**WESTOW & FIRBY PARISH COUNCIL NOTES**

**SPRING 2024**

Welcome to a short summary of some of the issues and successes that the PC have been working on over the past year or so since our last notes which related to Covid!

Hopefully folk can access the Parish Council website <https://westow.org.uk> where minutes of PC meetings are placed as well as documents relating to accounts, village notices and events etc. Thanks to Pennie Hamer for looking after our website which has a link to the Westow Facebook Forum.

This Newsletter will appear on the Parish Council website and there will be some paper copies by the Westow village notice board for anyone who does not have access to the website.

**Parish Council Precept**

Parish councils may raise a ‘precept’ on the council tax bills produced by their local billing authority (North Yorkshire Council). This is essentially a request for a sum to be collected through the council tax system. Council taxpayers cannot refuse to pay it, and the billing authority cannot refuse to levy it. It is the only source of tax revenue available to parish councils and is used for things like dog bins, grit, defibrillator maintenance and utility charges for the Village Hall. Westow PC has not increased the precept for three years now and it actually appears on Council Tax correspondence as a small reduction on last year because more households are sharing the charge.

**Village Hall**

The PC is responsible for the upkeep of the Village Hall (VH) which was donated to Westow just after the First World War. It would have been obvious to anyone who visited the hall in previous years that it needed to some work and its facilities refreshed. Some funds were raised prior to the building of Westow Cricket Club Pavilion in 2016 which were to be used specifically for the upkeep of the hall. After much hard work and perseverance by Clive Staples we eventually received the restricted funds from the bank. Clive was the chair of the original fund raising committee and many thanks to him for pursuing the release of the money (just over £3700).

Work had begun to improve the VH in a modest way a couple of years ago. Volunteers had helped to remove vegetation from the outside of the hall and generally tidy up the outskirts. Those of you who have been inside the hall more recently will have noticed that there is a new floor and refreshed paintwork. New curtains were donated by kind members of the parish. Externally there is a new side door, the woodwork has been checked and repaired where necessary and the door facing the road has been painted. Most of this work has been done by volunteers and our thanks go particularly to Tim Saxby and John Smith.

Most recently, a small VH Committee chaired by Geraldine Burton successfully bid for funds (£1000) from the NY Council Community Grant Scheme. This money will be used together with VH funds to replace the very old and damaged chairs and tables.

Work still needs to be done to refurbish the small kitchen and toilet facilities. We would also welcome ideas for improving the small area in front of the hall. If anyone would like to volunteer to help with these aspects these please contact Angela, our Clerk or email info@westow.org.uk.

Once we have new furniture more events can be held. Details will be published as available but meanwhile, offers to hold events are very welcome. The hall is available for a very modest sum.

For more information contact Tim Saxby on 01653 618064 or email timsaxb003@yahoo.com.

**War Memorial**

The PC is also responsible for the upkeep of the War Memorial and we thank Peter Burton who has power washed the War Memorial and Jaynie Pateraki for offering to look after it and paint the surrounding railings.

**Kirkham Bridge**

At long last the weight limit for vehicles crossing Kirkham Bridge has been reduced and is now active. Angela Fothergill has been a star in chasing this issue for many months and credit must go to her for it finally happening. Additionally signage at Eddlethorpe and Gally Gap has been updated. Most recently we have been notified that the bridge will close for 4 weeks from 2 April 2024 to allow the much needed repairs to be carried out.

**Parking**

It won’t have escaped anyone’s notice that there are more cars about than there used to be. On the whole people park carefully. This is a plea for us all to be as considerate as possible when we park along the streets. In particular, if parking on both sides of a road cannot be avoided then there must be space between cars for emergency vehicles to gain access if needed. Simply put, and based on advice from the emergency services, this means that a fire engine should be able to get through. If that can be done then an ambulance can also pass. We are lucky to live in an agricultural area and this means that occasionally large tractors and horse boxes come through both Westow and Firby. They too need reasonable access and so considerate street parking is essential. Thank you for your help with this.

**More Thanks**

Finally, a thank you to all those who contribute to our community. The Westow Playing Field has been further developed and maintained due to the hard work of Steve Tetlow, Chris Defty and colleagues. There has been a lot of praise for the Christmas tree that has been erected by The Blacksmiths Arms for the last few years and for Ruth and Mike Smith’s brass band and carols event. The Westow Cricket Pavilion regularly hosts events organised by Julie Price. Many thanks to them and to all the volunteers who help keep our villages interesting.

**Westow Parish Councillors**

* Richard Bannister
* Geraldine Burton
* Helen Crews (Chair)
* Angela Fothergill (Clerk)
* Pennie Hamer
* Neil Johnson
* Elizabeth Shields
* John Smith (Treasurer)
* Christine Smith