

**ARMTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10**

**Introduction**

This report is prepared by Armthorpe Parish Council (the Council) in order to provide (amongst other things) details of its elected Members, its employees, the functions and activities it undertook during the financial year 2009/10 and a summary of its annual accounts.

**The Council and its Members**

The Council is a local authority by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972. It comprises fifteen Members, fourteen of whom were elected to office on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007. The fifteenth Member, Councillor Paul Moscardini, was co-opted to the Council in January 2010, to fill a vacancy caused by the failure of a previously elected Member to attend Council meetings for a period of six months. All fifteen Members will automatically retire from office in May 2011, when the next local council election is held.

Each Member of the Council has signed up to the Council's Code of Conduct and registered his/her interests, which may be inspected by members of the public. The register of members' interests is on deposit at Armthorpe Community Centre (the Community Centre) and may be inspected during the Centre's opening hours. The registers may also be viewed on the Council's website at [www.armthorpeparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.armthorpeparishcouncil.co.uk).

The names and contact telephone numbers of all Members of the Council (in alphabetical order) are as follows:-

Councillor John R. Armstrong	(01302) 832287
Councillor Anthony J. Brown	(01302) 709699
Councillor Ann Brown	(01302) 709699
Councillor Margaret Davison	(01302) 886634
Councillor Lynda S. Dickman	(01302) 709699
Councillor Peter J. Farrell	(01302) 831485

Councillor David Hill	(01302) 835530
Councillor Paul Hutchinson	(01302) 830775
Councillor Valerie Jennings	(01302) 709699
Councillor J.R. Lowndes	(01302) 709699
Councillor Wendy L. Moore	(01302) 709699
Councillor Paul Moscardini	(01302) 709699
Councillor Tracy D. O'Connor	(01302) 709699
Councillor Scott A. Pickles	(01302) 831192
Councillor Margaret Pinkney	(01302) 832623

### **Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council**

The Council is required by law to appoint from its Members a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. During the year of this report, the Chairman of the Council is Councillor Scott A. Pickles and the Vice-Chairman is Councillor John R. Armstrong.

### **Employees**

The Council has the statutory power to appoint whatever staff it deems fit, on such reasonable terms and conditions it considers appropriate. It has a statutory duty to appoint a responsible financial officer (RFO).

Consequently, since its inception in the late nineteenth century the Council has appointed a part-time Clerk, who has responsibility for undertaking all the administrative duties of the Council, including servicing meetings, preparing Minutes, dealing with all correspondence. He also has overall responsibility for management of the Council's employees, its allotments, burial ground, playing fields and its Community Centre. The Clerk has also been appointed as the Council's RFO, with responsibility for all the financial functions of the Council. A part-time Administrative Assistant assists him, amongst other things, with the administrative tasks of the Council.

The Council has appointed other employees in various capacities. During the previous financial year it took the bold step of employing for the first time a Sports and Recreation Officer. The part-time Administrative Assistant also assists him

with his administrative duties. The Council has a full time General Assistant, whose main function is day-to-day responsibility for managing the Armthorpe Community Centre. He is assisted at the Community Centre by a part time Relief Assistant Site Manager. A Bar Manager is responsible for operating the Community Centre Bar and appointing part-time casual bar staff. The Council also employs two gatekeepers, one for the Cow House Lane playing field and one for the burial ground at Rands Lane. The General Assistant undertakes the gatekeeping duties for the Briar Road playing field, deputises in the absence of the other two gatekeepers and also undertakes other miscellaneous duties. It also has a pool of employees who work part-time as and when required as bar staff at the Community Centre.

The names of the Council's main full and part-time employees with contact telephone numbers, are as follows:-

Graham Shephard, Clerk to the Council – telephone 01302 709699

Julie E. Hardy, Administrative Assistant - telephone 01302 830543

John Hardy, General Assistant – telephone 01302 830543

Andrew Campbell, Relief Assistant Site Manager - telephone 01302 830543

Carl A. Hughes, Sports and Recreation Officer – 07526 791188

Michael Brown, Bar Manager of the Community Centre - telephone 01302 830543

Teresa Williams, Gatekeeper at the Rands Lane Burial Ground - telephone 01302 709699

Patricia Wilson, Gatekeeper at the Cow House Lane Playing Field - telephone 01302 709699

The Council also employs the services of an independent contractor and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) to provide gardening services at the Rands Lane burial ground, the Community Centre and the playing fields at Briar Road, Cow House Lane and Mansfield Crescent.

## **Functions**

The Council owns and administers an allotment site, a burial ground, three playing fields and a Community Centre.

