

## **Armthorpe Parish Council Parish Meeting Tuesday May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

Once again, I have the honour of presenting the Parish Council's Annual report. I will give an overview of the Parish Council's activities over the last year.

I would like to begin by thanking Parish Councillors, the Parish Council staff team, and all our Parishioners, partners and associates for their support and hard work over the past year.

I think that it is fair to say that our Parish Council is driven by the ethos of service. Parish Councillors, who work in an entirely voluntary capacity, give their own time and hard work, to improve Village life. To make our Village the best it can be. Over the last year, with the support of the staff team and our valued partners, the Parish Council has delivered many activities, opportunities, and initiatives for Parishioners. We have increased community engagement and involvement; we have also encouraged and supported Community Groups in delivering provision which has increased the overall village offer.

The past year has brought its challenges; however, we have continued to develop the facilities and activities that the Parish Council has to offer. We have had some staffing changes over the year and, at times, the workload for some staff members has been extremely high. I would like to thank our Clerk, Sarah Youngman, for her hard work and leadership over this period and her very able and committed team for all their hard work and commitment.

Here is an overview, by no means exhaustive, of work the Parish Council has been involved in over the past year.

### **1. Sports and Recreation activities.**

The Parish Council employs Carl Hughes, our Sports and Recreation worker. During the last year Carl has developed and delivered an increased range of activities for Parishioners of all ages. Carl works at the Community Centre, out in the community and in local schools. Carl also supports the Parish Councils events and initiatives. These are some of the activities that Carl has delivered:

- Youth Club provision.
- A full programme of activities for children and young people over the school holiday periods. These activities offered something for all children including a wonderful Nature Club delivered by our Community Clean up Champion Lea Pedley, and a new family provision for children aged 0-7.
- Work with young people's Voice and Influence including the creation of the new Youth Parish Council Group.
- Fitness activities for older community Members.
- A new Table Tennis group.
- Weekly fitness class at Charles Court
- Inter schools' Sports competitions and tasters.

### **2. Community Clean up Champion.**

The Parish Council employs Lea Pedley as our Community Clean up Champion. Lea, with the support of some wonderful volunteers, keeps our Village, clean and tidy. Lea also reports fly tipping and relates to Doncaster Council's Streetscene on any issues that arise. Lea also leads on the work on the Great British Spring Clean and has worked with local schools on environmental projects. I hope you will agree, especially when compared to other communities, that Armthorpe is kept in good order in terms of littering and tidiness.

### **3. Events and initiatives.**

The Parish Council has organised and delivered a wide range of Community events over the last year. These include:

- Activities around the Coronation of King Charles including formal announcements and the creation of the "Big Lunch" event.
- The annual Bridlington Trip for our older residents took place in June.
- The Parish Council arranged and delivered the Garden Party to mark the opening of the Museum in the Miner's Memorial Garden.
- The Miners Memorial Service in September.
- The Village Show in September.
- The Children's Halloween Party in October,
- The Remembrance ceremonies in November including the decoration of the Village with poppies and the lighting of the church yard tree.
- The Community Firework display.
- The Christmas Fair/ Santa's grotto/ Switch on event in November.
- Armthorpe Christmas Lights display. One of the best in Doncaster and the subject of much positive feedback from Parishioners.
- Children's Christmas Party.
- Senior Citizens Christmas Teas in the new format with entertainment from Downton Abbey's Thomas Howe and our own Helen Round and members of Armthorpe Community Theatre.
- Jack and the Beanstalk Pantomime, two performances.
- The Parish Council, with support from Markham Main Colliery Band, Armthorpe Elmfield Band and Doncaster and District Pipe Band, organised the March to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Miner's Strike.
- The Community Centre Book Swap has proved to be a very popular initiative and is very well used.
- The Tuesday Tea Dance continues to thrive and has increased in numbers, recently Carl Hughes, Sports, and Recreation Officer, has been bringing along Primary School groups who have been joining in and learning about Ballroom dancing.
- The Parish Council has organised a weekly Singalong Group which meets on Wednesdays.
- We continue to hold Tabletop sales monthly.

During the last year, the Parish Council has introduced a new ticket allocation system to ensure the fairest possible distribution of event tickets to Parishioners. This involved making sure that tickets were only allocated to residents and that groups of tickets were made available for collection at different times of day and different days of the week.

#### 4. Provision with Partners.

The Parish Council is always looking for ways of increasing provision for the village, one of the ways it does this is by working alongside and supporting partners.

This is often done by providing access to the Community Centre. Examples of these groups are.

- **Armthorpe Community Coffee Shop/Firefly.** Linda Monks and her team deliver a valuable community facility and raise money for Firefly by holding the Coffee shop on three mornings per week at the Community Centre.
- **Armthorpe Food Support.** The Parish Council provides premises and staff support for this much needed local provision which provides food, toiletries, household cleaning materials, nappies, and pet food for Armthorpe residents in need.
- **Andy's Man Club.** Upon hearing of the loss of its premises the Parish Council stepped in and arranged for this much needed and valuable provision to be delivered in Armthorpe.
- **Citizens Advice Bureau.** The PC has arranged for the CAB to be available for local people on Tuesdays in the Community Centre.
- **Shaw Wood Academy.** Shaw Wood are an excellent community facing school and have delivered three, popular, Street Food events at the Community Centre over the last year, they also delivered the Pride of Armthorpe Awards last May and are delivering this year's Awards Ceremony later this month.
- **Armthorpe Community Library.** We have supported Jean Brook and her team in creating some wonderful activities and events for local children, including the Teddy Bears Picnic and the Easter Party.
- **South Yorkshire Police and City of Doncaster Council.** We continue to work closely with both agencies. We provide premises for Police and Community Engagement meetings; however, our key initiative is in supporting the "Acorn Hub" on Hatfield Lane. This facility was newly opened at the time of last year's report; however, things have settled down with Police and Council staff now located in Armthorpe instead of travelling from Thorne. We have received feedback that this has greatly helped residents in terms of access to help and support and made things more straightforward for the Services involved. It isn't a Police Station, but it is a significant improvement upon what we had before. "The Hub" has recently won an award for partnership work and is being used as a model in other areas.
- **Armthorpe Community Theatre.** This has been an exciting development over the past year. Armthorpe now has its own Arts group. The group have provided the entertainment at several Parish Council events, they have delivered wonderful Songs from the Shows Concert and a fantastic Pantomime. They have recently formed a Choir and are currently in rehearsal for "Galactic Oddity," a musical comedy with performances in July.

