

Burton Agnes Parish Council

Chair's Annual Report

May 2017

1. Introduction

Before embarking on this report, I must emphasise that my comments are not intended to be a historical account of events, but rather my personal reflections on the year which may not represent the views of the Parish Council as a whole.

The Parish Council has been involved in a number of issues over the last 12 months. As in previous years (and, I am assured, in common with many if not most, Parish Councils in the East Riding) we have done so in something of a bubble with little or no interest being shown by residents of the Parish - until something goes wrong that is! We continue to operate without a member to represent Gransmoor, although informal arrangements remain in place for the management of the Gransmoor notice board. It goes without saying that we would very much welcome a volunteer from Gransmoor to serve on the Parish Council and represent the interests of the village more directly than we are currently able to.

On the positive side, we have been successful in recruiting a new Parish Clerk, Miss Jennifer Hobson, to administer our activities and keep us on the legal straight and narrow. We share her services with Rudston Parish Council which has led to economies of scale and offers very good value for money to the residents of the Parish and excellent support for me and the other members of the Council.

2. Planning

East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) planning department continues to use Parish Councils point of contact in the planning application process and this is set to continue. This year we have considered, and have been happy to support about a dozen applications both residential, mostly for extensions to properties, and from businesses.

We have offered detailed comments to ERYC on their 2017 revision of the 'Statement of Community Involvement' which describes how they intend to consult with and involve communities when it comes to the planning system and proposals for development. We have expressed strong reservations about the decision, promulgated, without consultation, in 'Your East Riding', to cease notifying neighbouring properties individually about planning applications which could affect them. We have also expressed our concern that this decision was made and promulgated in advance of the close of consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement and did not feature in that document. We have, further, expressed reservations about the fitness for purpose of the proposed move to 'notify' residents by relying on notices attached to lamp posts, gate posts and boundary hedges/fences in the vicinity of the proposed development.

Notwithstanding the comments above, the Parish Council has continued to enjoy a very constructive and positive relationship with Planning Officers, who have demonstrably taken account of the views we have put forward on individual applications over the last year.

3. Anaerobic digester

The Parish Council has continued to represent local residents on the Liaison Group, comprising representatives from the Planning Department, the Developer (Burton Agnes Renewables) and the Regulators for the building and commissioning of the Anaerobic Digester on Burton Agnes

Estate property. Burton Agnes Renewables organised a visit to the facility for residents. Those who attended found it interesting and useful and it is hoped that more will take up the invitation to a visit to take place later in the year.

4. Traffic issues

In concert with Burton Agnes School, the Parish Council has been successful in securing from ERYC agreement to install school warning signs on the A614 in an attempt to deter motorists from exceeding the 30mph speed limit through the village. This has been an ongoing problem for a number of years and there have been some 'near misses'. The Parish Council is considering the possibility of commissioning vehicle activated speed warnings to be installed on the approach to the Rudston Road by the village pond. This would have to be paid for by the Parish Council and, at some £4.5K each is well beyond its means. We are considering sources of finance for which we could apply to fund this.

The Parish Council has had reports of a number of incidences of inconsiderate parking on pavements in the village. We have taken the issue up with the Police who, despite initially informing us that it did not fall within their remit, agreed to follow up on the reports. We note that this is still an intermittent ongoing issue and would ask residents, please, to refrain from blocking footpaths with cars.

5. Litter Bins and Commemorative Tree

Following a donation from the North Wolds Lions Club, we have installed litter bins at the bus stop in Burton Agnes and the lay-by on the A614 just outside Thornholme. The cost was covered from the donation topped up with funds from the Lissett Wind Farm Fund. The bins are regularly emptied by ERYC. In the case of the Thornholme bin, there has been a noticeable reduction in the amount of litter left in the lay-by, although it appears there are still some for whom a short walk to the bin is too much trouble.

The residents of Gransmoor elected use their portion of the Lions Club grant to plant a commemorative tree in the village.