A number of events are also arranged or co-ordinated by the Council during each year, for example, the annual village fireworks display, annual Christmas tea and social for elderly residents, Remembrance Day Parade, Splash holiday club, etc. Further information is given about these matters later in this report and on the Council's website at [www.armthorpeparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.armthorpeparishcouncil.co.uk).

## **Meetings and Business**

The Council conducts its business at various meetings, which it holds throughout each year. Its meetings are held at Armthorpe Community Centre and commence at 7pm. They are held during each month of the year except August, which is the recess. All meetings are open to the public, except those meetings or parts of the same where the public is excluded by resolution. It is very rare for the public to be excluded from meetings. During the current year, the public have only been excluded from a part of every Finance Committee meeting, when the bar stocktake reports were being considered.

The full Council meets eleven times a year on the first Tuesday in each month and at other times when a special meeting is called. Its meetings deal with all matters that have not previously been delegated to its Community Centre and General Purposes Committee, its Finance Committee and its Staffing Committee.

The Community Centre and General Purposes Committee also meet eleven times a year on the third Tuesday in each month. The Council has delegated to this Committee all its statutory powers and duties relating to the provision of entertainments and operation of the Armthorpe Community Centre (except the power to levy a rate or borrow money). The Committee determines policies relating to the Community Centre (excluding the operation of the licensed bar), including arranging all forms of entertainment to be provided by the Council, such as the fireworks display and the Annual Christmas Tea and Social for elderly residents of Armthorpe. The Committee has also been granted delegated

authority to incur expenditure for the Christmas Tea and Social under the provisions of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. This Committee has sixteen Members, as it co-opted Mr. Haydn Griffiths, MBE, to membership of the same owing to the wealth of his experience and expertise in providing entertainment and his passion for supporting charitable works.

The Finance Committee meets three or four times a year on the fourth Tuesday of the month. It is responsible for exercising budgetary control of the Council's estimates throughout each financial year, supervision of the administration and other matters relating to the Council's accounting records and procedures, including arranging from time to time of an internal audit of the same. Its findings are then reported to the Council with the Committee's recommendations. In addition, the Committee has delegated authority to carry out all the powers and duties of the Council relating to the operation of the bar in the Community Centre, including setting the bar tariff and purchasing of necessary equipment and drinks. All Members of the Council are Members of this Committee.

The Staffing Committee holds meetings whenever it is deemed necessary by the Clerk (in consultation with the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman) of the Council. The Committee comprises the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council for the time being and three other Members of the Council. It has delegated authority to carry out all the powers and duties of the Council relating to the appointment of staff, hours of duty and rates of pay, determination of staff grievances and dismissal of staff. It does not, however, have the power to appoint the Clerk to the Council, as he/she is appointed by a meeting of all Members of the Council and casual bar staff are appointed by the Bar Manager of the Community Centre Bar. The Committee is also required from time to time to undertake a review of the 'benchmark' salary of the Clerk and accordingly to make any recommendations to the Finance Committee.

### **Council Activities During the Past Year**

#### 1 Allotments

The Council has one allotment site at Mercel Avenue, containing thirty allotment gardens, which is leased from a local landowner. The Council has requested this

landowner to sell it the freehold of this land and a further parcel of adjoining land for allotments to accommodate those persons on the Council's waiting list. It is still awaiting a response to this request.

## 2 Burial Ground

The Council owns and manages a burial ground situate at Rands Lane. It is a lawn type cemetery for ease of maintenance. On average, it accommodates about thirty interments each year and approximately the same number of interments of cremated remains.

The Council purchased the land for this purpose in 1965. It is freehold and comprises approximately three acres.

As the costs of purchasing and maintaining the burial ground are paid mainly from funds collected through the precept from Council taxpayers of Armthorpe, the Council operates a policy of discouraging non-residents of the parish from utilising the burial ground facility. It does this by subsidising the fees of local residents and charging non-residents of Armthorpe a significantly higher rate similar to the amount that DMBC charges for its cemeteries. Charging the latter rate is a clear disincentive to non-residents.

## 3 Armthorpe Community Centre

The Council owns and operates Armthorpe Community Centre, which is situated in the Welfare Park, Church Street. It was purpose built by the Council from its own funds and a significant grant from the European Economic Community. It is currently valued for insurance purposes at £1,397,768. It is a valuable community resource providing a venue for a range of activities.

The Community Centre is hired out to various individuals, groups and organisations for a variety of social, educational and recreational activities. A full list of these is displayed at the Community Centre. The Centre is also hired out for children's parties, wedding receptions, engagement parties and other celebratory events.

