Paul Elmhirst stepped down as Chair and Councillor, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his years of unwavering service to our community. I would also like to extend the same appreciation to James Atkinson and David Swinglehurst, who also stepped down from the Council in May.

In May, we welcomed 3 new councillors to the team: Nigel Kemp, Annette Strickland and Jonathan Foy. The team, including our new councillors, are Juan Brooks, chairman, John Cook, vice-chairman, Lesley Collingridge, Richard Daniel, Joanne Sears and Emma Powell. Our clerk is Ruth Swales who makes sure that the council is run the way it should do. A huge thanks to Ruth for your support and professionalism.

### **What the Council does:**

The parish council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish and has an overall responsibility for the well-being of our local community. It is the government authority closest to the people, so parish councils are invariably the first places people will go with concerns or ideas.

Our council make all kinds of decisions on issues that affect the local community. Probably the most common topics that we get involved in are: the management of the Green and play area; maintenance of street lighting (except Dale's Court); planning matters (we are statutory consultees); helping local groups e.g.; Village Hall or community initiatives and campaigning for and delivering better services and facilities.

It's true to say that we have limited powers to make decisions. But we do have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence those other organisations that do make the final decisions (such as Selby District Council or NYCC, health authorities, police etc).

In this respect we, as a Parish Council, are extremely powerful. The organisations that make the final decisions know that a parish council gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something, and its views will be taken seriously.

We also 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 North Yorkshire Council) to pay for what we provide and to allow us to put funds aside for contingencies. It currently stands at £6250 per year.

## **2022-2023 key events/updates:**

We have been committed to keeping all residents updated and engaged through the monthly Parish Magazine, noticeboards, our website and social media, with a particular emphasis on the following:

- Selby District Local Plan (Heronby)
- North Yorkshire Unitary Council
- Play Area

Detailed information can be found on our website, [www.stillingfleetparishcouncil.org](http://www.stillingfleetparishcouncil.org), and I will summarise as follows:

The **Heronby** consultations took place last year and our council, reflecting the views of our community, strongly opposed the development. Together with our residents' individual objections and the work of the Halt Heronby Action Group, Selby District Council were presented with an extremely strong, well-crafted and professional case against the Heronby development. At the last ever Selby District Council meeting, a vote was passed to take no further action and hand over to the new North Yorkshire Council, which came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 2023. We will continue to monitor the situation and act where necessary.

The new unitary council, **North Yorkshire Council** now is made up of the borough council, NYCC and seven district councils. You will have received more information with your council tax notification which gives a good summary. The important thing at this stage is that it seems to be 'business as usual' and to note that our county councillor is a familiar face around here, Cllr John Cattanach.

Our fabulous **Play Area** was officially opened in October. All the village children (and parents, carers, grandparents and everyone that has supported the long slog to get us to this point!) were invited to a little opening event. There was a ribbon cutting ceremony and a dedication to Alison Rothwell's memory (Alison was Chair of PlayStillingfleet and a great champion for providing a playground). There are lots more exciting plans for the area and as it gets more popular, we now have official signage concerning parking arrangements. It has been very popular since we opened it and look forward to seeing lots of happy young folk playing there this year and many more to come.

## **Our community:**

We have a thriving and growing village, and we have a large number of residents who are actively engaged in organising our community events. This year we will look forward to celebrating the King's Coronation and I would like to thank the small yet committed group of residents, Suzanne, Anna, David and Adele, for their work so far.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> May, The Village Hall will host the Annual Stillingfleet Beer and Music Festival. The Village Hall committee have done a sterling job over the years, managing events such as the pop up pubs, Bad Apple and above all, creating an all-important community 'hub' for the village.

I am mindful too that there are many other groups doing their bit for the village and would like to say thank you also to the Women's Institute, the Parish Church and our local businesses. In particular, Harmony House and Stillingfleet Lodge Gardens who over the years have been very community minded and organised some well attended and interesting events.

## **Looking forward:**

We have several exciting projects and initiatives planned for the coming year and I look forward to working with you all to continue to improve and strengthen our community.

