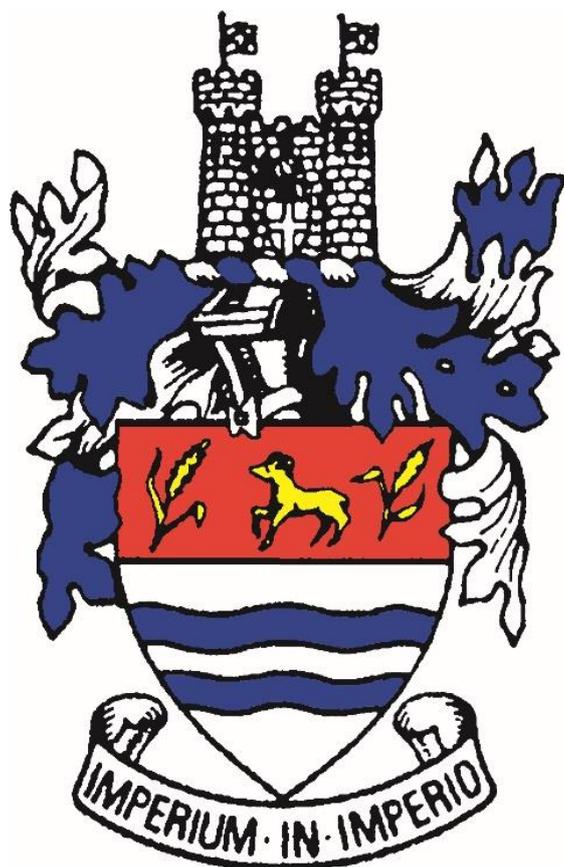


WETHERBY TOWN COUNCIL

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ANNUAL REPORT 2017

*A review of the work of the Town Council
during the past twelve months.*

Presented by the Mayor of Wetherby
Councillor Norma Harrington

At the Annual Town Meeting
Held in The Deighton Room, Wetherby Town Hall
7.45pm, Tuesday 23rd May 2017

Mayor

Councillor Norma Harrington was elected as Mayor of Wetherby for the 2016/17 Civic Year on 14th June 2016, when Councillor Harry Chapman stood down at the end of his two-year term.

Councillor Chapman was subsequently elected as Deputy Mayor of Wetherby for the 2016/17 Civic Year.



Serving at the Wetherby Lions' Senior Citizens' Christmas Party, January 2017



In her capacity as Mayor of Wetherby, Councillor Harrington has attended nearly 50 engagements including school fetes, bench openings, Civic Services at other local councils and a variety of church services.

The Mayor can be invited to attend an event by writing to the Council's offices at admin@wetherby.co.uk

Councillors

Dawn Payne of Wetherby District Social Club was co-opted on to the Council on 13th September 2016 following the resignation of John Trower in May. Mr Trower was thanked for giving 15 years of loyal service to the Council.

Other Councillors, serving throughout the 2016/17 Civic year, were:

North Ward

Harry Chapman
Norma Harrington
Nish Kanabar
Kazia Knight
Neil O'Byrne

West Ward

Cindy Bentley
David Frame
Victor Hawkins
Galan Moss
Gerald Wilkinson (Ward Member)

East Ward

Julie Brady
Alan Lamb (Ward Member)
Jo Maltby
John Procter (Ward Member)

Staff

There were two key changes to the Council's staffing team during the past year. Barbara Ball (Town Clerk) and Sally Brown (Administrative Assistant) both retired after working for the Council for over a decade.

The Council expressed its grateful thanks for all that Mrs Ball and Mrs Brown did during their time working for the Council and wishes them both well in their retirement.



Town Clerk

Mrs Iona Taylor was appointed as the new Town Clerk, taking up the post in July 2016. Mrs Taylor has extensive experience as a Clerk to Parish and City Councils in North Yorkshire including the management of community facilities, recreation grounds, Council finance and governance procedures.

Mrs Taylor, who is based in the Town Council's offices in the Town Hall, has settled in to the job well and is enjoying working in Wetherby.



Administrative Assistant

Mrs Alison Waterfield has been appointed as the Council's new administrative assistant, working in the Town Council's offices during its opening hours on Monday to Thursday mornings.

