

**NUNTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT JULY 2021**

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*It is a pleasure to present an outline of the activities of Nunthorpe Parish Council between the Parish Council Meeting on 6th May 2020 and the commencement of the Parish Council Meeting on 7th July 2021. With the exception of the most recent meeting on 17th June 2021, all public sessions have been held electronically - an indication of the special challenges of a year when we experienced varying degrees of "lockdown".*

*On the other hand, some residents have found it more convenient to attend meetings via Zoom. Other residents kept in touch without attending meetings. The Parish Council's Social Media Policy was discussed on several occasions, resulting in greater readership of our Facebook page. Also, the decision of the Parish Council to launch Greater Nunthorpe News (with co-sponsors the Nunthorpe Community Council and ourGreenways) has enabled the Parish Council to keep residents updated on our activities on a regular basis. Feedback through social media, and in response to the distribution of Greater Nunthorpe News, indicates considerable support from Nunthorpe residents for the wide range of activities undertaken without remuneration by Nunthorpe's Parish Councillors.*

*The availability of quarterly Parish Council reports in Greater Nunthorpe News has also facilitated preparation of this Annual Report, which is essentially a collation of the four outlines already distributed to every household in Nunthorpe, extended to incorporate other matters recorded in the minutes of the Parish Council.*

## **1. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

### **1.1 Nunthorpe Vision and "Nunthorpe Nineteen"**

From before our meeting in May 2020, the Parish Council has been instrumental in promoting and establishing the Nunthorpe Vision Group. In two documents, we presented the Group with a series of proposals for our future, summarised on the Parish Council webpage as our five minimum requirements.

After the Nunthorpe Vision Group initiated a consultation with particular focus on Nunthorpe Grange, the Parish Council arranged a special meeting in July 2020 for residents to contribute to discussion, in addition to encouraging feedback to our Clerk. When many responses via several sources confirmed considerable scepticism about the consultative process (in view of Nunthorpe's experience of sustained house-building without commensurate infrastructure), the Parish Council made representations to the Mayor and Council that a significant initiative would be essential in order to make progress.

The Mayor responded with a series of pledges which constitute the “Nunthorpe Nineteen”. Although these pledges incorporate the minimum requirements previously specified by the Parish Council, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Parish Council have continued to press Officers of Middlesbrough Council to show how each of these commitments will be implemented. By the meeting in July 2021, Officers had therefore drafted a comprehensive project plan consisting of a list of action-points for each of the nineteen pledges, and indicating the stages when we can expect to see results. Of particular significance is the combination of Commitment 1 (limiting housebuilding on Nunthorpe Grange to a maximum of 250 houses) and Commitment 19 (establishing “a mechanism for Nunthorpe Parish Council to monitor implementation of the undertakings outlined above, and to ensure delivery”).

## **1.2 Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan**

In parallel, the Parish Council launched a second strategic initiative - establishment of a Neighbourhood Plan for Greater Nunthorpe - with the aim of obtaining significantly more influence over the development of our area. With guidance from specialist advisors from “Locality”, residents were encouraged to respond to a consultation circulated to every household about their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of living in Nunthorpe. This was followed by a survey of younger residents attending Nunthorpe Academy. Both of these surveys achieved impressively high levels of response.

As all residents of Nunthorpe are affected by developments on both sides of the railway line, the Parish Council boundaries appear inappropriate for a Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan. However, this poses a fundamental question - “Where is Nunthorpe?”- about which we sought feedback from all households and from various interested parties. A survey of residents in Yew Tree Grove and Milan Grove indicated enthusiasm not only to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, but also to be incorporated within the boundaries of Nunthorpe Parish Council. On the other hand, Guisborough Town Council requested that much of rural Nunthorpe should be excluded from participation in the project. All contributions were incorporated in various refinements of a map of Nunthorpe, culminating in the version included in the Summer 2021 edition of Greater Nunthorpe News.

In July 2021, the Parish Council is awaiting a response from Redcar & Cleveland Council and Middlesbrough Council on our formal submission of boundaries for designation as the Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan.

The Parish Council is also awaiting the “Nunthorpe Baseline Study” from Lichfields, initially due on 6th February 2021.