Our vision is to improve the quality of life for people of the Parish; building upon the character and community spirit within the Parish, addressing your needs and encouraging all social sectors of the community to develop as an inclusive and vibrant community. To achieve this vision, we are launching a 10-point Parish Plan this year which will be a 'live' document informed by Community representation at meetings and Community engagement on social media. It will be updated on a regular basis, enabling us to track and monitor progress against objectives and timescales and will be published on the Parish Council website so that residents can monitor progress.

## **So, what's in the plan?**

Let me start by saying that a copy of the full plan is available to view on our website. The key points from the plan are:

Green Management: This is an ongoing action and involves maintaining The Green for the benefit of the community within the terms of the higher-level Environmental Stewardship Agreement. It includes annual haymaking, control of the trees, sewage pipes and manhole issues and importantly working with residents around their responsibilities.

Infrastructure: We want to make sure that key village infrastructure and facilities are maintained and enhanced to meet both our community's existing requirements along with possible future needs. This includes general maintenance and repairs in 'open spaces' throughout our village and specifically the Play Area, where we will look at equipment needs, safety checks and to support this we have a group of trained volunteers to undertake regular safety inspections. Please feel free to get in touch to help out!

Public Services: A longer term objective concerning the Council's application for the installation of mains sewage for the entire village and by agreement of a construction programme which outlines the timescales for the delivery of the scheme. Yorkshire Water approached the council a few years back and started this conversation

Housing: 1 to 2 year plan to explore the idea of an affordable housing development of approximately 4-6 properties to reflect the findings of the housing need survey and comply with national guidelines around affordable housing delivery.

Planning: This is an ongoing action for the council, and we fully participate in all planning consultations representing the best interests of our community. This focuses on the importance of our conservation area and urging compliance with the Village Design Statement. In doing so we strive to maintain the distinctiveness of our beautiful village and protect it from the impact of inappropriate development. We will periodically review our Village Design Statement to consider evolving environmental issues and direction.

Environment: We have a medium to longer term ambition to support a carbon free world by 2030 and to address the climate and nature crisis. Our actions will be on many fronts, for instance, in planning consultations, exploring renewable energy generation, improving our green spaces through nature recovery and biodiversity.

Health and Wellbeing: Keeping the members of our community healthy and safe is of the utmost importance and with this in mind we currently carry out regular risk assessments and deal with any issues appropriately. To support our community further we are looking to develop a Community emergency plan (Cold weather) and develop a First Aid responder hub. As you know, we manage the Defibrillator and will continue to host additional training sessions when needed

Communication & Community involvement: One of our aims is 'To be a strong voice on behalf of the local people and businesses, representing their views'. To achieve this, we strongly believe that a community engagement strategy is needed, so we can actively consult and engage with our local community. For example, some ideas being considered are a Village Website to promote and encourage Community/social events e.g., Royal events, Christmas, Summer fair, Bonfire night, Scarecrow festival, Remembrance, etc. The plan also looks to increase liaison with the Village Hall and Church to enhance community engagement and involvement.

Sound financial management, governance & accountability: An important aspect of the plan is the ongoing financial management of the council's budgets, including the setting of the precept. As well as this, we ensure that our website is updated and meets all regulations and that we achieve a satisfactory internal audit evidencing effective governance & accountability.

Council Development: We are a small council with a small precept compared to other Parish Councils. This doesn't and shouldn't stop us from striving to be the best we can be and as a council we have decided that we will work towards a Local Council Awards Scheme. It aims to ensure our Parish Council is 'fit for purpose' and that councillors and staff are well briefed enabling them to act in and represent the best interests of our community by accessing high quality training and development opportunities.

### **Final words**

Despite the challenges we have faced this year, I am proud of our council's commitment and dedication to serving the needs of our community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow council members for their hard work and support, which is done, all in their own time. Thank you also to our parishioners for their ongoing trust and confidence in us.

Still being relatively new to all things Parish Council, I am thoroughly committed to 'doing the right thing and doing things right' for our council team and for you the community. Let us know how we are doing and what else you would like to see. You will be pushing on an open door!

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Juan Brooks Chairman of the Parish Council