As in previous years, the Council organised and presented several events at the Community Centre, including a St. George's Day Concert, Yorkshire Day Concert, Halloween Fancy Dress Disco, Christmas Pantomime and the Annual Christmas Tea and Social for elderly residents of the village.

The Council has authorised free user of the Community Centre for charitable and other fund raising purposes, including concerts arranged by the Armthorpe Elmfield Band. Free user has also been granted to Age Concern Doncaster, the St. John Ambulance Brigade, the Brownies and a group of volunteers who operate a Tea and Coffee Shop, which opens Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

#### 4 Remembrance Day

In conjunction with the Royal British Legion, the Rector and various other local organisations, the Council once again organised and co-ordinated the annual Remembrance Day Parade and Service. It also paid for the services of the Armthorpe Elmfield Band to provide music during the Parade, the Church Service and playing of the last post at the Act of Remembrance. The Council also provided refreshments at the Community Centre after the event for those taking part in the same.

#### 5 Annual Firework Display

The Council provided a musical Firework Display on 4 November, on the Briar Road Playing Field. The Armthorpe Elmfield Band provided entertainment at the event and the Council also arranged for a funfair to be present on site to provide additional enjoyment for spectators. The event was well attended and once again was very successful. For the current year, the Council is making arrangements for additional entertainment with a view to the event lasting a longer period of time.

#### 6 Christmas Activities

The Annual Christmas Tea and Social for the elderly residents of the village was again held on 12th December 2009. This was the 58th annual event organised by the Council. The Junior and Senior members of the Armthorpe Elmfield Band

provided entertainment. Once again, their services ensured the event was a huge success.

Following a suggestion made in 2003 by Mr. Haydn Griffiths, MBE, the Council provided at the event additional raffle prizes to 44 elderly residents of a day trip to the seaside. As a result, these residents enjoyed a trip to Bridlington on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2009. For lunch, they were all provided with a bar meal at a restaurant in Bridlington and on their return to Armthorpe they were entertained with cream teas at the Community Centre. They were then taken home by taxi. The costs of this trip, the meals and the taxis were funded mainly from two concerts, which the Armthorpe Elmfield Junior and Senior Bands held earlier in the year at the Community Centre. The Parish Council is extremely grateful to Mr. Griffiths and all members of the two bands for their sterling services in this matter.

Another 44 elderly residents will be attending a similar trip to Bridlington this year and the Armthorpe Elmfield Bands have already held one concert to fund this trip. The next one is to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Once again, it must be said that the village is very fortunate to have such kind and caring people who willingly and unstintingly give their precious time to support worthwhile causes.

For the fourth year in a row, the Council provided a number of Christmas festive lights on street lighting columns in the village. More lights were provided than in the previous year and the Council received many favourable comments about them.

The Council, as in previous years, also arranged and paid for a Christmas Tree to be sited and lit on top of the Parish Church, one on the roadside in Church Street next to the Rose Grove junction, one outside Rose House and 41 others on the outside of shop/business premises in Church Street and Doncaster Road. The Council is committed to increasing the Christmas feel good factor during the festive season and intends to increase the number of lighted Christmas Trees in the village year on year.



## 7 Sports and Recreation

As previously stated, the Council took the bold step of appointing a Sports and Recreation Officer in 2008, to deliver sporting programmes based on the development of fundamental sport skills across age groups from 2 -19 year olds. The officer has responsibility for raising the profile of physical activity and sport, encouraging healthy lifestyles whilst building children's self-esteem, teamwork and leadership skills. The current post holder is Carl Hughes. He is an all round sportsman but has a passion for the sport of Rugby League, which he has played from the age of 8 years. He is a professional player currently playing for Keighley Cougars in the Rugby League Championship Division. He and his predecessors have done an excellent job in the short time since the post was created. A host of activities are provided for young people in the community and one of the biggest successes is the continuation of the school holiday Splash programme, which provides a variety of recreational activities for 8 – 13 year olds, including swimming at the Armthorpe Sports Centre. Since his appointment, however, Carl has developed and introduced a number of new initiatives, including the establishment of the Armthorpe Community Leadership Academy. This is a voluntary organisation, whose aim is to prepare responsible, motivated and confident young people to independently lead safe and enjoyable activities in their schools and in the community. The Academy should prove beneficial to many youngsters in the village for years to come.

