

Burton Agnes Parish Council

Chair's Annual Report

1. Introduction

As in previous years, I will caveat this report to say that my comments are not intended to be a historical account of events, but rather my personal reflections on the year.

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. The Parish Council is carrying 2 further vacancies which have elicited no interest from residents.

2. Cluster Meetings

At the instigation of our Ward Councillors a series of Cluster meetings have been established to enable groups of Parishes with similar interests and issues to raise their concerns directly with ERYC officers and representatives of the Police. Two have taken place to date and addressed concerns over Planning, Anti Social behaviour and traffic issues. These have revealed that all Parishes share similar concerns and have resulted in some positive outcomes. For example, raising the issue of the sinking drain covers on the A614 led to a meeting with the responsible officer and a more durable solution being implemented.

3. 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 a number of applications both residential, mostly for extensions to properties, and from businesses.

The only outstanding issue on the planning front is that of the change of use of the Blue Bell. The pub closed to the public in 2017, removing an amenity from residents. It has subsequently morphed into a holiday let business which has resulted in a number of complaints from neighbouring residents about late night noise and inconsiderate behaviour. The Parish Council is in contact with ERYC who are considering whether this change of use requires planning permission.

4 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. There were complaints made about inconsiderate behaviour by Contractors during the rye harvest and the volume of tractor traffic using the A614 during the rye harvest. Both were addressed by Burton Agnes Renewables. There have been no other issues with the site.

5. Traffic issues

In common with a number of Parishes, we continue to experience problems with speeding through the villages. We have raised that, and the issue of persistent inconsiderate parking on pavements in the village, with both the ERYC and the Police. The topic was raised at a Cluster meeting of Parish Councils where the problem of the lack of clarity over where responsibility lay for traffic and parking issues was also raised.

6. Play Park

The Play Park inspection reported last year revealed maintenance problems with some items of equipment. To repair and refurbish all items of equipment would have cost in excess of £9000, a sum which, at nearly 3 times the annual precept raised from residents, was unaffordable. It was also not possible to seek grant funding for maintenance. The Parish Council reluctantly decided, in the interests of safety, to remove a number of items from the Play Park. The swings were, however, fully refurbished at a cost of over £1200. I would repeat my observation that the Play Park consumes far and away the lion's share of the Parish Precept. The 'normal' 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.

In the interests of securing the best possible value for money for residents, the Parish Council invited tenders for the cutting of the play park in December. The contract was advertised on the Parish website, displayed at the service station in Thornholme which is used by a number of local contractors, and individual letters were sent out to local contractors who had previously expressed interest in undertaking the work. The response was disappointing. Only one tender was received which was in excess of the sum quoted by ERYC, and therefore rejected.

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 very high cost and we should keep this under review.

7. Defibrillator

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council has funded a community defibrillator to be located at the EE-Why Service Station in Thornholme. I should like to thank Martin Boyes for his kind agreement to allow us to mount the case on the Service Station wall and take a feed from his electricity supply for the equipment. Consideration was given to installing a defibrillator in Burton Agnes, and for a time it looked as if the School railings would be a suitable location. However, having got all the ducks in a row with respect to the necessary consents to do this, plans were scuppered when the supplier deemed the railings unsuitable for the weight of the defibrillator case. This coupled with the inconvenience of the location for those expressing a willingness to assist with the monitoring of the equipment led us to abandon the project for Burton Agnes until a sustainable location is identified.

8. Grit Bins

There has been a problem this Winter with getting the grit bins in the Parish filled. On 1 December 2017 a public spirited resident reported to ERYC that the bins were empty and requested a refill. Burton Agnes School reiterated the request on 12 December. When nothing had happened by 18 December the Parish Council were approached and a further request made - with a similar lack of response. The reason given in a response received on 9 January to my e-mail dated 28 December to the relevant Director was that the limited staffing and difficult weather leaving up to the Christmas break meant that the refilling schedule had been disrupted. With the greatest respect to the Director concerned, I would suggest that a little forward planning could have avoided the issue. We all understand that ERYC cannot possibly undertake the gritting of all the roads in the County. However it would seem incumbent on them to facilitate public spirited residents who are prepared to put themselves out to assist their communities. A delay of well over a month from initial request to filling the bins is, by any standard, unacceptable. A similar situation developed in March. The bins were reported empty on 28 February and remained empty until the 3rd week in March.

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

A donation was made in 2017 towards the upkeep of the Churchyard and Cemetery.

10. Parish Finances

For the first time in a number of years, it has been necessary to increase the sum raised from Residents via the Parish Precept. This has been necessary because of a unilateral decision by ERYC to discontinue paying Burton Agnes School for the use of its facilities for Parish Council meetings. The Parish Council decided to move our meetings to the Sports Club which would also support a village amenity.

The Parish finances remain stable and viable for which we thank the vigilance of the Treasurer. Once audited, the Parish accounts will be posted on the Parish website.

11. Thanks

As always I am grateful to our Ward Councillors for the efforts they put in on our behalf.

Sue Burt
Chair
Burton Agnes Parish Council
April 2018