

WETHERBY TOWN COUNCIL

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ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

held in the Micklethwaite Room
Wetherby Town Hall
at 7.30 pm on Thursday 29th May 2014



This meeting is an opportunity for local residents to meet their councillors and to ask questions about any issues that might be affecting them and to get information about what is happening in the town

The Mayor will provide a review of the work of the Town Council during the last 12 months and provide information on plans for the next 12 months.

MEMBERS OF WETHERBY TOWN COUNCIL

North Ward

Cllr Ron Aitken

Cllr Norma Harrington

Cllr Edna Hilditch

Cllr Neil O'Byrne

Cllr John Procter

West Ward

Cllr Julie Brady

Cllr Kazia Knight

Cllr Galan Moss

Cllr John Wardley

Cllr Gerald Wilkinson

East Ward

Cllr Cindy Bentley

Cllr Harry Chapman (Mayor)

Cllr Alan Lamb

Cllr Derek Nicholson

Cllr John Trower (Deputy Mayor)



MAYOR OF WETHERBY

At the Town Council Meeting earlier in the month, the two year term of office for Cllr Alan Lamb in his role as Mayor of Wetherby came to an end and Cllr Harry Chapman was duly elected.

Alan's final event was the Annual Civic Service which, this year, was all about the volunteers in the community. This Service was an opportunity for many of these unsung Wetherby folk to be congratulated for the work they do in the community.

Rev Steve Barlow from the Wetherby Methodist Church who conducted the service, was able to name well over 30 volunteering groups very easily so the actual number we have in the town is anyone's guess.

Members of the congregation raised a superb £315.94 for Alan's Mayoral Charity which was Martin House Hospice.

Cllr Harry Chapman will ensure that the tradition of a Civic Service will continue during his time as Mayor and his chosen Charity is Guide Dogs for the Blind.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The last twelve months have seen a dedicated group (yes, volunteers), working on a Neighbourhood Plan for Wetherby.

An Act of Parliament, called the Localisation Bill 2011, covered, amongst other things, the opportunity for Market Towns like ours, to produce a plan to cover the next 15 to 20 years of planning for the Town which, if accepted, would put more decision making back in Wetherby's hands. This will include housing and other developments.

There are rules for how the plan is produced and what it can cover and it has to involve the people of the town, not just the Town Council. When completed it will be presented to all the people of Wetherby who are then given an opportunity to vote on it. If we get a YES vote which is over 51% then the plan can go forward to the next stage which involves an Independent Inspector who, as part of the role, will ensure that the correct procedure has taken place. If the Inspector passes the plan then it is then passed to Leeds Council for it to be implemented.

The Town Council set the machinery in motion for a Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan over a year ago, when we had drop in sessions at the Town Hall. Residents that attended were given an explanation of what the plan was all about and why we needed to produce it. From an excellent turn out, we have many ideas and suggestions that have been formulated.

The next step was to set up a "Steering Committee" of around 15 people to set the plan in motion and this was filled with volunteers from the community and some Town Councillors.

Since the formation of the steering group, a lot of meetings and a lot of work has been done which included a questionnaire to all the houses in Wetherby. This was put together so that the Steering Group could ensure a plan was produced that covered the wishes of the people. A high return of the completed questionnaires meant that we had a good base to work from and that the plan is based on the people of Wetherby's wishes.

The next step was to set up groups to look at various aspects that had come out of the questionnaire. These were categorised as:-

Health, Wellbeing and Leisure, Education, Transport and Housing,
Shopping and Working

There are 9 stages to the plan and we have completed four and are advised by the Leeds experts that what we have done so far is excellent. So that is a good start!

We are hoping to have the plan fully completed so that, at the same time as the Local Elections in May 2015, the Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan can be put to a ballot for the people of Wetherby. Following this we would expect the plan to be implemented by Leeds.

I should say at this point that we have also gone through a similar process to the above to involve the Business Community and to ensure their needs for the future are also taken into consideration.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award

This was the second year of the annual Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award and once again we heard about some wonderful young people who make an outstanding contribution in the community.

