



Newsletter December 2021

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Let's get the bad news out of the way first. We regret that we constantly have to report deficiencies within Harrogate Borough Council but we firmly believe our parishioners should know what we face in dealing with that authority and how it affects us all.

## PLANNING

The planning system across the whole country is in need of a major overhaul but, nearer to home, the consensus is that most of HBC's planning department simply isn't fit for purpose. We'll explain why.

**Dunlopillo** – as you're aware, the plans were passed for a monstrosity that seems to have drawn design inspiration from Dartmoor Prison. We mentioned that HBC were holding an investigation into what went wrong when they passed the so-called permitted development for the old office block without following correct procedure. Needless to say, we have heard nothing about the lessons they are supposed "to have learnt". We will press for an answer but expect the usual obfuscation.

We sent a letter to The Right Honourable Michael Gove MP (who now heads Housing/Planning after the less than spectacular Robert Jenrick MP) and heard back from a civil servant that they couldn't comment on an individual case and referred us to the relevant section of planning law which he said they had no intention to change. We at your Parish Council - and primarily through diligent investigation by Cllr Dave Oswin - were already conversant with this section but apparently HBC didn't know how to operate it. Once again, it seems the civil servants are making the decisions rather than elected MPs. We will be lobbying Andrew Jones MP to press the case for specific action.

**Police Training College** - As you are aware, we have no faith in either the word of HBC's planners nor confidence in its planning committee. There are exceptions with some councillors and officers but as a whole, they failed yet again. They caved into bullying by Homes England who were aided and abetted by HBC officers and the reserve chairman for the committee. HBC had stated in June of this year that NO application for more houses on Harrogate's Western Arc would be considered until the ill-fated Parameters Plan had been signed off. They reneged on that at the slightest hint of a challenge, so we'll get 23% more homes and no significant improvement in highways to cater for the additional traffic.

The way in which the meeting continued after Cllr John Mann vacated the chair (having objected to the proposal himself) made one think that the now infamous Handforth Parish Council looked professional by comparison. Unfortunately, there was no Jackie Weaver to stop interjections by Homes England and officers or incorrect assertions by the stand-in chairman. One wonders why many of the councillors do not acquaint themselves with the detail of the proposals before making decisions. There may be grounds to challenge the procedure in this fiasco. There were falsehoods aplenty, bullying verging on blackmail and a clear hand-in-glove working between HBC officers and developers.

**Rossett Green Lane** - Some months back, HBC's planning committee failed yet again in permitting a type of development that should never have been allowed. Many councillors on that committee just didn't understand what was going on. Their only thought appeared to be – let's pass this, otherwise there could be an appeal with associated costs.

These are just some examples affecting our parish. HBC was also castigated for its performance over a Spofforth application. As a result of constantly giving in to developers, they all now know that HBC is a pushover when it comes to planning applications.

**Parameters Plan** - HBC has also reneged on an agreement to give your Parish Council a specific meeting on traffic and transport issues that will affect our parish. We had a meeting with others in early October where, as previously reported, they told us nothing new except £15M would be available for cycling, footpaths, public and active travel but no specifics on highways. HBC, in an effort to placate unrest, has cited several occasions where we have had contact with them but fail to recognise that contact doesn't necessarily equate to meaningful discussion. In this case, there is abject failure on HBC's behalf of any real interchange of views or indeed a view of any of the proposals. We have written to the cabinet member for planning to complain.

We thank HAPARA and our local neighbouring parish councils for their support in challenging the secrecy and lack of openness and interaction with HBC. Ours should not be some closed, totalitarian society but that is what HBC portrays.

## **UNITARY AUTHORITY**

Our parish councillors had the opportunity to listen to a presentation on how the new unitary authority (North Yorkshire Council [NYC]) will be set up and function. The content of this presentation is on our website. There were several questions from parish councillors throughout North Yorkshire and written answers to these will be available shortly. One of particular concern, voiced not only by Pannal and Burn Bridge Parish Council but also by other councils, concerned the transfer of staff from HBC to NYC. There will be no selection process as all staff will be subject to TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings [Protection of Employment]) rules. This means that the HBC planning department, which already has the reputation of being the worst in the North of England (and further afield, we now learn), could be moved en masse to NYC. Such a move would mean the continuation of a level of service and competence that doesn't augur well for the future for our area.

