

Armthorpe Parish meeting 27th May 2025.

As Chair of Armthorpe Parish Council it is my honour to present this overview of the activities of the Council over the past year.

I would like to begin by thanking my fellow Parish Councillors, the Parish Council Staff Team and all our Parishioners, community partners, agencies and associates for their support, kindness, and hard work during this time.

Our Parish Council is populated by volunteers who have an underpinning ethos of service to their community, a belief in our village and a vision for its ongoing improvement.

Our village is not perfect, no community is. It has its share of challenges and hardships.

However, Armthorpe has so much going for it, so many positives. We have so much on offer, there are lots of facilities and opportunities, a host of things to do and get involved in and great local businesses. There is a real community buzz around the place.

At the heart of all this are its people, good community minded people. We have the strength of our mining community at our core, we honour our past, but we aspire for our future. Our village has grown over the years, but we have managed to retain our sense of community and can take real pride in it.

There are naysayers in our Village, who can be extremely negative and dismiss our community, our home, as “broken’ or “finished,” who label the whole village as a bad place based upon some of the things that happen here. The kind of things that, unfortunately, happen in most communities.

I would call these people out, I say spend some time looking at all the wonderful positives that can easily be found in Armthorpe. Find places to take pride in our community, they are not hard to find. I would also call on them to act, to be creative and join in the challenging work of continuous improvement that the Parish Council and its many partners strive to make.

This Parish Council works hard to increase and strengthen provision for Parishioners by creating and developing its own initiatives. By co-working with our much-valued partners or supporting them in the creation and delivery of new provision by doing this we can add to the overall village offer.

I have said it on many occasions and will continue to do so.

“Armthorpe is a great village!”

Here is my, by no means exhaustive, overview of the work of the Parish Council over the past year.

1. Sports and Recreation activities.

The Parish Council continues to employ Carl Hughes, our Sports and Recreation worker. Carl continues to offer a wide range of activities across all ages and abilities to the community, Carl continues to work in the Community Centre, out in community locations and with local schools. Here are some of his delivery highlights from the past year.

- School Sports competitions. All Armthorpe primary schools competed in the 2024/25 season. Schools competed in a series of football, tag rugby and rounders matches.
- In an initiative to encourage female participation a girl's football competition was held involving 40 girls and young women in the sport at a competitive level.
- The Parish Council have sponsored a football strip for students at the Armthorpe school.
- Carl delivered a full programme of activities for children and young people during the Easter and Summer holidays at the Community Centre. It is intended to develop and deliver this provision across this year's summer holidays.
- As part of an intergenerational project visits by local Primary Schools to the Tuesday afternoon Tea Dance session were arranged and resulted in children and older people coming together to learn ballroom dancing.
- Carl organised the Christmas lights switch on at the Parish Council Christmas Fair. Each local school was asked to nominate a child to participate in the big switch on. A proud moment for children, parents, carers, and schools.
- Carl teamed up with Flying Futures Ltd to provide taster sessions throughout the year with social activities available in the evening for young people. The Parish Council is committed to continuing to deliver Youth Club provision for young people. We are currently seeking to recruit an assistant part time youth worker to enable the youth Club to continue.
- Carl accessed City Council "Anticipate" funding to provide several diversionary activities over the week leading up to and including Bonfire night in November.
- Residents at Rose House have enjoyed gentle and seated fitness classes based at the care home.
- An extremely popular new adults Table Tennis group has been set up at the Community Centre.
- Carl continues to deliver popular and very well attended adult fitness classes at the Community Centre. A wonderful place to participate in exercise and to meet new friends.

2. The Community Cleanup Champion.

The Parish Council continues to employ Lea Pedley in this role. Lea, with a lot of support from our dedicated local volunteers, keeps our village clean and tidy. Lea liaises closely with the City's Streetscene team making sure that collected litter is taken away and reports fly tipping incidents. In addition to regular litter picking Lea undertakes a range of projects throughout the year to educate and involve children and community members in looking after our environment.

Lea organises events such as the village's contribution to the Great British Spring Clean, she also coordinates the supply of litter picking equipment to local individuals and groups who wish to undertake their own cleanup activities.