## **2. SPECIFIC STRATEGIC ISSUES.**

### **2.1 Nunthorpe Medical Centre**

The Parish Council shares the delight across Nunthorpe that planning permission has been granted to construct a Medical Centre in Nunthorpe Grange. We are also pleased that the revised plan incorporates a detailed proposal from the Parish to relocate the road access, but we are disappointed that Council Officers opposed our submission on the advantages of a pavement parallel to Stokesley Road to facilitate those arriving on foot, and on the importance of enhanced safety arrangements for those crossing Stokesley Road.

### **2.2 Persimmon**

The Parish Council submitted to Middlesbrough Council its rationale for opposition to proposals from Persimmon to construct 97 houses in Nunthorpe Grange, and so we were pleased to learn that Persimmon's appeal on the rejection of this application was unsuccessful. The Chair and Vice-Chair met directly with Persimmon management on several occasions to underline the stance of the Nunthorpe community. The Parish Council has also objected in considerable detail to Persimmon's revised proposal to construct 77 houses, but, by July 2021, this had not yet been scheduled for consideration by the Planning Committee of Middlesbrough Council.

### **2.3 Taylor Wimpey**

During the year, Taylor Wimpey published plans to construct 56 houses in Nunthorpe Grange, but, by July 2021, a formal planning application had not been submitted. The Chair and Vice-Chair have met on several occasions with representatives of Taylor Wimpey, conveying the particularly strong objections of residents to construction at this part of Nunthorpe Grange, and also to the proposal that access would be via Guisborough Road. There have been related conversations between representatives of the Parish Council and the immediate neighbours of the Taylor Wimpey site - the Nunthorpe and Marton Playing Fields Association.

### **2.4 Nunthorpe Community Centre**

The Parish Council has stressed to Middlesbrough Council throughout the year that rapid progress towards a building for the exclusive use of the community would provide tangible evidence of Middlesbrough's commitment to change. Accordingly, the Parish Council was pleased to be able to announce on 11th May that land adjacent to the Medical Centre has been made available by Middlesbrough Council for a dedicated Nunthorpe Community Centre (subject to planning permission). At the same time, it was confirmed that almost £1m. will be available for construction costs. Since the appointment of a Project Officer later in May, the Chair and Vice-Chair have been seeking from her, and her colleagues, the core information needed to enable the Nunthorpe Vision Group to engage in community consultation about the building.

## **2.5 Church Lane**

The Parish Council declined to participate in a challenge to the agreement in principle by the Executive of Middlesbrough Council to sell land in Church Lane to the Plymouth Brethren. On the other hand, the Plymouth Brethren were reminded that the Parish Council had already lodged an objection to outline proposals for the development of their current location in Gypsy Lane, and also that non-engagement in the challenge to the terms of the proposed sale of land in Church Lane should not be interpreted as preempting the response of the Parish Council when an application for development of the site in Church Lane is submitted in due course for planning approval.

## **2.6 Other Development Proposals**

The Parish Council was successful in objecting to a proposal to construct 69 properties at Ford Close. It also successfully opposed an application to construct nine dwellings in the Nunthorpe conservation area at Grey Towers Farm.

An application to discharge planning conditions in Grey Towers Village (David Wilson Homes) raised some concerns at the Parish Council about the transfer of responsibility for this large estate to a management committee.

# **3. PROJECTS**

## **3.1 Traffic Issues**

On numerous occasions during the year, the Parish Council agreed to send to Middlesbrough Council various recommendations to increase road safety in Nunthorpe. Although improvement of the junction at Dixons Bank / Guisborough Road / Brass Castle Lane remains an outstanding issue, we have received a more positive assurance about a lower speed limit being imposed along Dixons Bank. On the other hand, our reasoned case about the need for action in relation to Guisborough Road has not yet produced any results, other than a commitment to undertake a traffic survey. In feedback from a survey organised by the Parish Council, the majority of residents who responded confirmed support for at least one of several possible initiatives. Similarly, although we successfully made the case that relocation of vehicular access to the Medical Centre would significantly enhance safety, Middlesbrough Council was not persuaded about several concerns relating to Stokesley Road. Safety around schools also remains an unresolved issue.

