

Armthorpe Parish Council Parish Meeting Tuesday 4th April 2023.
Annual Report 2022-2023

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, standard information relating to the Parish Council which does not alter significantly from year to year is shown in an appendix attached to the report.

I would like to begin by thanking Parish Councillors, the Parish Council Staff Team and all our partners and associates for their hard work and support over the last year.

As predicted in my last report this year has been a year of immense change, with most of our previous staff team retiring. We have recruited a new Clerk, Sarah Youngman, and a new Deputy Clerk Bridgette Perks, we have also undergone recruitment to a range of other posts including Caretaking, Bar Management and Cleaning. We have also recently allocated the Ground Maintenance contract to D S A Gardening following a tendering process.

I would like to thank Sarah and Bridgette for their hard work and leadership over the last year. They have taken on new roles in a new setting and have faced many challenges which they have met with stoicism and efficiency. I believe that we are now in a strong position in terms of Parish Council staffing. This gives us a firm foundation upon which to build solid future provision.

Over the last year we have experienced a range of issues in relation to the Community Centre building. Whilst it is a fine building, which has worn well and does not feel dated, many aspects of its infrastructure have required attention. There have been issues with water ingress, electrical faults and various structural difficulties. Most of these problems have been resolved. This has not been a quick or easy process and it has not been cheap.

The overall cost has been in the region of £25,000.

However, the building is now in a sound condition and the Clerk has instigated an ongoing inspection and maintenance regime.

At our Parish Meeting, last April, I stated the Parish Council's intention to working to increase community engagement and involvement in its activities. I believe that we have made inroads into these objectives. We have organised a

wide range of activities and events and have also encouraged and enabled community groups to provide activities of their own.

Here is a list, by no means exhaustive, of the kinds of initiatives the PC has undertaken over the last year.

The Queen's Jubilee.

The Parish Council facilitated a full programme of events for the Jubilee. The Senior Citizen's Tea and Social was enjoyed by two hundred residents. The Jubilee Social and Beacon lighting event was held at the Community Centre and in the Miners Memorial Garden and was part of the National activity on the day. The Queen's Jubilee Festival Gala a free to enter event was immensely popular. It was organised in partnership with the wonderful staff at Shaw Wood Academy and was very successful. 6,000 people attended and the feedback was very positive.

There was also a Teddy Bears picnic, organised by Armthorpe Community Library and supported by the Parish Council, which was enjoyed by many of our younger residents at the Community Centre.

The Digital Tree at Rose House was also lit in purple for the Jubilee period. Overall, this was a very successful and well received Jubilee Weekend.

Senior Citizens trip to Bridlington

This annual event took place in early July. A coach full of winners of the Senior Citizens tea raffle were treated to a lovely day out at the seaside followed by a fish and chip tea back at the Community Centre.

Sports and Recreation activities

The Parish Council's Sports and Recreation Officer, Carl Hughes, has continued to deliver a wide range of opportunities for Armthorpe residents. Carl works in the community and in schools and organises a range of activities including inter school sports competitions. Carl also offers support with many of the initiatives that the Parish Council undertakes.

During this last year Carl has focused upon increasing facilities for children and young people including school holiday provision across all the school holidays, the development of youth clubs and a family drop in provision including gaming and movie nights. These projects have been very well received and Carl will continue to build upon them in the coming year.

In addition, Carl has provided opportunities for people who are struggling with the cost of living and isolation to come into the community centre and to enjoy some time there.

The death of her Majesty the Queen.

In September, the Parish Council provided community leadership in terms of the protocols surrounding the death of the Queen. We made sure that things were done as they should be including the Proclamation, the Book of Remembrance, and the Moment of Reflection Ceremony.

Again, the Digital Tree was lit in purple for this much sadder occasion.

Street Food event

This event was held at the beginning of October and was part of the Parish Council's efforts to increase events for families. Once again Shaw Wood Academy did much of the organisational heavy lifting for this. It was held in and around the Community Centre

The event, which ran from 3pm until 9pm attracted approximately 1500 visitors during the day.