## **5. Infrastructure responsibilities.**

The Parish Council is responsible for the Community Centre, The Armthorpe Burial ground and green spaces at Briar Road and Cow House Lane, it also holds a long-term lease for the land to the rear of the Community Centre.

- **The Community Centre.**

The Community Centre is a key asset of the Parish Council. It is an excellent building. It is bright and airy and has good facilities. Parishioners may recall from last year's report that several historical building issues had been identified that required urgent remedial action. This required additional unforeseen expenditure across the past year. The Clerk and her team have worked hard address the building issues and have put a routine maintenance programme in place to prevent this happening again. The most recent major work has been to completely replace the guttering around the building.

The Community Centre has been reorganised and storage issues have been addressed. Our Bar Manager Sam Fielder has done an amazing job of completely refreshing our Bar offer. It has been reorganised, redecorated, and brought up to standard, she has reviewed the beverage offer, bringing it up to date and making it much more attractive to users. We have payment by card working efficiently. Takings have increased significantly.

The Clerk and her team have improved our lettings offer, including being able to provide table linen and chair covers. Our lettings are increasing, bringing in more income to support the work of the Parish Council. Many activity groups let the building meaning that villagers have access to an even wider range of sports, crafts, and other activities.

- **Burial Ground**

The Parish Council continues to be responsible for the running of the Burial Ground on Rands Lane. This year has seen the installation of the "Letters to Heaven" Post Box in the gazebo. The Parish Council have recently purchased a digital system for Burial record keeping and the archives will be uploaded in stages.

- Briar Road and Cowhouse Lane green spaces continue to be overseen by the Parish Council

## **6. Communication.**

The Parish Council are keen to communicate effectively with Parishioners, making sure that residents know what is happening and can contact us if they wish to. We are available by email, phone, post and via the Messenger App. The PC has a regularly updated web site and is active on social media via its Facebook page. FB updates are shared across all 7 local FB pages resulting in substantial reach. For example, over the last 90-day period the APC FB page has had a reach of 55,421 with 2,457 followers and a 5 out of 5 rating. We are aware that not everyone is able to access electronic means of communication, so we have refreshed our notice boards and have placed 4 new ones across the village including one at the Acorn Hub. Parishioners can also call into the Community Centre and speak to a member of staff.

## **7. Increasing the Parish Precept.**

At the budget meeting in January the Parish Council met to consider the level of Parish precept for the current financial year which began in April. After a long and careful examination of the proposed budget it was, reluctantly, decided to increase the precept by 14.7%. The PC did not take this decision lightly but felt the increase was necessary to protect the services and facilities currently provided and to meet challenges in terms of significant remedial building costs, the increases in energy and other building costs due to inflationary pressures and the need to begin the process of developing the land to the rear of the Community Centre for community use. The precept is calculated using a Band D rateable value. The 14.71% increase means an increase of £10 per year or 19p per week for most households and less for people who receive help with their Council Tax. Armthorpe has the sixth lowest precept amongst all Town and Parish Councils across Doncaster. Last year, in the face of astronomically high costs the PC raised the precept by 7.94% which was below the rate of inflation at the time which was 10.1% overall. Retaining the precept at last year's level would have resulted in cuts in provision and the prevention of planned work over the next financial year.

Parish Council activities are provided for free or at low cost to enable local people, often struggling with the cost of living, to have access to otherwise unaffordable opportunities. Good examples of this are that any child could visit Santa at the Christmas Fayre for free and a family of four could attend an excellent Pantomime for £10.

In addition, the Parish Council supports many local community groups and organisations in providing activities and services for Parishioners.

The Parish Council is committed to providing value. We are custodians of your money and take the responsibility very seriously. We were sorry to raise the precept but felt that it was needed, to continue to provide services to the village to a good standard.

## **8. Parish Council vacancies.**

We currently have 2 vacancies for Parish Councillors, and these are being advertised. During the year we have welcomed 3 new Parish Councillors, Cllr's Kevin Stothard, Lee Mason, and Shane Rose.

## **9. Future projects.**

The Parish Council will continue to strive to improve and to deliver its existing services and add to them where possible. We have recently begun work on a major new project to develop the leasehold land to the rear of the Community Centre. It will be a large project and will take some time. The Parish Council are currently working with partners and will be coming out to the community with a consultation plan later this year.

## **10. Conclusion.**

In conclusion I wish to reiterate my thanks to everyone who supports the work of the Parish Council. We want to make our village, our community, our home, the best it can be. As a Parish Council we are proud of our village and are proud to serve it. We want it to be a great place to live for everyone. There are quite a lot of negatives in the world now, however Armthorpe has good, strong, kind, community minded people. We are a real community and if you aren't doing so already why not join in with something, why not create something or help someone? Let's all be a part of a resilient, thriving community.

After all.

**Armthorpe is a great Village!**

Cllr Chris Brodhurst-Brown  
Chair Armthorpe Parish Council  
April 2024.