In the eyes of everyone, they were all winners but we had to choose one which was an extremely hard decision and took the panel longer than they had anticipated.

Matty Collinson was the person awarded the honour in December 2014. He is certainly a role model for other young people in the town and he has earned their respect by his involvement with the local youth club where he is a Youth Leader. His name has been added to the 'Scroll of Honour' in the Bramham Room in Wetherby Town Hall.

We invited three young people from the Child Friendly Young Reporters Group to report on the evenings activities and they did a superb job with their articles being published in the Town Council Newsletter.

We will, in the autumn, once again be seeking nominations for this award, so when you see a young person in the community doing something amazing, please do put their names forward as we are more than happy to accept nominations throughout the year.

PLANNING

Last year we reported that Morrisons had been granted approval for their expansion scheme which has yet to commence. For the moment, the only

changes to the store have been the internal layout and the much welcomed hanging baskets.

The development of the Hallfield Lane Car Park will form part of the Wetherby Parking strategy and we are expecting an announcement about this in the foreseeable future.

Aldi have put in an application for a store on Deighton Road and the developers have been asked to make some changes to their original plans. The final decision has yet to be taken by the Planning Authority.

The housing development at the top of Spofforth Hill has raised huge concerns with residents in this area and meetings have taken place in order that their points are taken into account by the Planning Authority.

It has to be remembered that the Town Council is a statutory consultee and will give a collective view on a Planning Application, but it is Leeds City Council as the Planning Authority who is the decision maker.

ROADS AND GENERAL HIGHWAY POINTS

This year we are delighted to report on a number of achievements and improvements.

The additional crossing on Crossley Street is now in place and this is certainly appreciated by those who use the bridleways to come into town.

Yellow 'no parking signs' outside the local schools are still being ignored by drivers and the local police do go around the schools, on a rota basis, at start and finish times to monitor the situation. However, the 10mph zones do help as vehicles are able to come to a stop quicker.

The HGV ban on Deighton Road will be in place very shortly and some of the problems with HGV Parking on Sandbeck Lane have been addressed with yellow lines in place.

Motorway Brown Sign

It will be back in place this year as the funding for this has been found.

Motorists will once again be reminded that the Historical Town of Wetherby is just off the A1(M) and the sign will hopefully bring visitors to the town.

PARKING

Parking opportunities in Wetherby are still a problem and many believe that motorists park all day and then car share into Leeds or Harrogate.

Nothing has changed since last year. People still need more than two hours to dine out and shop and the town must be losing trade from visitors who simply cannot find anywhere to park.

The idea of having 'Permit Parking' is still being discussed with Leeds City Council and for the moment has not been ruled out.

WETHERBY IN BLOOM

I do hope that you have all noticed the new bespoke planter in the pedestrian area in front of the Town Hall which looks wonderful and another superb feature for the town. We have to thank a generous donation for this and, of course, the Wetherby in Bloom Team who organised the planting and the installation in the early hours of the morning.

The work the Wetherby in Bloom team do in the town is truly outstanding and, they are all volunteers! They are out from the early morning and you can find them watering all the wonderful flower tubs and hanging baskets when the rest of us are at home having our tea.

The winner of the Wetherby in Bloom licensed premises floral competition in 2013 was Wetherby Social Club. The diversity of planting ranging from flowers to fruit tree and baskets to vegetables was to be applauded and made it stand out from the other excellent entries. The Royal Oak came a close runner-up.

MARKET

The weekly Thursday Market continues to thrive and we have a waiting list of traders wanting to come on the market.

We do try to offer people a variety of goods and this is why we try not to have stalls with similar products.

The market brings residents and visitors into the town and it is lovely to see people just wandering and chatting. When you see any empty stall or space this might well be because the stall holder is on holiday or sick or perhaps, which happens occasionally, their vehicle has broken down. Many travel a fair distance to be on our market.