Many of the food providers sold out. It was such a well-received event that two more are being arranged over the coming summer.

Hallowe'en Party

This sold-out children's event was held at the Community Centre at the end of October, there were prizes for the best fancy dress, spooky games, a disco and Hallowe'en food.

Armthorpe Fireworks display.

This ever-popular event was held at Briar Road field on November 4th.

Residents were entertained with a Fair, an inflatables and crafts marquee and a full professionally delivered Fireworks display. I think it is fair to say that the display is as good as any in Doncaster. Approximately three thousand people were in attendance.

Remembrance Sunday

In November the Parish Council arranged and facilitated this important Village event. The Service was held at the Community Centre which, it is felt, provides better access for the public. The procession to the War Memorial was solemn and impressive and many Villagers lined the route. I always feel that this day is one of our proudest days as a Village.

Christmas.

Christmas was an incredibly hectic time for the PC.

The Christmas lighting scheme was lit during the last week in November.

Following the consultation, back in January 2022, additions were made to the

existing scheme. These included additional tree lighting on Doncaster Road and Hatfield Lane and some additional column lighting. There were still some sparse areas, as the lamp post infrastructure refresh was still awaiting completion and there were insurmountable technical difficulties with a stand of trees on Nutwell Lane. However, the display was almost universally well received and brought much seasonal joy to residents.

Late November saw the Christmas Fair and Light Switch on at the Community Centre This was a packed event, graced by many community groups and charities raising money.

Santa came to visit and met with 300 children and family members. All local Schools nominated their “hero” children who joined together to perform the official light Switch On.

Overall, a very successful event.

The annual Senior Citizens Christmas tea was held in early December with 200 older residents enjoying a Christmas meal, entertainment and a giant raffle with prizes including tickets to the 2023 Bridlington Trip.

The Parish Council also organised two other, sell out, events, the Children’s Christmas Party and the Christmas Pantomime. Both events were in high demand and were well received and reflected the PCs desire to increase its family-based events.

It is also important to remember that the Community Centre provides ongoing programmes of activity across the whole of the year, some are organised by the Parish Council, for example the Youth Clubs, family activities, dancing, the new Book Exchange and activities for older residents.

In addition, there are many services and groups who let space and offer a wide range of activities to residents.

The Parish Council also supports a range of groups by providing free usage and, in some cases, financial support. These are organisations which provide valuable services to our locality.

Examples are:

- Armthorpe Food Support. This volunteer organisation provides food, household goods, toiletries, nappies, and pet food for Armthorpe Families who do not have enough money to feed themselves properly.

It is run by Armthorpe residents and is a lifeline to many.

- Armthorpe Community Tea and Coffee shop. Again, run by volunteers, it opens for 3 mornings a week and provides valuable social space for our residents. It is warm and welcoming, good value for money and a terrific fund raiser for Charity.
It is a regular contributor to Firefly and other groups and is a credit to its organisers and volunteers.
- A recent addition is Andy's Man Club. When we spotted that AMC were seeking accommodation, we contacted them to discuss locating at the Community Centre.
Their presence in the Village is a coup. It provides well respected, cutting edge, community-based support for men. It provides a safe and welcoming space for men of all ages to come together and have a good talk about issues affecting them.

We also offer support to Dennis Nowell and the Miners Memorial Garden and are involved in the organisation of the various events that are held there.

- The Parish Council has continued to facilitate monthly Police and Community Engagement meetings at the Community Centre on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

The Parish Council also employs our Community Clean-up Champion who, in addition to keeping our main thoroughfares clean, organises events and projects including this year's very successful Great British Spring Clean.

The Acorn Hub

After many months of trying to navigate the upper bureaucracy of South Yorkshire Police and Doncaster City Council the Acorn Hub was opened in late February.