Wetherby Cemetery



There have been approximately 35 interments in the past year, split fairly evenly between full burials and interments of ashes. There is now very little, if any space for kerbside memorial plaques but the Memorial Wall is available and a number of plaques have now been fixed. The Cemetery Superintendent is always happy to help visitors to the Cemetery and if anyone is interested in locating graves of family members and/or pre-purchasing a plot in the Cemetery, they should contact the Deputy Clerk in the first instance.

The Church on the Corner / Cemetery Chapel continues to be used regularly by St James' Church for their Tuesday afternoon service. The Chapel is available for use for funeral services at other times and is an ideal choice if only a small number of family and friends are expected.

Markets

The Thursday market continues to be well attended by local residents and by visitors from further afield – we are always pleased to welcome coach parties.

We have a body of 24 or so traders, most of whom have been attending Wetherby Market on a regular basis for a number of years. This is appreciated by the shoppers who know that they can rely on the traders and build up a rapport with them. We do welcome new traders when possible and are also pleased to be able to accommodate local charities who are looking to raise their profile in the town or funds for their organisations. If anyone is interested in trading on the market or booking the Charity Stall, they should contact the Deputy Clerk in the first instance.



The Farmers' Market continues to be run by Otley Town Partnership as part of the Yorkshire Farmers' Market Group, which includes the markets in Harrogate, York and Otley. All the markets in the group are widely recognised by stallholders and visitors for the variety and quality of their produce.

Stalls at Wetherby include jams and preserves, honey, cakes, plants, home-made pies, pork & bacon products, game produce, chocolates, fruit and vegetables, soups, fish and an award-winning Indian sauce producer. For customers who prefer their food to be gluten free we have a stallholder selling a range of sweet and savoury produce.

Green Space Areas

Wetherby Town Council is fortunate to own a number of the green space areas around the town, including Sandringham Park, Scaur Bank and King George's Field, the Garden of Rest and Jubilee Gardens.

Under the direction of the Deputy Clerk, the Town Handyman helps maintain the areas by emptying litter bins and repairing equipment where possible.

The Council is grateful to Wetherby in Bloom for their outstanding efforts across the Town and to the Friends of Sandringham Park for the work they continue to do in the park. The fact that the park has again been awarded the Green Flag is a credit to them and an indication of the work they do.



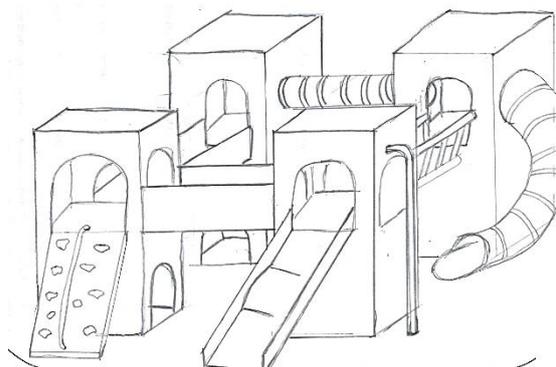
Recreation Facilities

The Town Council is responsible for the playgrounds at Scaur Bank, Nidd Approach, Masons Field and the Skate Park on the Ings.

During the past year two key items of play equipment at Scaur Bank, the multi-play unit and the much loved roundabout, came to the end of their working life and had to be decommissioned.

Since their removal an assessment of the Town's recreational needs has been undertaken, including an online survey and contact with the pupils of all the local schools. We are in the process of analysing the responses received, which will be used to inform a design brief on which suppliers can base initial proposals.

Once these initial proposals are received we will re-consult with the local schools and interested members of the public to help select a preferred supplier who we can work with to implement a strategic programme of improvements in the Council's playgrounds.



Play equipment designed by a pupil at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School



Wetherby Bike Trails and the Little Toe Pump Skills Track

In August 2016 the Council was approached by a small group of mountain bikers who were keen to provide and promote facilities for fellow enthusiasts in Wetherby. Wetherby Bike Trails was formed, with information about the group available on their website: www.wetherbybiketrails.co.uk

Initial proposals centred around a weekly ride from the town centre and the production of an off-road trail map making use of the existing routes around the local area, but then developed to include the provision of pump track facilities in Wetherby.

Two sites were identified for possible development.



Little Toe

The Little Toe junior pump skills track was constructed over a weekend in April 2017 on land off the Harland Way, behind Millennium Field which is owned by Wetherby Town Council.

After careful consideration, the Town Council agreed to give permission for this facility to be constructed on its land and be responsible for the future maintenance of the

track, including inspection and insurance.

