

## CHAIRMANS REPORT APRIL 2025

I am pleased to report on the activities of your Parish Council over the past twelve months.

In May Helen Butterworth resigned from the Council as she was moving away from the area and Victoria Kirk was co-opted back on to the Council in her place. Over very many years Helen made a major contribution to the community and was the driving force behind the creation of the cycle path between Rufforth and Knapton and she took responsibility for the Burial Grounds with passion and enthusiasm. Cllr Linda Young has taken over as Chair of the Burial Ground working group and the burial grounds as well as providing a vital service, continue to provide a source of valuable revenue to the Council.

As a result of two to three years of lobbying by the Parish Council the 20mph speed limit in Rufforth was implemented in August and Cllrs Terry Edmonds and Nick Murray worked quickly with CYC to get road markings improved. Whilst all vehicles are not adhering strictly to the 20mph, the new restrictions have undoubtedly resulted in a significant reduction in average traffic speed and improved safety . I thank Cllrs Edmonds and Murray for all their persistent hard work in achieving this breakthrough. We will now lobby for 40mph buffer zones , similar to the one on the York entrance to the village, for the Wetherby and Bradley Lane approaches.

We have dealt with numerous small planning applications throughout the year, mostly for extensions. There is an application in for 6 houses in Knapton at the junction of Main Street and Back Lane. The Parish council did not object as this site was allocated for housing in our Neighbourhood Plan but we did raise serious concerns over the detail. The York Local Plan has now been formally adopted and as result the Green Belt around York is now legally defined. The Local Plan is consistent with the Rufforth with Knapton Neighbourhood Plan, meaning that the only housing allocations in our Parish are for the site In Knapton and the one currently being developed at the end of Middlewood Close in Rufforth. The remaining land in the Parish is Green Belt.

As residents will know the Solar Farm on land between Rufforth and Hessay has been approved. Whilst we objected to this proposal the Parish Council are engaging with Solar 2 and Recurrent Energy , who are constructing the farm, to minimize effects on residents . We have already held one meeting and agreed to set up a liaison group with representatives from Hessay and Rufforth Parish Councils. We already have agreement that construction traffic will not pass through Rufforth village and a commitment that the connection to the grid will be via underground cables. There seems to have been a delay in agreeing arrangements for the grid connection and construction won't commence until 2026 at the earliest.

Approval has also now been given for a solar installation on Harewood Whin but for a reduced size , only covering the first two mounds of the landfill. We were supportive of this proposal as it made use of otherwise unusable land and we have a meeting with Yorwaste later this month to discuss the details.

You may recall mention of a Harewood Whin Green Energy Park with numerous ideas for renewable energy and it's uses being put forward. We are pleased to report that after significant engagement with the Project team at CYC , we have been told that they are proceeding with the solar installation only and that all other ideas, although we can never say never, have currently been discarded.

This is just one example of the large amount of “ behind the scenes “ work carried out by the Parish Council with varying degrees of success. We have spent a great deal of time in debate with CYC over litter picking on the B1224, including getting the Head of Environmental of Services out to the village and culminating in a commitment for litter picking to be undertaken on a six weekly basis. That commitment has been confirmed in the last couple of weeks and the task is now to keep them to it. As part of their cost saving measures CYC have reduced the number of grass cuts per year and the Parish Council plan to compensate for that by undertaking interim cuts of key areas within the Parish at our expense. We have also engaged over parking issues in Knapton a a result of the Community Woodland and developed a working relationship with Forestry England with Cllr Gary Thompson acting as our link. During the year we have assisted the Rufforth

Playing Fields Association in matters relating to title to their land, with Cllr Frank DiLorenzo being our representative on the Playing Fields Committee.

The 412 bus service operates with a substantial subsidy from North Yorkshire and CYC. ,a contract which was due for renewal at the end of March. We kept up a dialogue with CYC to ensure that the contract was renewed and are now lobbying for the reinstatement of a bus service for Knapton.

Sadly the Methodist Chapel announced in January that it would be forced to close in August. We are working with the Post Office to facilitate an alternative location for the Outreach Post office and are confident of a satisfactory solution.

We have worked with CYC and the Allotments Association to make some improvements to the site including the moving of the compost store and preparation work for the planting of a small apple orchard . There are a few vacant plots if anyone is interested.

During the summer we plan to install an accessible path to the play area in Knapton. My thanks go Cllr Suzie Flynn for all her work on this one and we will be considering her final proposals at the Council meeting which follows later this evening.

We increased the Parish Precept for the coming financial year by 3% to cover inflation plus £610 to cover the additional cost of Employers National Insurance incurred as result of the Chancellor's budget . The resultant charge for a Band D property is £29.10 per annum , which we hope residents will feel represents value for money.

Finally I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their support and enthusiasm and a special thanks to our Clerk for all her hard work and in her role as Financial Officer for keeping our affairs in order.