

ARMTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Introduction

This report is prepared by Armthorpe Parish Council (the Council) in order to provide (amongst other things) details of its elected Members and employees, the functions and activities it undertook during the financial year 2008/09 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, all of whom were elected to office on 3rd May 2007. They 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 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 John 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, amongst other things, assists him with the administrative tasks of the Council.

The Council has appointed other employees in various capacities. In this respect, it has a full time General Assistant, whose main function is day-to-day responsibility for running the Community Centre. He is assisted at the Community Centre by a part time Relief Assistant Site Manager. There are two part-time Licensees who are jointly 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. During this year the Council also took the bold step of employing for the first time a Sports and Recreation Officer. The part-time Administrative Assistant also assists him with administrative tasks.

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 709699

John Hardy, General Assistant/Community Centre Manager – telephone 01302 830543

Andrew Campbell, Relief Assistant Site Manager - telephone 01302 830543

Carl 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 has 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 and Service, Splash holiday club, etc. Further information is given about these matters later in this report.

Meetings and Business

The Council conducts its business at various meetings, which it holds throughout each year. Its meetings are held at the 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, it was only excluded once from a Council meeting to discuss information from the Monitoring Officer of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC). It was also 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 Entertainments Committee, its Finance Committee and its Staffing Committee.

The Community Centre Committee and Entertainments Committee 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) and determining and 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. The 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 (excluding the Clerk to the Council who is appointed by a meeting of all Members of the Council and general bar staff who are appointed by the Licensees of the Community Centre Bar), hours of duty and rates of pay, determination of staff grievances and dismissal of staff. It 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 situated 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 similar significantly higher rate 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 £1,331,208. 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 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 Halloween Fancy Dress Disco, and (in conjunction with the Ark Club/New Life Church) a Christmas Pantomime.

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's 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 and various other local organisations, the Council once again co-ordinated the arrangements for 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 and a Steam Organ owned and operated by a local resident, Mr. Alan Williams, provided entertainment at the event. 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 successful.

6 Christmas Activities

The Annual Christmas Tea and Social for the elderly residents of the village was again held on 13th December 2008. This was the 57th annual event organised by the Council. The Junior and Senior members of the Armthorpe Elmfield Band provided entertainment. Once again, their voluntary services ensured the event was a huge success.

Following a suggestion made in 2003 by Mr. Hadyn 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 10th July 2008. 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 scones and cream tea at the Community Centre. They were then taken home by taxi. The costs of this trip, the meals and the taxis were funded 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. 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. As a result, the Council intends to increase the number of festive lights year on year until an excellent display is achieved.

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 this year.

7 Sports and Recreation

As previously stated, the Council took the bold step of appointing a Sports and Recreation Officer. He commenced his duties on 1st April 2008 for the purposes of providing sporting and recreational activities for young people in the village. The post holder was the former Community Development Worker employed by Armthorpe Community Enterprise Limited (ACE), whose funding for that post had come to an end. The Council recognised that young people of the village had

gained considerable benefit from the services of that post, so it took the initiative of creating the new post of Sports and Recreation Officer on its establishment and employing ACE's redundant Community Development Worker. He was employed by the Council in this post for five months and then left to undertake teacher training at The Armthorpe School. Craig Moss replaced him and both he and his predecessor have done an excellent job in the short time since the post was created. They provide a host of activities 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. The Council is hoping to expand its services during the Spring and Summer months by employing an additional Sports Youth Worker on a six month contract. It is anticipated that more young people in the community will benefit from this additional post.

The Council's former part-time Secretary's post was deleted and the new post of Administrative Assistant created. The post holder carries out the duties of the former Secretary's post and the additional administrative duties associated with the post of Sports and Recreation Officer.

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.

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. During the year the Council was consulted on a major planning application to extend the existing West Moor Business Park. The Council arranged for a public consultation to be held in the Community Centre and a public meeting to discuss the proposed development. This culminated in the Council objecting to the application and myself and Councillor Wendy Moore attending DMBC's Planning Committee to voice the Parish Council's objections. After the application was

subsequently approved by DMBC subject to approval by the Secretary of State as a departure from the local development plan, the Parish Council nominated some of its Members to work closely with a residents' action group for the purposes of mobilising the wider community into writing to the Secretary of State to call in the planning application for determination by himself. The Parish Council and individual Councillors also made representations to the Secretary of State and is awaiting his decision in this matter.

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 at an early stage, are already encouraging further co-operation between services, and are starting to show results.

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 3906. Consequently, after determining its budgetary requirements, the Council precepted the sum of £136,780, an increase of £31,864 on the previous year.

This increase was necessary to pay for the (a) services of the Sports and Recreation Officer previously referred to and the various programmes initiated (b) the increased costs of the Administrative Assistant's post and (c) 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 £35 per year, which was only a £9 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 2008 and ending 31st March 2009 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

31.3.09