

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023/24
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 8TH APRIL 2024**

2023/24 has been another busy year for your Council. Elections in May 2023 saw two new councillors for Rufforth, Terry Edmunds and Frank Di Lorenzo. In Knapton ward, Cllr Linda Young was re-elected, and joined by Suzie Flynn and Gary Thompson, who were co-opted on to the Council. So as a result, we have a new team, with a good balance of experienced councillors and new blood, which I can assure you is approaching the task of serving the community with enthusiasm and determination. The Parish Council operates as one, representing the whole Parish of Rufforth with Knapton and will continue to be guided by the policies and principles set out in our Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Nick Murray was re-elected as Vice Chairman and I was re-elected as Chairman at the first meeting after the local elections.

Numerous planning applications were considered by the council during the year. The big ones were the two applications for Solar installations – from Solar2 on land between Hessay and Rufforth, and from Yorwaste for Harewood Whin. Your Council strongly objected to the former on the grounds that it would cause significant harm to the Green Belt, spoil the wonderful views over open fields from the cycle path towards Rufforth, proximity to the village, and taking land out of agricultural production. In both cases we recognised the need for renewable energy but supported the Harewood Whin proposal on the grounds that being reclaimed landfill the site could not be used for anything else, did less harm to the Green Belt, and was further away from residential property. Despite an awful lot of work on our behalf, the City of York Council planning committee approved the Solar2 application in February. The Harewood Whin application remains in the planning system.

We will now engage with Solar2 to minimise the effects on residents, in particular during the construction process.

A feasibility study has been announced by City of York Council for a Green Energy Park on Harewood Whin. This is separate to the solar farm and is in the very early stages and would have to be the subject of a full planning application. Your Parish Council are engaging with the team at CYC to understand fully the implications and to influence any proposals to ensure no adverse effects for residents.

Our work on traffic management and in particular speeding continues. In September we secured approval from CYC for a 20mph limit for sections of the B1224 close to the school and other roads in the vicinity. Implementation is scheduled for the coming months. We will continue to pursue additional objectives and any other means to improve safety in our villages and will use the data provided by Speedwatch to pursue our objectives.

We have been actively lobbying CYC with regard to litter picking along the B1224 and grass cutting within the villages. We have requested a meeting to resolve these matters but are currently waiting for suitable dates.

During the year the Rufforth Playing Fields Association updated its constitution to better fit modern circumstances. The Parish Council was involved in discussions to ensure the rights of the Parish and residents as laid down in the original Trust Deed were maintained in the new constitution.

Planting of the new Community Woodland continues apace, and it is expected to be open to the public later this year. The Parish Council have engaged with Forestry England and the CYC Executive Councillors on this project and particularly with regard to car parking provision and adequate signage to the official car park. Apart from its contribution to York's net zero ambitions we believe this will be a valuable facility for local people.

Preplanning consultation by developers is currently taking place with regard to a small housing development in Knapton. The site in question is allocated for housing in the emerging York Local Plan and was included in the submission version of our Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council are not opposed in principle to this development but there are serious concerns with some of the detailed plans and we are engaging with developers on these issues.

A full transcript of the Chairman's report can be requested by email to clerk@rufforthwithknapton-pc.gov.uk.