The facility was constructed by volunteers of all ages, with donations of time and materials from local businesses, grant funding from Wetherby District Lions Club and using the knowledge and support of SingletrAction.

The track is already well used and a welcome addition to the Town Council's portfolio of recreation facilities.



Big Toe

The next phase of the project intends to construct a more challenging skills track for older mountain bikers on land known locally as the Devil's Toenail which is located next to the Harland Way, behind Glebe Field Drive.

Wetherby Bike Trails has secured agreement from the current landowners to gift the land to Wetherby Town Council. Discussions about, and preparation for, the project will continue to ensure that a safe and appropriate facility is provided.

Jubilee Award

The winner of the Council's Jubilee Award was announced as Niamh Hutton at a ceremony held in the Town Hall on 21st December 2016.

Nominated by Wetherby High School, Niamh was put forward for the Jubilee Award because of her participation in "a tough and demanding sport, requiring bravery and fortitude. Her ambition has enabled her to reach the 'heights' in the world of kickboxing. She is a credit to the school and the community."

Nomination forms for the 2017 award are available now.



Website & Communications



One of the major pieces of work undertaken by the Council during the past year was the redevelopment of its website:

www.wetherby.co.uk

After selecting Vision ICT as its new website provider, detailed work was carried out to design the new site which went live in February 2017.

The new site combines a fresh, but classic look with easy to navigate sections providing information about the work of the Council and the town of Wetherby generally.

The Council is pleased to be able to offer each and every community, charity or not-for-profit organisation in Wetherby the opportunity of having either a link to its website from, or dedicated page on the 'Community' section of the new site.

Key features of the new site include:

- Access to the agenda and supporting documents for each Council meeting.
- Copies of the Council's latest accounts and budget documents.
- Copies of the Council's policies and standard documents.
- An online copy of the Town Map which can also be found in several locations around the Town.
- An online copy of Welcome to Wetherby's Visitor Guide.
- Details of transport links to and from Wetherby.
- Details of the schools, churches and other facilities in Wetherby.
- A fully inclusive 'What's On' guide.
- Online booking form for Wetherby Town Hall.

To have information included on the new site please contact the Town Clerk.

Social Media

The Council has begun to use Facebook and Twitter as an additional method of communicating with the public. Since setting up accounts at the beginning of 2017 the Council has already accrued 339 likes on Facebook, with posts reaching an average of 2,000 people per week, and 139 follows on Twitter, having sent 251 tweets.

Other Communications

The Council continues to produce a regular newsletter and 'What's On' list of events in the Town as well as displaying notices on the boards in the Town Hall and Garden of Rest.

The Town Clerk can also be heard on Tempo FM's Not the Midweek Show, 10am – 12 noon on the last Tuesday of each month.



Planning & Development

Planning and development has been a hot topic in Wetherby over the past twelve months, during which planning permission was given to Bellway Homes for a residential development of up to 325 homes on land off Spofforth Hill. The Ward Councillors, who also sit on Wetherby Town Council, were instrumental in arranging the first meeting of the residents' liaison group to establish effective communication at the start of a 7 year period of construction.

More recently an outline planning application has been submitted by Taylor Wimpey for the creation of a new community comprising of up to 800 dwellings, a food store, primary school and public open spaces on land off Racecourse Approach.

The Council's Planning Committee continues to meet on a three-weekly basis, usually on a Monday afternoon in Wetherby Town Hall, to consider consultations on planning applications being carried out by Leeds City Council.

In the past year it has met 17 times to consider a variety of planning applications ranging from extensions to properties, to the erection of a statue, to works to protected trees.

Consultations on significant applications are considered at Full Council meetings.

Details of all planning applications can be viewed on Leeds City Council's website: <https://publicaccess.leeds.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Neighbourhood Plan

Powers have been devolved to councils and neighbourhoods to give local communities more influence over housing and planning decisions. Neighbourhood plans give local communities the chance to produce a binding blueprint for their local area and have a greater say over the design and location of new development.

Since 2013, the Wetherby Neighbourhood Planning Group has been working to formulate a plan, based upon input from the Wetherby community. The Group, which is chaired by Town and Ward Councillor Alan Lamb, consists of 15 members including four Town Councillors.

In early 2017 the Group carried out a Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The consultation ran for 10 weeks from 28/01/2017 to 22/04/2017, during which views were sought from all residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the town, who were asked to read the draft Plan and respond to the survey.