We have to remember that trading on this and other markets is the stallholders' livelihood and they will attend weather permitting. It is really just high winds and ice and snow which could cause the market to be cancelled, as health and safety for the traders and shoppers has to be a priority.

GREEN SPACE AREAS

Tree Work

Each year we tell you about trees that have had to be felled due to disease and this time there is a horse chestnut in Raby Park and one at Hudson Park. The one at Hudson Park we found had a wasps nest, so that had to be dealt with before we could fell the tree.

We have, as part of our management programme replaced the tree at Raby Park with a Hornbeam and we will have to make sure it is well watered during the summer months.

From the three trees felled at Sandringham Park we have left a number of the trunks for additional seating which have been placed around the field. We are just waiting for a volunteer or two, to cut a flat surface on the top as this will provide better seating.

The lime trees at Hudson Park are looking good and the bottom spars have been removed. It will still be a couple of years before we dare remove the cages as it would, after all this time, be very upsetting if these were vandalised. We constantly have to repair the cages, but better that than a branch being broken off!

Encampment on Town Council Land

Many of you will recall that we had unwanted visitors on the Mason Field site and that they left a huge amount of mess, not only on the field but also in the cemetery. The upset to local residents and people visiting the cemetery was totally understandable. What surprised us was that a skip left for the rubbish was filled by local residents before we had time to put the site rubbish in it!

We have taken measures to stop encampment on this field and also at Sandringham Park by putting boulders and barrier gates in place.

Sandringham Park

The Friends of Sandringham Park continue to work hard in ensuring that this area maintains its status as a Green Flag Park. Each year it becomes harder to maintain this award as you have to demonstrate improvements every time. This award recognises the hard work and dedication of all the parks volunteers who have helped create a place for all to enjoy.

We are still waiting for the legal department at Leeds City Council to sign off the contract for Sandringham Park as a Queen Elizabeth II Field in order that we can sign the deed protecting the site as a green open space.

There are again various events being planned for the park with the 'Big Lunch' on Sunday, 1st June and a community 'Have a Field Day' on Saturday, 16th August.

Nidd Approach

Improvements have been made to this park with impact matting being provided under the swings and slide.

We just wish that the game of throwing the swings over and over the top bar would stop as, until we unwind them, people are unable to use this play equipment.

Scaur Bank

We had a good winter in respect of Scaur Bank. No flooding and no bark washed away! We always top up the bark during the summer months and we have plans this year to paint the play equipment.

As you go up the steps, you will see that a new metal seat has been donated and recently installed. This gives a superb view over the river and across to the The Ings. There is still plenty of room for more seats and we always welcome sponsorship of these.

The park is used regularly by a 'keep fit group' and every year the Scouts hold their annual jamboree down there.

Wetherby Sports Association have put in a request for the use of the land for football on a Saturday and Sunday and the Town Council is currently considering this.

Garden of Rest

The Garden of Rest has looked particularly colourful during the winter months and it provides a peaceful sun trap for locals and visitors alike. It is a fitting place as a memorial to the youth of the town.

The shelter known by all of us as 'The Old Man's Parliament' provides a meeting place for a good natter on a Tuesday and Thursday morning and provides a box office for the Wetherby Festival. We are always pleased to see groups using this facility.

Jubilee Gardens

More and more people are becoming aware of this tranquil spot where you are just able to sit and relax and look at the reflections in the river.

The Jubilee Garden team of gardeners do a superb job and we never have to worry if it is looking its best, because it always is.

The Bath House is being opened to more and more visitors and it is upsetting to find that this is being subject to anti-social behaviour with windows smashed and doors being kicked in. There is nothing inside the building to pinch, so the mindless behaviour is beyond belief.

Skate Park

How disappointing to see the damage caused at the Skate Park, as this is used by more people than we realise.

I am able to advise that the work to repair and bolt down the equipment has been authorised and should start very shortly. At the same time, we will be painting the ramps with specialist paint.