This newly refurbished Hub is a base for SYP and DCS employees who serve Armthorpe.

This means that staff do not have to travel from Thorne to work or attend appointments in Armthorpe. The Parish Council have facilitated this project to improve services for residents. I think it is fair to say that we are currently in the settling in stage particularly in terms of the

manning of the building. We are in constant dialogue with the providers and are seeing improvements now.

For example, SYP have given an undertaking to hold drop ins for public access and have published a number that residents can call to arrange to meet an officer at the Hub.

Communication

In last year's report the Parish Council made an undertaking to improve the way it communicates with Parishioners, making sure that residents know what is happening and can contact us if they wish to.

There has been a substantial improvement in our Social Media activity with regular updates and sharing across all local sites. The reach of posts varies between approximately 2 and 5 thousand depending upon the level of interest. The Parish Council and Community Centre Facebook page has developed to 1.8 thousand followers and has a 5 out of 5 rating currently. Contact information is also pinned to this page and there are contact links on the APC webpage.

However, it is recognised that some residents do not use social media, therefore we are trying to provide better and more notice boards to share information more effectively. We are in the process of erecting 2 new notice boards, one on Doncaster Road adjacent to the Spar and one in the seating area in front of the Aldi on Church Street. There are some bureaucratic challenges with this, but we are working through them, and they should be in place soon.

We have placed a new bench on the open space next to the Scout Hut on Cow House Lane and are working toward placing an additional bench on Nutwell lane.

We are in the process of acquiring a "letters to heaven" post box to be located at the Burial Ground.

In conclusion, I hope that Parishioners will agree that the Parish Council has worked hard on behalf of the village. Our intention is to serve, develop and enrich our community. The community which we are all part of and we all want the best for.

I know that Parish Councillors and staff alike do their utmost to look after our Village.

During the coming year we will work to build upon our achievements so far. We know that Armthorpe has tremendous community spirit and we want to help that to grow.

Please come along to Parish Council meetings, please feel free to get in touch and share your ideas. Join in, help us to make Armthorpe an even better place to live.

Armthorpe is a great Village!

ARMTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Appendix

The Council and its Members

The Council is a local authority by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972. It comprises fifteen Members. Twelve Members of the Council were elected in 2021 and the remaining were co-opted to the Office of Councillor, there are currently two vacancies which will be filled by co-option shortly. All Members will automatically retire from office in May 2025, 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.

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

Councillor Andy Barrington	01302 830543
Councillor Nigel Berry	01302 830543
Councillor Christine Brodhurst-Brown	01302 834069
Councillor Aimee Dickson	07447 984221
Councillor Colin Head	01302 830543
Councillor Christine Joseph Jay	01302 830543
Councillor Sue Knowles	07784 473629
Councillor Tim Needham	07369 239829
Councillor Emma North	01302 830543
Councillor Tracey Nowell	01302 830543
Councillor Vicki Revell	01302 830543
Councillor Frank Tyas	01302 830543
Councillor Michael Walton	01302 830543

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 was Councillor Christine Brodhurst-Brown. The Vice-Chairman was Councillor Lynne Donald who retired in January 2023 and was succeeded by Christine Joseph Jay the following month.

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. Additionally, she 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 Deputy Clerk assists, amongst other things, the administrative tasks of the Council. Arrangements have been made for a part time Administration Officer to join the team in April 2023.

The Council has appointed other employees in various capacities as follows:-

- a full-time Sports and Recreation Officer
- a full-time Site Manager, whose main function is day-to-day responsibility for managing the Community Centre
- two Relief Assistant Site Managers and one Casual Support Assistant, one of whom is also responsible for ensuring the burial ground at Rands Lane is kept in a tidy condition.
- two part time Cleaners.
- two part-time Bar Managers who are jointly responsible for operating the Community Centre Bar and appointing part-time casual bar staff.