Although the consultation has now closed the relevant documents and draft plan can be viewed online at: wetherbyneighbourhoodplan.wordpress.com/consultation/



Grants & Donations

The Council's 2016/17 budget included provision for £2,000 of grant funding to be given. Requests for funding are considered on a first come, first served, basis.

The following monetary donations have been given during the past year:

- £300 to Crossley Street Primary School to subsidise the costs of their summer fair.
- £500 to Wetherby Bike Trails to support the production of a trail map and construction costs of the Little Toe.
- £500 to Wetherby Arts Festival to support their successful weekend of entertainment events in October 2016.
- £100 to Leeds Community Trust who work to relieve poverty and give assistance to vulnerable people in Leeds and surrounding area.

In addition to these contributions, the Council has also continued to support the work of other local organisations, including:

- Wetherby in Bloom who use the storage and water facilities at the Council's York Road depot.
- Wetherby Twinning Association who enjoyed a successful visit from Privas representatives in June 2016.
- Facilitating the use of the Town Hall for the Wetherby District Lions' Club Dickensian Christmas Market.
- Agreeing to pay for the electricity at the Old Men's Parliament in the Garden of Rest.

Town Hall

The Town Council has continued, in its role as Custodian and Managing Trustee, to operate Wetherby Town Hall. The Council's offices are located in the building.

The building is located in the centre of the town, but during the past year has also been at the heart of many of the community events. These have included the Tour de Yorkshire celebrations, the Dickensian Christmas Festival and the Christmas Lights Switch On.



During the past year the Council has begun to look at its relationship with the Town Hall to ensure that it is fit for purpose and legally sound, including taking professional advice to inform its position.

A new bookings system has been installed, meaning a more efficient process for hiring out rooms and invoicing customers.

There remains availability to hire the Town Hall, with a preferential rate being offered to community groups or for charitable events.



Highways

Although Leeds City Council is the relevant authority for this area the Town Council has been involved with, or considered a number of items of highways related business during the past year.

Councillor Gerald Wilkinson, who sits on both Leeds City Council and Wetherby Town Council, provides effective and efficient liaison between the two authorities.

The Council's Community Paths Partnership committee met once during the past twelve months. In recent weeks members of the committee have surveyed the public rights of way within the parish boundary. The results of these surveys will be considered at the committee's next meeting.

The Council has continued to receive a grant of £2,220 from Leeds City Council to pay for the cutting of the network of public rights of way in the town. The Council is indebted to local contractor G Baxter & Partners who carry out cuts in addition to those funded by Leeds City Council.

Councillors Chapman and Harrington have been trained in the use of the Speed Indication Device (SID). They deployed the SID machine on three occasions in June 2016, when 141 vehicles were detected travelling over the speed limit in a period of just 3 hours.

The Council continues to monitor relevant issues using a log which is updated at each Full Council meeting.

In the past year the following points have been considered:

- HGVs travelling through the Town Centre.
- The use of the Station Car Park, which can now be promoted after the installation of CCTV.
- Installation of speed matrix signs on Deighton Road and Hallfield Lane, funded by the Ward Members.
- Resurfacing of the Ginnel between St. James' Street and Westgate.
- The adverse condition of the road surface on St James Street. Leeds City Council are intending for re-surfacing works to be carried out in early July 2017.
- The condition of the collapsed wall near the bridge which is unfortunately a private matter in the hands of the insurers of the Micklethwaite Estate, although works are expected to begin in the next few weeks.

And Finally....

The work of the Town Council is varied and could never be fully covered in one report.

In addition to the points detailed above the Council has also:

- Maintained regular liaison with West Yorkshire Police who continue to provide the monthly crime statistics for consideration at each Full Council meeting and send a representative whenever possible.
- Pressed for the resolution of issues identified as being of concern to local residents such as speeding on Deighton Road and Hallfield Lane.



- Worked with the local branch of the Royal British Legion to organise the annual Remembrance Day parade and service.
- Held a Civic Service celebrating the Wetherby Community at St. James' Parish Church on Sunday 14th May 2017.
- Assisted Wetherby Business Association to organise the Christmas Lights Switch On, held on Thursday 24th November 2016.
- Liaised with Leeds City Council to secure the refurbishment of the public toilets in the Shambles.
- Dealt with the aftermath of a serious break in at the Cemetery workshop.
- Liaised to organise a security briefing for local churches, chaired by the Mayor. The meeting, held on 1st September 2016, was convened in response to a fatal attack on a church in France.