6. Other Consultations

The Parish Council has, in addition to the planning consultation referred to above, responded to consultations on the Mineral Plan, the review of Landscape Characteristic classification (this has a potentially strong impact on the sort of development which could be approved in our neighbourhoods and on the Wolds more generally) and the NHS proposals on emergency care facilities. In the latter we, as did ERYC, raised concerns about the proposals to concentrate emergency care in fewer locations and the speed with which the change was planned. We expressed our view that none of the options being consulted appeared to provide a satisfactory service to residents. The concerns raised by ERYC and ourselves, among others appeared to have been disregarded and the consultation resulted in the NHS preferred option being adopted. ERYC has requested the referral of the outcome of the consultation to the Secretary of State on the grounds that the consultation was flawed and that the resulting proposals do not meet the interests of the residents in the East Riding.

7. Play Park

We have re-instated the programme of inspections for the Burton Agnes Play Park which had lapsed. Thanks are due to the Treasurer who picked up, on a trawl through previous years' accounts, that we were no longer being billed for these by ERYC. The fact that ERYC were no longer carrying these inspections out did not appear to have been relayed to the Parish Council at the time, despite ERYC having circulated affected Clerks. A new annual programme has now been agreed. The first of these inspections has been undertaken and action is being taken with respect

to the observations made in the report. I would observe that the Play Park consumes far and away the lion's share of the Parish Precept. The costs of renting the field from ERYC and keeping it cut during the summer months, plus the costs of inspections amount to well over £800, more than double the amount spent by the Parish Council on any other single recurring item. To this needs to be added the costs of any maintenance identified by the inspections. Whilst supporting the principle of encouraging physical activity and providing a focal point for parents and their children, the level of use of the facility does need to justify the cost and we should keep this under review.

8. Youth Club

A long held wish by the Parish Council to introduce some facilities for our younger residents came to fruition this year with the establishment of a Youth Club at the Sports Club. The Club meets on a Friday evening. It has started slowly, but it is hoped that more youngsters will come along to join their friends. Thanks are due to Clive Neale and Jean Boynton for getting this off the ground.

9. Donations

Twilight Bus

The Parish Council has continued to support the Driffield School Twilight Bus service which is well used by local students and enables them to attend after school activities and be sure of being able to get home afterwards.

War Memorial

We have continued to make a small donation towards the upkeep of the War Memorial in Burton Agnes.

Churchyard Maintenance

There has been an ongoing (2 years+) correspondence with the representative of the Treasurer of the Church Committee in order to elicit information relating to the demand received for a very large sum in terms of the Parish budget (and more than double the highest paid by other Parish Councils) for maintenance of the churchyard and cemetery. This is not a statutory duty of the Parish Council and before agreeing to spending residents' money on this we considered that we needed to understand the basis on which we were being invoiced and what the money covered.

At a very helpful meeting with Rev Anderson and members of the Church Committee it emerged that when the contribution was first requested some years back, it had been requested as a donation and for a much lower sum. It appeared to have morphed into an invoiced demand (and more than doubled in size) in the interim. It was agreed that it was not appropriate to issue invoices. The Church Committee would investigate what had gone wrong and would approach the Parish Council with a more appropriate request for support more in line with the level of support given by other Parishes for this activity.

10. Parish Finances

Again, the Parish Council, alone among the constituent elements of the Council Tax raised from residents, has not raised its Precept for 2017/18. This has now remained at a constant level for over 4 years.

The Parish finances remain stable and viable for which we thank the vigilance of the Treasurer. As mentioned above, we have entered into an agreement with Rudston Parish Council to share a Clerk. This has resulted in a saving to the Parish as clearly a lot of the work required by both Parish Councils overlaps. Once audited, the Parish accounts will be posted on the Parish website.

11. Thanks

Without wishing to do a Gwynneth Paltrow, I should like to thank all the very patient officers at ERYC whom I have bothered over the past year. Without exception they have readily answered questions and offered considerable help. As always I must thank our Ward Councillors, particularly Councillor Evison without whose readiness to go well beyond the call of duty when it comes to giving advice and assistance I would have torn far more of my hair out by now.

Sue Burt
Chair
Burton Agnes Parish Council
May 2017