I hope you will agree that Lea and our local volunteers work hard to keep our village one of the tidiest in Doncaster.

3. Events and activities.

During the past year Armthorpe Parish Council has organised or worked in partnership to offer a wide range of events, initiatives, and activities for Parishioners. These include:

Adoption of the “Choose kindness” ethos.

The 13th and 14th December saw the annual Senior Citizens teas where eligible villagers were treated to a Christmas Meal and a prize raffle.

The Christmas Season was rounded off by the lovely Civic and Church Christmas Service held at St Leonards and St Mary’s Church. A wonderful new Christmas tradition.

January saw a post-Christmas boost with the performance of this year’s pantomime, Cinderella. Armthorpe Community Theatre did a fabulous job of entertaining their audiences.

January 23rd saw the announcement of our most exciting Community Project to date, The creation of a new state of the art children’s Play Park.

February saw nominations open for the wonderful Pride of Armthorpe awards. An event organised in partnership with Shaw Wood Academy. “Pride” is an opportunity to recognise all those Armthorpe folk working away to support and work hard for our community. The awards were held on March 21st, and a spectacular evening was enjoyed by all who attended. They were treated to a lovely meal cooked by Parish Councillor Shane Rose and Staff member Daisy Youngman who were ably assisted by Parish Councillors and volunteers. A wonderful Community night. Many thanks to Shaw Wood Academy for all their work on this important event.

In April Armthorpe Community Theatre delivered an entertaining evening of music, dance, comedy, and drama in their Variety Showcase. A great night out.

The Parish Council delivered the ceremony, with beacon lighting, to commemorate Victory in Europe day. It was a very moving occasion. The Church Bells from St Leonard and St Mary’s rang out earlier in the evening and the Church Yard tree was lit in red as a mark of remembrance and respect.

4. Provision with Partners.

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

Some examples are:

Armthorpe Welfare Bowling Club – funding towards new lighting.

Armthorpe Welfare Junior Football Club – A contribution towards the new toilets.

Armthorpe Food Support, providing food and hygiene products to villagers in need.

Shaw Wood Academy – toward the costs of Street Food Events and funding for the Armthorpe Summer Festival.

The following groups are supported with free access to the building:

The Community Coffee shop – This opens for 3 sessions per week and raises funding for Firefly Cancer Awareness and Support.

SUPPORT Armthorpe – A weekly session for people working to improve their mental health.

Armthorpe Community Theatre - 2 sessions per week for rehearsals and facilities for performances.

Andy's Man Club – A weekly session for men wishing to improve their mental health.

The Eating Disorders Group – which meets weekly.

South Yorkshire Police and the City of Doncaster Council.

The Parish Council continues to work closely with both agencies. We continue to provide premises for the Police and Community Engagement meetings; however, the key initiative is the provision of the Acorn Hub on Hatfield Lane.

The Police and Safer Neighbourhood team continue to work from the Hub, ensuring that our services are locally based instead of travelling from Thorne. This is the Hubs' third year and its impact on the provision of local services continues to grow.

It is not a Police Station; however, residents are able to drop in to the Hub when it is open and speak to officers there. The Police also run drop-in sessions there. Parishioners continue to report that they find the services provided to be useful and helpful. Relationships have been built and strengthened between the Parish Council, City Councillors, and other local community organisations. Consequently, communication has been improved.

We look forward to the provision of extra Police resources in the near future. A current analysis of crime data by South Yorkshire Police shows that Armthorpe has the 4th lowest level of crime in Wards across Doncaster. It comes just above Bessacarr, Auckley and Branton and Edenthorpe and Kirk Sandall Wards

5. Infrastructure responsibilities.

The Parish Council is responsible for the Community Centre, Rands Lane Burial Ground, Mercel Avenue allotments and green spaces on Briar Road and Cow House Lane, it also holds a long-term lease for land to the rear of the Community Centre.

- **Armthorpe Community Centre.**

The Community Centre is a key asset of the Parish Council, as discussed in last year's report we have been working to remedy a range of urgent building issues, we are now in a position where these have been addressed, and regular maintenance programmes have been put in place. This resulted in significant additional expenditure in a financially challenging year. However current budgets have been set to ensure that the Community centre is well maintained and fit for purpose. The Staff team has been rationalised and reorganised and we are in a position where we have a team in place who can serve the needs of the building and community and respond to growth in building use.

