

Annual Parish Meeting – Chairs Report 13 May 2024

I started writing this report three times.

I know the Chairs annual report is supposed to be all upbeat and uplifting, bunny rabbits and kittens, but how could I read out something that ignores the trauma the Parish Council has experienced over the last seven or so months. I lay the blame fully at the feet of Simon Roger Baxter, outgoing clerk, not a qualified clerk, devastator of at least 6 councils, disgraced ex JP, not a qualified accountant, owner of a cease and desist notice from Humberside Police. Someone who brings his expertise of lying from the world of poker. And yes, he is the real Simon Baxter and not just someone with the same name. If there is anyone left in this village that still proffers support for Mr Baxter. Then I feel there is little hope for you.

I was hoodwinked too, but I realised it quite quickly. I had made a huge mistake in employing him – although I wasn't the only person on the interview panel. Unfortunately, no one else in the council agreed with me, hence the division over the past few months, I felt I had to put right this wrong even though it seemed I was a team of one. I tried to keep it contained within the council but the ex chair refused to engage with me directly, accusing **me** of bullying. I have many faults but being a bully isn't one of them. I then needed to let the village know what was going on. I spoke to others in the village whose own impartial research reached the same conclusions as me. We had employed a monster!

I'm not going to dwell on Baxter's legacy to this council, except to say that despite his best efforts, we now have everything we need for our year end accounts and our audit. We pretty much have everything we need to run the council, even though Baxter stole every item of paperwork, every invoice, statement, electronic assets by way of domains and cloud storage. He even tried to extort money for the return of this property. Had he been so concerned for this community, all he had to do was leave it in the village hall office before he left.

It had even been said that he has been seen in the village recently. Really?. Don't use your stolen keys to access the village hall Baxter.

Still. To happier times. There were a couple of Parish Council run events that were successful between September and January last year. The Tractor run coming through the village was a blaze of colour and noise, and of course the Christmas tree light switch on.

When I walked into the Village Hall in early February, I found two old defibrillators, I was expecting to find one. There was no need for the long drawn out project that started in the late summer to obtain a new one for the village. We are now tied into a five year

contract costing double the servicing and repair of the two existing defibrillators. Still, the upside is that Waithe and Grainsby will benefit by having their own units. A quick weekly check is all that is required to ensure we do not find ourselves in the same position as last summer when a defibrillator was needed but it was unusable.

Today you will have seen them in use and the plan to engage local Angels to ensure the swift use of these devices. After months of inertia, real progress. Great work Councillor Goodwin.

One of the benches in the Memorial Garden has been moved, something that was in the minutes back in August. Councillor Goodwin polished that off in a few hours a few days after he heard about it.

The railings talked about for over a year with no real project plan and as recently as December no proper specification, has now moved on. Once the council formed, the proposals were re-examined, proper specifications drawn up and reissued to interested parties. The work should start in the next two weeks. Local firm Platers have won the contract and significant savings have been made due to councillors helping out with the installation saving valuable funding. This means we will have a number of clear, large, easy to use notice boards available for our community groups, as well as for the council to use. Good bye A Frames – we may sell them off or re purpose them! Thanks to the commercial and technical skills of Councillors Orrill and Goodwin.

A comprehensive and detailed fire/health and Safety report for the Village Hall has been completed identifying many areas that need work. This is being led by Councillor Orrill whose expertise lies in commercial buildings and services. His initial quick scan identified many areas where the hall fell short. We have already properly sorted out the emergency lighting and signage. Proper certified sockets, capable of safely running items such as speakers, musical equipment and the like have been installed. Because we have live music rcd sockets were a temporary measure. We are soon to be getting hot water to wash our hands with, in the toilets! The boiler in the kitchen is no longer serviceable and will be replaced soon.

We have a new microwave after the last one was condemned.

All of the village hall repairs mentioned have been outstanding for a while

We have co-opted a fifth Councillor, Ian Bunn who will focus on safeguarding and building relationships within the community. He is also going to work with a couple of parishioners to look at what funding we can access.

Items reported as broken within the play park have been repaired.

We have seen the return of Live and Local in a well supported evening with Shekoyokh, who, according to the Evening Standard perform the best Balken and klezmer music in Britain. They also had us up dancing.

Councillor Helen Willerton is managing the Best Village Competition, with help from anyone who would like to be involved.

We have brought together a village hall working group to look at what we can do to make sure it works well for the village. Last year it was reported that there was a 43% increase in hiring, however we are currently in the position of a £7000.00 operational loss. We can do better.

We have started to talk to the Local GP Practice to see if we can collaboratively work together for the health of the village. Ideas are embryonic right now but they include the possibility of holding Patient Group Meetings, Chair Yoga, Community training.

You will hear this evening more about the idea for a Community Orchard, whilst this is an initiative set up by a private individual, there are many ideas of how this can be used for the benefit of the community.

There are talks ongoing to do something about saving the bridge to the football field. However, we must be aware that owners of the land surrounding this popular facility may have ideas on developing their land. It isn't a given.

The Calendar Picture Competition is open! Get your entries in before the end of October to be selected for the calendar at the 4 November Meeting, ready for publication soon after.

We are operating within the skilful eyes of Councillor Butters, whose past years leading the Parish Council will be essential to our endeavours.

Gosh all this in around 64 days! Imagine what we might do with 365?

It is imperative to thank our locum clerk for the incredible work to rebuild our finances and systems. The speed and accuracy of his work and presenting it to us in such a way so that we can understand it, has been amazingly efficient. Moving forward, a monthly PDF will go onto the web site so you will all see what we see. All finances.

Interestingly, all this extra work has been completed in what would have been the normal weekly hours for the current ex clerk who managed to get up to something like 19 hours a week.

Despite being badly maligned and persecuted by some in this village, we owe Tony Shaw a huge debt of gratitude for his work supporting us. I would expect anyone not in possession of the full facts of his unwarranted accusation of fraud to check up on the information before they give him and his wife further grief. And to the woman who turned her nose up in disgust and told me she would not engage with me because I am a friend of Tony, I say this. No one chooses my friends for me. Look to be part of the solution of reconciliation, not part of the problem. Tony, your work has been

outstanding and your professionalism remarkable. We could not have done this without you. Thank you

Next you are going to hear from local businesses and talented residents, also, the various community groups who are incredibly well supported. They are fortunate not to have the same formal bureaucracy that controls what a Parish Council can do. We hope to be able to work collaboratively with you over the coming months and hope to put to bed some of the misunderstandings of the past. I'll be clear. I would never and have never expected anyone to be at my beck and call. That would just be rude. I am as eager as anyone to roll up my sleeves and get stuck in. This council will focus on friendship and respect of all. No bullying, no isolating fellow councillors.

Bad behaviour annoys me and either they go or I do. I want to connect with people NOT impress them.

I'm quite Sensitive - always have been - always will be and stuff gets to me

I will always Keep it real

When necessary, I will just say "stuff it" and then, like Jesus, go overturn a few tables

I am open to listening to how you want the village to grow. In order to do this, we need more of you to get involved and join the council.

Chairing this meeting and reading this report is my last job before I stand down as chair. It's been an interesting year but not a particularly happy one.

Let's make the coming year a happy, peaceful one

Thank you.

Councillor Lynne Gale

Chair North Thoresby Grainsby & Waithe Parish Council

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