There may be opportunities for parish councils to take on more responsibilities, especially if / when there will be a new mayor for North Yorkshire with an increase in income from central government. It is imperative therefore that Pannal and Burn Bridge continues with a strong parish council after elections in May 2022 while the new council (NYC) beds in during the transition period until 30th April 2023 when it becomes autonomous.

Please consider now putting yourself forward for election on May 5th. We will give more details at Pannal Village Hall's open day on the afternoon of January 29th 2022 from 2 to 5pm. Failure to field enough candidates at this election would mean being subsumed back into HBC and thence to NYC. That is unthinkable!

Now, after the bare facts of the bad news, we can advise about good news.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Steering Group (chaired by Cllr Cathy Burrell) has been engaged in marathon Zoom sessions going through the various topics necessary to complete the draft of the plan that will be available early in the New Year. This will be a very important document to both promote and protect our parish in the years to

come. Again, if you have any questions or further comments, please let us know or if you want to know first-hand, our consultant, Mike Dando, will be present at that village hall open day.

### **PANNAL GREEN LIGHTS**

You will all have noticed that the Christmas lights were switched on during the afternoon of December 1<sup>st</sup> and will remain operational until Twelfth Night. Despite some of them being trashed by the fall of part of an ash tree belonging to HBC, the Parish Council paid for their replacement. Thanks also to County Cllr Cliff Trotter for making a contribution to the cost.

### **RINGWAY FOOTPATH**

After yet another intervention by the Parish Council, NYCC has finally added some hardcore to the diverted path just down from the cricket club. What we predicted would become a morass duly became so after some heavy rain. Now at least that stretch is passable. We thanked NYCC for its efforts but still await an answer as to the long-term restitution of the path along the river bank after its failed repair attempt.

### **CAROLS ON THE GREEN**

To have this joyous event back on again was wonderful. It really is a sign that Christmas is just around the corner and the spirit of giving is well and truly back. Pennies short of £250 was collected during the evening for Frank's Fund (chosen by parishioners via Facebook) with this sum to be supplemented by £250 from the Parish Council. There is, to-date, a further £65 on the Frank's Fund JustGiving page which will be open for any additional contributions until Christmas Eve: please find the link here:

[https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/carolsonthegreen211?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=fundraising&utm\\_content=carolsonthegreen211&utm\\_campaign=pfp-share&utm\\_term=bd352cafb3f14c9e92fa54040c4b28ab](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/carolsonthegreen211?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=fundraising&utm_content=carolsonthegreen211&utm_campaign=pfp-share&utm_term=bd352cafb3f14c9e92fa54040c4b28ab)

Thank you to all our parishioners who attended the event, for your generosity and for making it such a memorable occasion. We also thank Mrs Jane Turner, Headteacher, for her warm welcome and provision of such excellent school facilities for the refreshments. It would not have been possible, of course, without the organisation and attendance of choirmaster Mr Iain Ward-Campbell, and the fabulous Tewit Well Band: their lead and accompaniment were truly valued and appreciated.

We wish you all a super festive season and a chance to recuperate before what promises to be an interesting and challenging time for our parish in the New Year.

Merry Christmas and good health to everyone.

Best wishes

Howard West, Chairman, [howard.west@pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk](mailto:howard.west@pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk)

and Dave Oswin, Deputy Chairman, and Councillors Cathy Burrell, Ian Birchall, Steve Cobb and Ryan Dall

For reference, the most recent newsletter is always posted on the Village Notice Board (at the Village Hall) and all newsletters are posted on the website here: <http://www.pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk/Documents.aspx>

Also, if you use Facebook, please join our group where you'll get any breaking news more quickly than through these periodic newsletters:

<https://www.facebook.com/Pannal-and-Burn-Bridge-Parish-Council-1655335551445518/>