

Chairman's Annual Report 2024

STILLINGFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Parishioners,

It is my pleasure to present the annual chairman's report of our parish council.

Our Parish Councillors are Juan Brooks, chair, John Cook, vice-chairman, Lesley Collingridge, Richard Daniel, Joanne Sears, Emma Powell, Nigel Kemp, Annette Strickland and Jonathan Foy. Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank our council team for the work they put in to improve and strengthen our community. Without our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to do any of this. Our clerk, Ruth Swales, makes sure that the council is run the way it should do and has recently completed and passed ILCA, a local council administration qualification. Well done and thank you for your professional approach and ongoing commitment to our Community and Parish Council.

At a county level, our unitary council, North Yorkshire Council, which came into being just over a year ago, is now made up of the borough council, NYCC and seven district councils. You will have seen and received many consultation requests as the NYC attempts to gather information for future planning purposes. Our county councillor, Cllr John Cattanach continues to keep us updated on a variety of issues and news, and we would like to take the opportunity to thank him for his service.

I thought it would be useful to briefly explain what our parish 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.

Our council make all kinds of decisions on issues that affect the local community. Probably the most common areas that we get involved in are the management of the Green and play area; maintenance of street lighting (except Dale's Court); planning matters; 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 North Yorkshire Council, health authorities, police etc).

In this respect we, as a Parish Council and as a community, 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.

There is always lots of information about what's happening that the village should be aware of and we are committed to keeping all residents updated and engaged. We strive to find ways to constantly improve our communication, stay relevant and reach all of our residents and do this through the monthly Parish Magazine, noticeboards, our website and social media, council meetings and will continue to do so.

Finally, our range of statutory powers include 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. Last year it was £6250, and this year has increased to £6850. An average increase of around £3 per household per year.

So how did we spend most of that precept last year?

Green cutting, baling and disposal of grass	£2110
Statutory Parish running costs, e.g., hall hire, insurance, auditors, etc	£1209
Improvements to Church/Village Hall parking area	£687
Electricity for street lighting provided by NYCC	£593
Defib maintenance	£445

In addition to our main activities mentioned, The Parish Council is also 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. If you have any suggestions on how we can use the funds for the general benefit of our community, please get in touch. We'd love to hear your ideas!

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 help achieve this vision, we launched a 10-point Parish Plan last year. Updates are published on the Parish Council website so that residents can monitor progress.

I would like to take this opportunity now to update you on our progress and outline what's to come. When it come to the area of Planning, the Selby Local Plan and Heronby has been at the top of all our minds last year. The most recent information from the NYC states that the proposals (Heronby) have been dropped from the plan and that further consultation is to be undertaken. This started on the 8th of March and runs until 19th of April.

Our County Councillor, John Cattanach, who has been very vocal against the Heronby development, has urged us all to make comments individually. The Parish Council intend to submit its comments too. The Heronby settlement has been dropped from this plan but can be considered in the one being looked at by NYC. However, the North Yorkshire plan will take at least 5 years to come to fruition if not longer.

As part of our Parish Plan, the Village Green Committee have been considering the future management of the Green and we have recently had concerns from residents about the state of the village green, agricultural access during busy seasons and the prevalence of docks and other invasive weeds. Following feedback from residents and recommendations by the Village Green Committee:

- We have introduced a parking permit scheme for the Church/Village Hall car park and have supported this with 1-to-1 communication, signage and permits. Everything you need is on our website or contact Ruth if you have any queries.
- The Church/Village Institute car park (opposite Dales Court) was resurfaced at the beginning of the year, and we have sprayed the kerb area of the car park and cleared weeds to make the kerb clearly visible.
- In the coming months we plan to make improvements to the Chapel car park to make the actual parking area more visible to residents.
- Spot spraying of docks and other invasive weeds will be taking place in the Spring.

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. Government funding for improved connectivity, Project Gigabit, has seen many telecoms companies looking to support rural communities with improved networks. You may have heard of or seen a company called Quickline operating in our village.

- We are working with them at the moment to look at how best to install improved fibre technology in the village. It goes without saying that as much as we welcome this improvement, we are also duty bound to make sure that we protect the appearance of the village.

Our fabulous Play Area 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. Last year:

- We installed new signage concerning parking arrangements.
- The Play Stillingfleet team secured additional funding from Two Ridings, Drax and John Cattanach and we installed new equipment.
- Created a new look noticeboard with info that changes with the seasons

To support those who could benefit from community transport and also for those who want to volunteer, we got behind a local initiative by the charity group Up For Yorkshire. The Local Community Transport Service is still active, and more info is on our Community Facebook page.

And let's not forget our two brand new bridges on the Green!

