

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017

CHANGES TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

In June Councillor Alderson submitted his resignation for personal reasons. Adam has vast experience and knowledge of the local area and we all appreciated and benefitted from the voluntary duties he undertook around the village.

Following due process, we were pleased to welcome Carol Fletcher as our new Councillor.

September brought the resignation of our Clerk, Laura Blanchard. Laura worked diligently during her two years in this demanding post and she will be missed. However, for Laura, the time was right to move on to more structured employment.

We consider ourselves very fortunate to have appointed Lynn Watkinson as our new Clerk. Lynn has several years' experience as the Clerk to Bellerby Parish Council and will combine both positions.

UPDATING OF REGULATIONS ETC.

Since being awarded a government grant to help with Transparency Code compliance, the Parish Council has purchased a dedicated laptop computer and a printer/scanner. Our own website is now live and is a valuable source of information for those interested in keeping up with the activities and decisions of the Parish Council. Its existence has been widely publicised and I encourage everyone with internet access to use it regularly.

Parish Councils have to follow rules and regulations. Some of these are mandatory and others discretionary. In order to comply with the Transparency Code, the Council has updated its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Asset Register, which are to be published on the Council's website. Last year the Cemetery Regulations were overhauled and this has been followed up with a Cemetery Processes Document designed to enable clerks (and Councillors) to confidently undertake all their responsibilities pertaining to cemetery matters.

PLANNING

During the year we have received a dozen planning applications for consideration. They were a diverse assortment ranging from a field barn to a slurry lagoon. Members of the public always have the opportunity to raise questions and to make representations and the Council has given due consideration to each application prior to submitting a response to Richmondshire District Council's Planning Department.

The application for planning permission to build a development of six dwellings at the East End of the village is ongoing. The developers were asked to make certain amendments to the original application before it could be re-considered for approval.

We are disappointed that the Planning Department has decided to stop sending out paper copies of applications. This makes it very difficult for Parish Councils and other stakeholders to make informed assessments of planning applications when they have to be viewed on personal computers or similar devices. We oppose this decision and are urging RDC to reconsider.

HIGHWAYS

There have been several areas of concern around the village this year, which have been reported to Highways. The responses from Highways have generally been slow and with a reluctance to take action. However, the Council has adopted an attitude of perseverance and stubborn determination towards Highways and because of that the Council has ensured that several problems have been successfully dealt with.

Mill Hill and Moor Road were of particular safety concern due to the vegetation obscuring the marker posts and the edges of the roads, particularly where there is a steep drop. Moor Road was also becoming narrower as debris built

up along the road. The Council argued that in the present state the roads were becoming dangerous to all users: vehicles, horse riders and pedestrians. In December we were pleased when Steve Barker from North Yorkshire County Council Highway Department attended a site meeting to see for himself the safety issues on Mill Lane and Moor Rd. It was generally felt to be a positive meeting and we were happy to receive the support of Councillor Harrison-Topham.

Unfortunately, NYCC was not prepared to reinstate the cutting of the verges, and could offer little help as regards the obscured marker posts. They did agree to sweep Moor Road, to repair the corner at the bottom of Moor Road where it joins Mill Hill (completed May 2017), and to cut back the black thorn which overhangs the bottom end of Moor Road (yet to be done). Highways also committed to a further site visit in 2017 to re-inspect the roads at a time when the vegetation was at its height.

At the start of 2017, the condition of Moor Road further deteriorated when forestry operations began on both sides of the road and mud left on the road began to make the road even narrower and more slippery and dangerous. This was raised with Highways which took it up with the land owner and it led to an improvement it working practises. NYCC also sent a large sweeper which was able to clear back the debris along the road; the driver also attempted to remove the old vegetation from the verges.

We have continued to push for improvements to the Whipperdale Crossroads between Grinton and Leyburn, but have been informed by Ian Beighton that, after due consideration, some of the signage would be "refreshed" but that no other action was required.