- three part time gatekeepers, one for the Cow House Lane playing field, one for the Briar Road playing field and one for the burial ground at Rands Lane.
- a part-time Community Clean Up Champion.
- a pool of employees who work part-time as and when required as bar staff at the Community Centre.

The Council also employs the services of an independent contractor and City of Doncaster Council 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 a Community Centre and The Acorn Hub. It also owns additional land in the Welfare Park, which it acquired to build a sports centre or for some other community use.

A number of events are also arranged or co-ordinated by the Council during each year, for example, the annual village fireworks display, Remembrance Day Parade, Christmas Market and the annual Christmas tea and social for elderly residents, sports and recreation activities, etc.

Meetings and Business

The Council conducts its business at various meetings, which it holds throughout each year. These 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.

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 meets eleven times a year on the third Tuesday in each month. It has thirteen Members. The Council has delegated to this Committee all its statutory powers and duties relating to the provision of entertainments and the operation of the 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, the Annual Christmas Tea and Social, etc. and it approves the activities of the Sports and Recreation Officer. 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 Finance Committee meets three times a year on the fourth Tuesday of the month. It has 10 Members. 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.

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 five 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. Casual bar staff are appointed by the Bar Managers 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.

The Sports and Recreation Sub Committee and Events Sub Committee have been established to support the Community Centre and General Purpose committee due to an increase in events and activities.

Council Services and Activities

1 Allotments

The Council has one allotment site at Mercel Avenue, containing thirty allotment gardens, which is leased from a local developer. The lease was granted for 42 years on 29 September 1979 and this expired by operation of law in 2021. This developer has indicated that it will transfer the freehold of the land to the Council (free of charge) and the lease will, therefore, merge with the freehold title. The developer has also agreed to transfer the freehold title of an area of land adjacent to the existing allotment site, to enable the Council to provide additional allotment gardens for residents.

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 approximately twenty-five interments each year and 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 rate that is greater than the significantly higher charges imposed by CDC for its cemeteries. Charging the latter rate is a clear disincentive to non-residents.

3 Armthorpe Community Centre

The Council owns and operates the Community Centre, which is situated in the Welfare Park, Church Street. It was purpose built by the Council and paid for from

both its own funds and a significant grant from the European Economic Community. It is currently valued for insurance purposes at £ £4,232,610. 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. It is also hired out for children's parties, wedding receptions, engagement parties and other celebratory events.

4 Miscellaneous Activities

In addition to the activities/events referred to earlier in the main body of the Chairman's report 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 community assets.

The Council, as always, has made numerous representations to CDC 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, however, have not proved productive, much to the disappointment of the Parish Council.

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

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 City of Doncaster Council (CDC) to pay a specified sum. CDC collects the amount due from the Council taxpayers of Armthorpe and passes 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.

For the financial year 2022-23, the Parish Council precepted the sum of £248,220. 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.

The balance sheet from the Council's Accounts for the financial year commencing 1st April 2022 and ending 31st March 2023 will, when completed, be attached as an Appendix to this report. The balance sheet for the previous financial year 2021/22 is attached.

Armthorpe Parish Council

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2022

2020-21		2021-22	
£		£	£
CURRENT ASSETS			
1,209	Stocks	1,694	
1,978	VAT Debtor	4,237	
7,190	Debtors	10,414	
2,042	Payments in Advance & Accrued Income	582	
137,555	Cash at Bank	184,129	
132	Cash in Hand	180	
1,000	Community Centre Bar Float	1,000	
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151,106	TOTAL ASSETS		202,236
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
911	Credit Card	2,271	
2,530	Creditors	4,576	
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3,441	TOTAL LIABILITIES		6,847
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147,665	NET ASSETS		195,389
REPRESENTED BY:-			
233,670	General Reserve at 1 April 2021		147,665
- 86,005	Add: Net Income/-Expenditure		47,724
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147,665	TOTAL RESERVES		195,389
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The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the Authority as at 31st March 2022 and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.