

# Asenby Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

8<sup>th</sup> May 2024

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### **Summary**

A mixed year for the Parish Council with both highs and lows.

Parish Councillor numbers, difficulties with grass cutting contractors, the play park and parking all took their toll but we feel the Council has demonstrated that it can take these onboard and make a difference. Ending the year with a full Council, a new Clerk, a new commemorative bench, and a park with clean equipment, plus landscaped with trees.

### **Parish Council structure**

The year started with only two Councillors and an urgent need to increase membership for the Council to remain viable and governance not be given up to North Yorkshire Council. Two new Councillors were recruited early on, but following the sad death of David Cockburn we ended the year with three Councillors. We have since recruited two further Councillors who have only recently started in post.

The existing Clerk, Peter Palmer continued throughout as a volunteer and in a 'temporary' role keeping proceedings on track. We are pleased to say that we have a new Clerk, Denise Grima, who will undertake preparation alongside Peter until she is ready to take charge.

Peter is acknowledged and thanked for keeping things together during this difficult year.

### **Asenby Park**

Following difficulties with the grass cutting contractor at the time we had a Park with grass reaching 2ft (60cm) tall. This prompted the Council to find another Contractor who is now providing reliable services, and also to undertake a survey into future use of the park.

The survey had good responses and interesting results with the focus for improvements being around providing more trees and flowers, enhancing wildlife and providing a 'walking area'. It also became very clear that the play equipment needed cleaning thoroughly. This became the most significant project during the year with the planting of 169 native trees/shrubs, establishing a grass path weaving through them, and soon to be added garden benches, plus clean play equipment.

The annual ROSPA inspection of the play area equipment was overall positive with a limited number of amber reports. These were mainly around ongoing maintenance, with nothing considered to be a danger.

### **Village Maintenance**

The riverside walk and countryside walk across to Park Road remain well used and the grass is cut regularly as part of the general contract. It was reported last year by a resident that the wooden bridges along the riverside walk needed attention. The Parish Council recruited the services of a local builder, Dean Pallister, who rebuilt one bridge fully and replaced rotting woodwork on the second. Many thanks to Dean and his team.

It was observed that the lime tree near the bus stop was dropping a few dead branches in windy weather. A qualified arborist was sourced who removed dead branches from the tree and generally tidied it up.

### **Village Seating**

Following the unfortunate closure of Asenby Institute, the Chair of the Institute, Siobhan Gifford, offered to fund a replacement seat with the surplus funds remaining. This offer was accepted by the Parish Council and would replace the seat at the bus stop to the south of the village. It was decided to commemorate the bench to the King's Coronation, and was in memory of Ben Lowe. The same design was used as the one previously commissioned for the Queen's Jubilee which is sited under the horse chestnut tree on the village green. Our grateful thanks to Mr Corrigan who removed the old bench, Siobhan who arranged everything, and Louis Sturt who designed and installed the bench.

### **Village Green parking**

Possibly because of the wet weather, parking on the village green primarily by work people, resulted in a badly damaged section of the village green. Eric and Chris Moss were good enough to re-seed the area (twice) and plant some bulbs along the edge. The Parish Council added to this by installing a 'no parking or driving' sign with the intention that anyone unfamiliar with the village would observe the request.

### **Website**

A newly updated website was published during the year which could better accommodate access from devices such as phones and tablets. It also enabled easier editing by users with less technical skills. Our thanks to David Stringer who had maintained the old site for many years.

During the past month there have been 85 visitors and 292 page views, a decrease from the launch.

### **Finances**

Although the Council had relatively good financial reserves, it was recognised that we would continue to use these as costs increased and we agreed to spend on improvements to services. It was agreed to increase the precept for 2024-25 but keeping it well below other villages in the area, and to make as much use as possible from grants and other funds available.

In addition to the precept for 2023-24 we obtained £500 from North Yorkshire Council via our local Councillor Nick Brown. We will also access Commuted Sums of £808, both for the park.

We continue to receive a fee from the Asenby Fishing Syndicate for use of our stretch of the River Swale. Our Clerk continues to recover the VAT on our expenses from the HMRC.

### **The future**

The future of Asenby Parish Council at this time is more secure with a full complement of Councillors, and ongoing support from volunteers, albeit a limited number. Maintenance work and improvements as identified will continue throughout the village over the course of the next year.

### **Many thanks**

Finally, our sincere thanks to everyone who has supported the Parish Council and contributed to improvements during the past year. The existing Councillors, Malcolm Sollitt, Sue Hazelton, Colin Grimston, and our new Councillors who have already been very active, Steve Gallon and Tom Miles. Our existing Clerk, Peter Palmer, and our future Clerk, Denise Grima.

All of the volunteers who helped with the park and specifically Matilda and Catherine Catterick for their ideas and plans, Steve Hall for his expertise and Jane Stringer, Chris Moss, Claire Phillips, Audrey Grimston for their digging and planting skills.

Communication has played a key part in the past year and our thanks also go to Doug Allan for the input to his Sunday Email publications and the Tatler.

Colin Grimston  
Chair, Asenby Parish Council