

## Little Smeaton Parish Council Annual Report for 2023-4

It has been quite a momentous year for Little Smeaton Parish Council, and I would like to start by commending my fellow councillors Colin Atkinson, Angela Hancock, Joanne Howdle and Iain Carpenter for all their hard work throughout the year, and to say a big Thank You to them all; also to our Clerk Barbara Smith.

All have contributed at levels well-above what councillors might normally be expected to do and the separate skills they have each brought to the table have been invaluable.  
Thank You.

Councillors have carried out all their usual tasks during the past year:

- Planting up the village sign planters and promoting wildflower areas
- Again, putting up Christmas Lighting on the lamp posts, also erected the Christmas Tree and decorating it.
- Annual moss removal at the playground.
- Regular inspection of all play equipment and carrying out of any minor repairs.
- Keeping the poo bag dispensers filled
- Keeping the Website and Facebook pages up to date

Little Smeaton & Kirk Smeaton Parish Councils also continue to work together on a number of projects affecting both villages...

- Continued development and review of the [joint] Village Emergency Plan.
- Both Parish Councils send representatives to the Quarry Liaison Committee meetings which are held every three months, with the operators and North Yorkshire Planning Officers in attendance.  
Monitoring of dust, and of HGV traffic, is reported at each meeting.
- Crime. Following an escalation of burglary and of theft from vehicles in the Smeaton villages, there has been a joint project both to lobby our [new] MP and to hold our local police officers to account. This has been followed up with a Community Impact Statement which is being promoted/sponsored to the Community Safety Partnership by Cllr McCartney and Inspector Wedgwood.
- Following advice from the police, the Village Whats app has been reviewed, its rules have been amended and all unidentified numbers have been removed.
- Highways. Little Smeaton Councillors have also worked with Kirk Smeaton, Norton and Stapleton Councillors to lobby both National Highways, and North Yorkshire and Doncaster Councils for road repairs on the roads between Stapleton and Barnsdale Bar, via Little Smeaton. This route, as everyone is aware, is being used by traffic trying to avoid delays caused by the A1 roadworks. The huge increase in volume, and potentially speed, of traffic has caused considerable damage to local roads.  
Regrettably we have not been successful in getting a temporary speed limit introduced or any financial assistance from National Highways, but both Councils have stepped up to the plate and carried out significant repairs.
- Village Events. The Events Team consists of parish councillors from both villages, other enthusiastic volunteers and representatives of pub, church & magazine  
In the past year the team has organised not only the Annual 5k, Fun Run + Fete in September; and the 'Carols round the tree' family event in December, but also introduced a Christmas Tea for our more Senior residents.

In addition, Events Team members planned the Coronation events in June 23, which comprised Lighting of the Beacon for a second time, plus the Duck Race and Village picnic which Little Smeaton was pleased to host.

- The Picnic and Duck Race are anticipated to become an Annual Event – this year on June 29<sup>th</sup>, and the Beacon will be lit for a third time on June 6<sup>th</sup> to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D. Day.

Please note that parish councillors personally give their time planning and helping at events, but **no parish council monies are used**; events are self-funding.

Hillside Cottage. The Parish Council has owned the cottage for many years and traditionally the rental income has supported the precept, enabling the demand on council taxpayers to be less than in neighbouring villages.

The tenants properly gave notice and left in May last year. Upcoming government legislation, and our own inspection, showed that a considerable sum would have to be spent to bring the property up to a standard which complied with legislation and would enable a new rental.

After obtaining price quotes and undertaking considerable research, councillors very reluctantly decided that the cottage would have to be sold; which it has been.

The decision was also taken to re-draw the boundaries, and this has enabled the Parish Council to retain ownership and control of both the parcel of land between the cottage and the next property [Glengarth] and also the section to the left of the footpath containing the phone box and down to the river.

It is intended that they will remain as they are in order to preserve the rurality of the area.

All monies received from the cottage sale have been very carefully invested, and the interest received will continue to support the work undertaken in the village – as the rental income did previously.

The accounts are audited on an annual basis and will be available for viewing as usual in July.

The Precept: has not been raised this year and the total amount remains the same as last year. Any change in that section of council tax bills is caused by a minor variation in the way NYC have applied the precept rate, not by the Parish Council.

Grass cutting. The contract was awarded to Daniel Curnow for the summer of 2023, and now 2024, and we thank him and Sam for doing a great job in keeping the village looking neat and tidy, also for their help with the Christmas Tree last year.

The agreed grass cutting plan allows spring flowers to die back naturally/come back stronger each year; part of the bank at the playing field is deliberately left uncut in order to encourage wildflowers, and as a result the cowslips have been fantastic this year.

Thank you: to councillors and residents for the seasonal planting around the village signs, & especially for the constant watering required to keep them in good shape.

To everyone who helped putting up, and taking down, the Christmas lights last year – all much appreciated.

To Jo and Bracken at the Brotherhood for their kind donation of the Christmas Tree.