It is an excellent, very well used building. The staff team work hard to generate income which is ploughed back into Parish Council activities. The building takes many lettings, many of which add to provision available to residents. A new commercial grade kitchen has been fitted and people who book the building are able to access a wide range of extras to enhance their events.

The Parish Council are currently researching gaining grant aid to support the installation of solar power hardware which, whilst being good for the planet, should reduce energy costs significantly over time.

- **Rands Lane Burial Ground.**

The Parish Council continues to be responsible for the management of the Burial Ground on Rands Lane. Last year's opening and closing issues have been remedied by the appointment of an efficient new gatekeeper. The new digital system for Burial Ground record keeping has been embedded.

- **Mercel Avenue Allotments.**

The provision of eight new allotments arising from planning gain on the Albemarle homes development came onstream earlier in the year.

- **Briar Road and Cowhouse Lane green spaces.**

These spaces continue to be overseen by the Parish Council. Arrangements are underway to extend the lease held by the Scouts on the Cow House Lane site. An agreement has been reached to extend the land currently leased by the Scouts to enable them to expand their provision for our children and young people.

6. Communication.

The Parish Council are keen to communicate effectively with Parishioners. The Council can be contacted by email, telephone, post and via the Messenger App. The Parish Council has a successful social media strategy. A large amount of Parish and Community based information is posted on the Parish Council Facebook page which is shared across various local social media sites. The FB page currently has 2.8 thousand followers with a reach of 65,247 views across the last four weeks. During the Christmas 2024 period our FB reach hit 360,000 views. Although the use of social media can be challenging at times, it is a highly effective way of getting information out into the community. The Parish Council has extended the number of notice boards across the village for those who do not access social media. The information carried on the Parish Council Facebook posts is also displayed on the Notice Boards.

7. The Parish Precept.

Last year, after detailed deliberation, the Parish Council raised the Parish precept by 14.71%. This was done to address the significant extra stresses of the costs of energy and running the building and due to the urgent remedial work that the building required. This year the Precept was kept at the 2024/25 rate. i.e. it had a 0% increase for the 2025/26 financial year. The overall amount of precept coming in this year will reduce despite extra properties coming onstream in the village. This is due to recalculation of the Precept, by the City Council taking into account the percentage of Parishioners in receipt of benefits. The Precept for the 2025/26 period is £318,708.

8. Parish Council vacancies.

Following the recent Election processes the Parish Council currently has three vacancies open to co-option. These have been advertised with a deadline on June 24th. Applications will be considered at the July Parish Council meeting.

9. Future Projects.

Work began last July on the Parish Council's "Heart of the Village" project. This huge initiative will lead to the creation of one of the most extensive and finest children's play parks in the country.

The Strategic Planning Group, which consisted of Parish Councillors and Welfare site stakeholders, has worked long and hard on this complex project.

A detailed village wide consultation took place. The chosen contractor is the HAGS company, one of the market leaders in this field.

Special attention has been paid to accessibility for children with various disabilities including physical disability and neurodiversity.

Contracts have been signed, and preparatory work has begun. We are hoping for completion by the early autumn.

This project will provide a safe, exciting, and stimulating space for our children for several generations to come.

10. Conclusion.

In conclusion, once gain many thanks to Parish Councillors our staff team, partners, associates and, of course Parishioners for all their work and support over the last year.

I would especially like to thank our Parish Clerk, Sarah Youngman, she is an excellent Clerk and keeps everyone organised.

Armthorpe Parish Council is a hardworking and forward-thinking organisation. Its primary purpose is to serve its Parishioners and to enhance the life of the village. We will continue to try our absolute best to make Armthorpe the best possible place to live, work and grow old.

We will be innovative but realistic, and we will be positive in our actions.

We will promote, take pride in, and celebrate the many good things about our community.

We will honour our past and we will aspire for the future.

Never ever forget.

Armthorpe is a great Village!

Chris Brodhurst-Brown.

Armthorpe Parish Council Chair.

May 2025.