



Chairs Annual Report 2021

Introduction

Good evening. I took over as Chair of the Parish Council at a difficult time when the Covid Pandemic had just struck and we had just gone into lockdown. Meetings had to be held virtually and we were all confined to our homes.

The pandemic has been a new experience for everyone in the world and the way we have handled it has been incredible. So many of our fellow citizens have risen to the challenge to help out neighbours and friends. The Parish Council has sought to assist groups who found themselves struggling as their usual sources of income dried up, and hopefully we are now able to look forward to a brighter future.

Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council has managed to keep going through the pandemic and has met virtually on 12 occasions and at times there has been some lively debate. Issues have included a discussion on speeding in the villages and the possible installation of Speed Indication Devices (SIDs) but no final decision has been made about this. After much discussion we also agreed to fund the cost of an awning at Barwick Post Office to assist residents and support an important local facility.

We made enquiries about acquiring the freehold of Scholes Allotments but received a negative response.

The PC also helped to fund a resident's initiative to set up a Santa's Grotto at Scholes Pavilion which was a great success.

The Police no longer attend Parish Council meetings and instead we have a representative who attends regular Police and Community Together meetings, (PACT) which involves a number of Parish Councils. Councillor Bedford is our current representative.

The Parish Council remains in sound financial health and we saw no reason to increase the precept this year. Future plans include spending a substantial amount of money on the Scholes Tennis Courts to provide a MUGA pitch and other facilities. The PC still has funds available for projects and we are always interested in any ideas residents may have to improve the quality of life in the parish.

Unfortunately, Councillors Austin, Young and Greenwood resigned from the Parish Council this year and we thank them for their work on the Council. We welcome Councillors Brunt and Cantelo. There is currently a vacancy for a Councillor in Barwick so if you are interested, please contact our Clerk.

Committees and sub-committees

The Parish Council has a Planning and Finance/General Purposes Committee along with subcommittees for Staffing, Scholes Lodge Field, Crime Prevention, Scholes Pavilion and Barwick Allotments. All of these groups have met at regular intervals during the year to deal with business arising. Some residents and Councillors felt that we should plant more trees on Scholes Lodge Field and reports were commissioned from experts; an ecologist and an archaeologist who both advised against further tree planting to preserve the existing ecological and historic earthworks on the field.

Sports Clubs and Volunteers

The Parish Council has met with the Sports teams in the Parish who use the facilities on Council land. Obviously, the pandemic has meant that little sport has taken place although many clubs did benefit from grants from Leeds City Council and so their financial situation is generally healthy. These clubs' welcome residents who will find it much cheaper to use the bowls and tennis facilities in the villages than travelling to Leeds.

Barwick Village Hall, which occupies land owned by the Parish Council is looking for volunteers to help to run it and may struggle to keep going if no one comes forward to help, which would be a great shame for Barwick.

The PC continue to provide financial support to both Bloom groups in the villages. I think you will agree that despite lockdown the villages continued to look wonderful and it is very uplifting this year to see the spring blooms once again to cheer us up.

In December the Peace Flame Group were able to unveil the Scholes World Peace Flame Information Board at a short but very moving ceremony. The Group have worked hard to provide the Peace Flame and the garden where you can now sit in peace and reflect on life. Thanks go to Councillor Walsh and her team for this wonderful addition to the village.

Barwick Sports Field

The PC negotiated a licence with Mount ST Marys football club for their use of the football field although matches have been curtailed because of lockdown.

A new cess pool has been installed at the football Pavilion with some grant funding.

The PC hopes to secure the freehold of the access track to the Barwick Allotments and get this repaired, which will also assist the cricket club.

Scholes Sports Field

All sports have now resumed at the Sports field. Shadwell United and Five Star Sports use the football field. This area became very wet over winter and we are looking at ways to provide better drainage.

Problems continue here with dogs causing damage and messing the field which is of concern for the players and particularly the youngsters playing football with the clubs. New Signs will shortly be erected to remind dog owners to respect the area.

Scholes Pavilion

The Parish Council now own and run Scholes Pavilion which is available to hire for events such as children`s parties and other meetings. It is situated off Belle Vue Avenue Scholes near the Bowls Club.

A major project this year for the Parish Council was its Vision for the Future initiative for the development of new facilities on the site of Scholes Tennis Courts. A drop-in session was arranged which was well supported by residents. I am pleased to report that planning permission was recently granted for the scheme. We will be seeking grant support to help fund the work and carrying this out in phases over the next couple of years. Thanks go to Councillor Slater and his team for the hard work undertaken to reach this stage of the project.

ELOR

We have all been aware that Leeds City Council have begun work on the East Leeds Orbital road (ELOR) and the disruption this has caused to the village. The Parish Council set up a working party for regular meetings with the ELOR team to help keep the impact of the new road to a minimum. We are also working to secure benefits for the village with an improved rights of way network.

Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan

The Planning Committee has considered a number of planning applications this year and made a number of representations to Leeds City Council. There have been no major applications or appeals this year but we are expecting to be consulted soon on a proposed Park and Ride development to be located on the A64 somewhere in the parish in the near future.

The PC decided this year to embark on a review of our Neighbourhood Plan. This was prompted by the discovery our Parish boundary had been extended to the urban edge of Leeds north of the A64

and now extends to Coal Road. Much of this land is included in the northern quadrant of the East Leeds Extension and will in due course introduce an additional 1500 houses into the Parish. More information about this can be found on our website where there are a number of discussion papers setting out the issues we will need to address. The potential impact of so large a development on existing services and the increased threat of a merger with the built-up area of Leeds remains a worry.

The Parish Council has set up a small working party to look at the current Plan and decide on which policies to retain, which to amend and any new policies which may be required. Anyone interested in joining the working party should contact the Clerk.

New Website

A major achievement this year has been the setting up of a new website. Thanks go to Councillor Slater and John Ferguson who have done a magnificent job. I really recommend you tap in Barwick and Scholes Parish Council to the internet and you will reach the website and have access to lots of information about the Parish Council and what is going on in the parish.

Next Year

Looking ahead to next year we are investigating setting up an Environment Committee to seek ways to operate in a more environmentally friendly manner.

So that was the year of the pandemic and it only remains for me to thank my fellow Councillors for the help and support they have given me throughout the year. I would also like to thank our Clerk who provides us with help and advice and generally keeps the show on the road.

Let us all hope this next year shapes up better than the last and that by all working together we can make the Parish a better place for all.

P R Maude May 2021