## 8 Miscellaneous Activities

In addition to the above, the Council has responsibility for the playing fields at Briar Road, Cow House Lane and Mansfield Crescent. Council taxpayers money has, of course, been spent on maintaining these fields. Mansfield Crescent playing field is currently unused for playing field purposes, as it has been blighted with a number of problems over the past few years. Consequently, in the next financial year, the Council is hoping to commence turning the playing field into a nature reserve. Furthermore, it has plans to re-develop the Briar Road playing field in the next few years by erecting a sports hall and providing various other sporting facilities.

The Council, as always, has made numerous representations to DMBC and other organisations on a variety of matters including highways, planning, environmental services, bus services, etc. Many of these have been productive and improved local services and the quality of life for some Armthorpe residents. Some of these have not proved productive, much to the chagrin of the Parish Council. In this respect, residents may recall that last year the Council was consulted on a major planning application to extend the existing West Moor Business Park. Despite objections from the Parish Council, local residents and a 500 signature petition, including verbal representations made by myself and Councillor Wendy Moore to DMBC's Planning Committee, the application was approved by DMBC subject to approval by the Secretary as State as a departure from the local development plan. Although local residents, the Parish Council and individual Councillors made representations to the Secretary of State asking him to reject the application, he eventually approved the departure and DMBC granted the planning permission last December.

The Council will continue to lobby outside agencies to secure whatever improvements it can for the local community.

#### 9 Multi-agency Group

A series of meetings have also been initiated between the Council and various representatives from the community. These include the schools, police and the healthcare sector to name just a few. These group meetings, while still at an early stage, are already encouraging further co-operation between services, and are starting to show results.

#### 10. Draft Village Master Plan

The Parish Council has produced a draft of what it calls the Armthorpe Village Master Plan. The object of this Master Plan is to influence future planning policy being made by DMBC in its Local Development Framework (LDF), which will replace the Unitary Development Plan. The effect of the Master Plan, if adopted by the Parish Council after the end of the public consultation exercise, will be that it will be incorporated in and supplement the LDF and DMBC will have to take

account of it when determining future planning applications. The new planning policy will affect the whole Borough (including Armthorpe) until 2026 and the Parish Council is being encouraged by DMBC to get involved in the process leading to implementation of the new policy. This is the first time that any Parish Council has been involved in this process.

A public meeting has already been held with local residents and a three day consultation period was held at Armthorpe Community Centre two weeks ago. The Parish Council will be meeting shortly to discuss the outcome of the consultation replies and the points made at the public meeting to determine the way forward with the Master Plan, before it formally approves it and submits it to DMBC.

### **Council Finances and Accounts**

The Council's income is derived mainly from the annual precept and Community Centre letting charges. It also receives some income from allotment rents and burial fees. It may from time to time obtain grants for specific purposes. The Council uses its income to pay for its functions and activities, including payment of employees' remuneration.

The precept is a formal demand made to the billing authority (DMBC) to pay a specified sum. DMBC collect the amount due from the Council taxpayers of Armthorpe and pass it on to the Parish Council. The Council tax is fundamentally a property tax and dependent on eight valuation bands lettered A to H. Precepts are based on the total equivalent band D properties in the Council's area. This is known as the Tax Base. At the time the precept was set by the Council for the current financial year, the Tax Base for Armthorpe was estimated by DMBC to be 4021. Consequently, after determining its budgetary requirements, the Council precepted the sum of £152,798, an increase of £16,018 on the previous year. This increase was necessary to pay for (a) the services of the Sports and Recreation Officer previously referred to and the various programmes he initiated and (b) the increase in the number of Christmas illuminations. Despite this increase in the Precept, the cost of the Parish Council's services for each

household of a Band D property was just £38 per year, which was only a £3 increase over the previous year. Occupiers of lower banded properties obviously paid less than this amount.

The Council's finances and accounts are governed by its formal financial regulations. They are also subjected to annual scrutiny and examination by a system of independent internal and external audit in accordance with statutory requirements. The Council endeavours to comply with all the recommendations and requirements of the auditors.

A summary of the Council's Accounts for the financial year commencing 1st April 2009 and ending 31st March 2010 will, when completed, be attached as an Appendix to this report.

### **Chairman's Overview**

It will be seen from the above, although it is not an exhaustive list, that the Council has once again had a very busy year. All Members have made a valuable contribution to the work of the Council, some (inevitably) less than others owing to employment and other personal issues. Nevertheless, the commitment to serving our community continues and I wish to commend and thank each of my colleagues in this respect.

If local residents have any suggestions for improving our community, please contact any one of my colleagues or myself and we will be pleased to consider them.

Scott A. Pickles  
Chairman of Armthorpe Parish Council

31.3.10