Looking forward, Yorkshire Water have indicated that they will begin to explore the installation of mains sewage for the entire village, in 2025. If viable, they say it would probably take 5 years to implement.

With regards to our Environmental goals, we have:

- Adopted a formal Biodiversity Policy which can be seen on the Parish Council website.
- Produced our first biodiversity report, which will be produced annually.

As we well know, one significant impact of environmental change is flooding. We managed to get through the floods relatively unscathed, unlike some other parts of the county. It was lovely to see how everyone pulled together and supported each other. Thanks to all those who contributed with road updates, photos (especially after we lit up Stillingfleet at Christmas), drone footage and our 'boating lake' was even on the news! Special thanks to David Atkinson and Sean Duggan for clearing the debris and mud after the water had receded and also to Richard, our Flood Co-ordinator, for providing the helpful updates. The flooding we experienced prompted the Parish council and community to take some new measures to further protect our residents and their properties.

- Our Flood Policy was reviewed and updated on the website.
- Councillor Sears has created a Stillingfleet Buddy List, as a follow up to Suzanne McCloud's welcome idea. It lists those who are willing to assist our less mobile neighbours during bad weather with collecting shopping, prescriptions etc. Let's hope we don't have to use it in the near future!

The impact of the recent extreme flooding has highlighted a need to further develop a plan for our community to make sure we are better prepared for the future. As part of the Parish Plan for 2024/2025, the Council has decided to develop a Community Emergency Resilience Plan. Its aim is to make sure the village is better prepared to cope with and respond to local and major emergencies as the health and wellbeing of our community is paramount.

We will all remember the illegal party that took place on the Stillingfleet Mine site over the Coronation weekend. Many residents were disturbed by the loud music and called the police. Selby Police apologised for the initial slow response which they say was due to staff shortages and minimal information. There were 9 arrests and Harworths, the owners of the mine site carried out a review of the site security to minimise the chances of future anti-social behaviour and a new stronger and safer gate has been installed.

There is continued and frequent concerns about speeding in and around our village and this issue has been raised at a number of NYC meetings. We have communicated the various ways to report concerns and incidents over the year and urge all residents to continue to do so.

- The Council have lodged a complaint about the volume, speed and noise nuisance of motor bikes passing through and around the village.
- The Council have applied to operate the Community Speed Watch initiative
- Councilor Foy, Councilor Kemp, and Councilor Brooks have completed the necessary training and accreditation.

We are currently waiting for the outcome of our application.

During May and June many of us were experiencing a strong odour which was identified as coming from the Acumen Waste Services Limited site. The council kept in touch with Acumen and the Environment Agency and communicated updates via our Facebook page and the Parish Magazine. Thankfully, the smell had gone by late Autumn and the Internal Drainage Board are continuing to monitor any impact to the water course in the surrounding area.

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 in community engagement and involvement. We have a thriving and growing village, and we have a large number of residents who are actively engaged in organising our community events.

In May we celebrated the King's Coronation with a 'Bring your Own' community picnic on the Green and the Council would like to thank the small yet committed group of residents for all their hard work. It was lovely to see so many out enjoying the weather and having a good catch up with each other.

On the 20th of May, The Village Hall hosted the Annual Stillingfleet Beer and Music Festival which was a huge success. The weather was very kind, additional 42 buses were put on and we had many visitors from near and far. This year's Beer and Music Festival takes place on Saturday 22nd of June – I'm sure it will be another huge success. 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. A huge thank you to all involved.

In November we purchased a Royal British Legion remembrance wreath and 10 Remembrance Tommy Lamppost flags ahead of the Remembrance service in November

In December, we were encouraged to 🎄 🎄 🎄 🗣️ Let's light up Stillingfleet 🗣️ 🎄 🎄 🎄 Many of our residents did so on the 1st of December and our village looked amazing during the festive period.

In February the Council held its first drop-in sessions for our community. They take place before the start of the Parish Council meetings and will last for 30 minutes. Many villages like ours, hold sessions like this and they are a really useful opportunity to ask questions in an open door and informal environment.

A big part of the Parish Plan is about engaging with the community by partnering with volunteers to promote and encourage Community/social events (e.g. Christmas celebrations, Summer fair, Scarecrow festival, Remembrance Day, D Day commemorations, the list goes on!).

I am really pleased to inform everyone that a village Community Group has now been formed and is represented on the Village Institute Committee. Currently the group has around 7 or 8 volunteers who will look to co-ordinate community initiatives for the village linking in with the Parish Council, the Village Hall and the Church. The group will be keen to hear from others in the village who want to get involved.

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. We also welcome Andre and Lisa, the new owners of the Methodist Church, who are planning to bring it back to life with art classes and much more.

I am proud of our council's commitment and dedication to serving the needs of our community and 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.

I am truly 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