

## **Chairman's report 2019**

### **1. The work of the Parish Council**

- 1.1. It is the aim of all councillors elected to Ackworth Parish Council to represent all the people of the village to the best of their ability. We value the stability of the community and we welcome new residents who bring new skills and new ideas to our village.
- 1.2. The Council manages the playing fields and buildings at Carr Bridge and Brackenhill; the Low Ackworth Playing Field; the cemetery; the allotments; the village green; and the Community Centre on Bell Lane. It organises community events throughout the year. The Parish Council also manages the budget and sets the Parish precept.
- 1.3. The clerk and the administrative assistant respond to concerns about the village raised by Parish Councillors. They also respond to concerns raised directly with them by individual residents. The Parish Council cannot and will not respond to negative comments, complaints and false information published on Social Media.
- 1.4. The work of the Council is mostly conducted through Committees and working groups which then report back to the full Parish Council meeting for approval.
- 1.5. The Parish Council works positively with community groups and organisations to promote positive action in the village. These include the Brackenhill Allotments Association, Low Ackworth Community Association, Ackworth Community Library, Senior Citizen's Christmas Fund, the This is Ackworth group, the South East Link Road Action Group. In addition the Council supports the Ackworth Big Spring Clean, the Ackworth Pram Race and CRY - the Rory Embling Foundation.
- 1.6. We work closely with the West Yorkshire Police through PCSO Lorraine Kavanagh. The Parish Council receives monthly reports on reported crime in the village and responds to concerns raised by residents.
- 1.7. The Parish Council is well supported by District Councillors to secure funding for improvements in the village and in liaising with Wakefield Council officers.

### **2. Developments in the village**

- 2.1. The Community centre on Bell Lane has been redecorated and a cycle rack installed in the rear car park; a hedge has been moved to improve the cemetery; work has been done on unsafe trees at Low Ackworth and in other locations, and a new notice board has been

erected; there is a new planter at Low Ackworth with more to be installed around the village in the coming months.

2.2. A new stretch of footpath has been laid from the end of Heaton Street to join Dando Way making access much easier.

2.3. A defibrillator has been installed at the Bell Lane Community Centre with the help of a contribution of £50 from the Rory Embling Foundation.

### **3. Road Safety**

3.1. The Parish Council continues to work closely with SELRAG and Wakefield District Councillors on the proposal for a by-pass road for Ackworth but progress continues to be very slow.

### **4. Events in the village**

4.1. The weather was perfect for the annual Ackworth Gala which very well attended. More than 30 local groups had stalls to raise funds or to promote their organisation.

4.2. Over 300 children came to see Santa in his grotto at the Bell Lane Community centre. This annual event is much appreciated by Ackworth families and greatly enjoyed by the Councillors and staff who help with the preparations and management on the day. Thanks also to the volunteers who help with bag packing and trimming up the grotto. Many people say that it is the best event of its kind in the area.

4.3. The Parish Council once again worked with Ackworth Churches together to plan the Christmas Lights switch on. This was very well attended. Villagers enjoyed a short carol service, counted down for the Gala queen to switch on the lights and then enjoyed tea and mince pies.

4.4. Although it is not officially a Parish Council event, Councillors are centrally involved in raising funds for and organising the Senior Citizens' Christmas Tea. This took place as usual in the refectory at Ackworth School. It was very well attended and enjoyed by all.

4.5. The Reverend Charlene Smith led a ceremony to dedicate a tree to those villagers who sacrificed their lives in the 1914-18 war. Additionally, the Parish Council in partnership with Ackworth Heritage Group took part in "The Nation's Tribute" event; lighting a WW1 Beacon of Light in tribute to the millions of men and women who died or were injured.

4.6. 20 children took part last year in growing pumpkins. The planting day and showing day is organised in association with Brackenhill Allotments Association.

4.7. There have been two Big Ackworth Litter Picks in the last 12 months. The most recent one saw over 95 residents taking part and more than 860 kgs of rubbish was collected. Thank you once again to Adam Fletcher for organising them and to Wakefield Council Streetscene for providing the litter picking sticks and bin bags and for organising the pick-up of the full bags of rubbish.

4.8. The Tour de Yorkshire received an enthusiastic welcome as it passed through Ackworth. The village looked fantastic and it was a true community effort. On the initiative of the Council Village Events committee the community worked together to make bunting to decorate the village. The yellow and blue bicycles and the hundreds of villagers who came out to line the route all added to making it a great event.

4.9. A Community Day was held in the Bell Lane Community Centre in partnership with Ackworth Art Walk. This gives an opportunity to local groups to publicise their work and possibly to recruit new members.

## **5. Parish Council grants**

5.1. During the past year the Parish Council has given grants to the Ackworth Heritage Group, the Royal British Legion, Featherstone Rovers Foundation for junior rugby sessions, the B.O.A.R. Cottage Charity which provides holidays for disadvantaged young people, the annual Ackworth Pram Race, the Senior Citizens Tea fund, 1st Ackworth Scouts.

5.2. The Parish Council continues to support Ackworth Community Library by leasing the room at a peppercorn rent.

## **6. New Councillors and staff changes**

6.1. A new cleaner, Michelle Jones has joined our staff team and a new part-time Administrative Assistant has just been appointed.

## **7. Developments for the next year**

7.1. There will be improvement to the drainage on the footpath from Bell Lane car park under the Barnsley Road making it a much cleaner walking route.

7.2. Changes will be made to Bell Lane car park including kerbs and speed bumps to improve safety. A new litter bin will also be installed- this work will be funded jointly by the Parish Council and Wakefield Council.

7.3. More benches and planters will be placed at several locations around the village.

7.4. The Parish Council will be supporting the initiative of the This is Ackworth group by sponsoring a new litter bin by the cemetery.

Finally I would like to thank Councillors and staff for their hard work and commitment during the past year. We will continue to work positively for the whole Ackworth Community in the coming year.

Sarah Balfour, Chair of Ackworth Parish Council, April 2019