WETHERBY PATHS PARTNERSHIP

As part of the Jubilee Celebrations, Wetherby Paths Partnership, in conjunction with the Footpaths Group, and, with help from Sustrans, have recently erected an interpretation board at the top of Scaur Bank. The map shows the many routes and linking footpaths on the Harland Way and will certainly be of great interest to local people and also be very helpful to visitors too.

Wetherby Scouts, as part of their Community Week activities cleaned, washed and painted the finger post signs on the Harland Way and they are doing the same again this year. The work of these young people certainly made a difference to the signs and the scouts are truly a credit to their parents.

TWIN TOWN – PRIVAS

Wetherby Twinning Association have again been busy with a party of over 23 young people coming on an exchange visit.

A party from the Twinning Association will be visiting Privas this summer and they are certainly looking forward to the trip, with many staying with host families.

CEMETERY

The new woodland area at the very bottom of the cemetery is starting to get established with the spring flowers that have been planted over the last two years. The two donated trees are now well established too.

Work to the roof of the two Chapel buildings is currently being undertaken as the workshop roof has had no maintenance work carried out for as long as anyone can remember.

The beautiful new stained glass window in the Chapel (Church on the Corner) has been donated by Pauline and David Holland in celebration of their 50th anniversary of ringing the bells at St James Church. They donated the window as a gesture of appreciation to the people of Wetherby and St James' for the love and friendship that they have received over the years, and for the benefit of the town itself.

PEACE GARDEN

This is a newly created area that the town and in turn Wetherby in Bloom are now cultivating. This garden is at the bottom of Caxton Street and Wetherby in Bloom have provided all the plants and shrubs and have already transformed this triangle of land into a well-managed beautiful area.

Lloyds Bank personnel also helped and, through fund raising in the bank, have enabled us to replace the seat that was removed from there about 6 years ago. The seat is on order and we are determined to have it in place by August.

The Wetherby Branch of the Royal British Legion are to place a memorial plaque in the garden and have arranged for a Service of Dedication on Sunday, 3rd August. The congregation will meet at the garden and then move onto the service in St James Church.

POLICE OPEN DAY

After another highly successful event in 2013 plans are underway for the 2014 Open Day.

Last year there was a Public Order Display which included actual petrol bombs and the police are planning to do the same again this year. The Crime Investigation Team, Police Dogs and a Forensic Display will be there and it would not be an open day without the tour of the Police Station. And yes there will be the Police Band to entertain you.

The date this year is Saturday, 2nd August at the Police Station commencing at 12 noon.

REMEMBRANCE DAY/POPPY APPEAL

This parade, to honour the fallen service personnel, just grows every year with literally hundreds of people lining the streets of Wetherby to pay their respects.

The number of poppy wreaths also increases every year with the young of Wetherby being involved through the Brownies, Guides, Scouts, Air Cadets and representatives from Wetherby High School and junior schools.

The Wetherby Poppy Appeal provides funds for vital services to veterans, and serving members of the armed forces, and local contributions raised £19,251.96.

This year is the centenary for the First World War and we have seen the last of our troops withdraw from the frontline in Afghanistan so your support is as important as ever.

CHRISTMAS IN WETHERBY

Wetherby certainly put on a show and sparkle with the switching on of the Christmas Lights. It was a truly memorable evening. Huge crowds gathered in the Market Square with celebrity guests including ITV Calendar's Christine Talbot and Wakefield Trinity Wildcats player, Richard Mathers, doing the honours.

This was the first time for this type of event and it was a phenomenal success with local businesses providing sponsorship for the Christmas lights and trees. It was just wonderful to see the town coming together and enjoying themselves and you could not fail to get into the Christmas spirit as the atmosphere was just exhilarating.

Are we going to do it all again this year? You just bet we are! Just you wait and see what we are planning.

As you are aware the Christmas Lights are organised by volunteers who could always do with another pair of hands and we are more than happy to take your name and details and add you to the list.

The popular Christmas Window Display Competition organised by the Welcome to Wetherby Group was another huge success with 19 traders taking part.

The schoolchildren from Crossley Street School and Wetherby High School, who formed part of the judging panel, took their job very seriously and certainly passed a critical eye over the window displays.

CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT

We were all very disappointed that the Carol Concert had to be cancelled due to the severe weather conditions.

Unfortunately, there is a limit as to the numbers that the Town Hall can and is allowed to accommodate for Health & Safety reasons and this is why the concert could not be held in the Town Hall.

It is the very first time that the Wetherby & District Rotary, who organise the event, can ever remember it being cancelled, so fingers crossed that the weather is kind to us this year.

WETHERBY COMMUNITY BONFIRE

The Community Bonfire event took place in the pouring rain and yet we are still able to report that we had an excellent turn out.

For the first time pupils from Deighton Gate, Crossley Street and St James made guys for the bonfire and they were brilliant. It was just a shame that they had to be burnt!

We have to thank the Ward Councillors for sorting out the drainage problem in the area where we build the bonfire as without this, we would not have been able to erect the bonfire or get the other amenities on site.

Plans for the 2014 bonfire are all in hand with Wetherby Sports Association once again supporting this event on The Ings. This year the date will be Saturday, 1st November.

WELCOME TO WETHERBY

We would need to do a separate review if we were to tell you everything that they have been involved with, during the last 12 months.

The promised Welcome to Wetherby Booklet was published and copies can be found at various locations in the town including The Library, Town Hall and local hotels.

They launched a Keep Wetherby Tidy Charter in a clamp down on littering campaign. The charter was distributed to schools and businesses and to members of the public attending a Thursday Market in a bid to get residents and visitors to keep the town tidy.

We now have two volunteering groups in the town picking up litter, one looking after Lodge Lane and the other clearing up 'hot spots'. They have made a huge difference and their continued dedication and efforts are certainly appreciated.

Easter Egg Hunt

The second Easter egg hunt was organised with 20 shops participating and the eggs this year were wonderfully decorated by the children from St Joseph's School.

There were over 50 entries so this event did encourage a lot of people to wander around the town looking into shop windows.

Tour de France

In conjunction with Wetherby High School the Welcome to Wetherby Team is organising a community event on Sunday, 6th July to mark the arrival of the Tour De France. Wetherby High School will be the host to activities and there will be something for everyone in the community to enjoy. Live bands, sporting activities, children's rides and yes even a hog roast.

There are volunteers knitting little yellow jerseys that will be displayed around the Town Hall and we are looking for people to greet the many visitors we expect to be in the town the week of the event. The town and railings to the High School will certainly look colourful with the yellow bunting we are planning to put up.

FILM SET

There was great excitement when Wetherby was chosen to be part of the film set for a Ridley Scott production of a feel good Christmas movie 'Get Santa'. The filming certainly brought a buzz to the town and was a wonderful opportunity to showcase Wetherby. I expect a great many of us will want to see this when it comes to our very own Wetherby Cinema.

TOWN HALL

This year Ron King who had been the Caretaker for over 25 years retired and the Town Council recognised his long service with a leaving do to which his family were invited. With a change of Mayor every two years and a number of Town Clerks he had certainly had to deal with many different personalities and meeting the needs of the town hall hirers, who can be very demanding will not always have been easy. We wish him a long and happy, well deserved, retirement.

The Town Hall is still well supported by the regular hirers who provide a vital source of income. There are lots of venues for coffee mornings in the town and whilst these types of bookings are down we are still managing to cover our overheads and save towards a new roof.

We will continue to do as much of the general maintenance work as we can in-house and are currently preparing the downstairs windows ready for painting.

We still have problems from time to time with people not showing respect for the building and you really do not want to know some of the things they do.

The Town Hall is an important landmark and it is important that we all support it in every way we can to ensure its upkeep for future generations.