### **3.2 Waste Management.**

The Parish Council considered all aspects of waste management, leading to establishment of our Waste Management Policy. This Policy ranges from measures to reduce fly-tipping in rural Nunthorpe and litter along the footpaths, to proposals about household waste collections, a Nunthorpe wood-chipping facility, and community access to the central tip at Haverton Hill. Although we invited Middlesbrough Council to engage in discussion about this Policy, our offer of constructive dialogue about this was not accepted until recent weeks, when Barrie Cooper was appointed as the Executive Member responsible for the environment. However, we have already been successful in relation to one specific component - acceptance of our objection to the fortnightly collection of general waste.

Towards the end of the year, consideration is being given to the potential purchase of a larger recycling bin at The Avenue Park. Although action is required because the current facilities are clearly inadequate, investigation of the proposal disclosed that Middlesbrough Council does not currently have arrangements for recycling waste deposited in public locations.

### **3.3 Bridleways, Cycleways, and Pedestrian Rights of Way.**

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has received representations about the respective rights and obligations of landowners and the general public in relation to pedestrian rights of way in Nunthorpe. From time to time, disagreement escalated into unpleasant exchanges in relation to the "Green Link" alongside Grey Towers. The Parish Council negotiated a statement on mutual respect which was posted on social media.

The Parish Council has taken the stance that resolution requires agreement on some fundamental legal facts, but obtaining the core documents from Middlesbrough Council has proved remarkably difficult, exacerbated by the number of Council Departments involved, concerns about releasing confidential documents, and the difficulty of researching archives during the pandemic. The relevant Council Officer attended a meeting of the Parish Council to explain the issues, but, due to the slow pace of progress during the year, the Parish Council requested the involvement of more senior Officers, and encouraged the Chief Executive of Middlesbrough Council to nominate a senior representative to join the Grey Towers Management Company. Unfortunately, it proved problematic to liaise with the Grey Towers Management Company on strategic matters because they were unable to hold meetings among themselves during the pandemic.

In short, disappointing progress was made at a strategic level, and the Parish Council became necessarily embroiled in attempting to resolve symptoms of the underlying issue - such as the location, nature and wording of signage; the removal of hazards (including fly-tipping and barbed wire); and the process of consultation when authorisation of temporary closure of a right of way is required (whether by Middlesbrough Council and / or the Forestry Commission).

Success at this operational level has included relocation of bollards, resurfacing, and removal of some hazards.

The Parish Council has been liaising with the Cleveland Police Engagement Team on an initiative named "Operation Gloucester". Although the primary focus of this team is rural communities, it also encompasses bridleways / pedestrian rights of way.

### **3.4 Trees, Flowers, and related developments.**

As the Parish Council has normally provided an annual grant to support "Nunthorpe in Bloom", the Parish Council has been concerned during the year about the convergence of two serious challenges facing this group - the pandemic, and the loss of several stalwarts of the organisation. So the Parish Council confirmed its continuing financial support as soon as a rejuvenated system of "adopters" and volunteers confirmed the viability of Nunthorpe in Bloom. The Parish Council also agreed that proposals to zone areas for wildflowers should be considered alongside an overall plan for Nunthorpe in Bloom, and, in this context, Middlesbrough Council Officers were informed of our preferred locations for wildflowers.

The Parish Council agreed, in principle, to join with our Greenways in seeking a lease from Middlesbrough Council of "Triangle Wood", at the entrance of Church Lane. By July 2021, the Council had removed the most dangerous of the trees at this location; but a source of funding (approximately £9,000) is still being sought to ensure safe access to "Triangle Wood" by Nunthorpe residents.

In accordance with the Parish Council's Trees Policy and undertakings given when Dixons Bank was widened, the relevant Officer of Middlesbrough Council attended a meeting of Middlesbrough Council and agreed to our request to plant a number of trees along Stainton Way. The Parish Council agreed to support an application for three oak trees to be listed with Tree Preservation Orders.

Agreement was reached for Council Officers to complete some improvements at The Avenue Park, including relocation of the rockery.

The Parish Council expressed support for a resident of Stokesley Road who had launched a "Community Cupboard". Although the Parish Council agreed in principle to develop this initiative into a community allotment, we were unable to make progress in the absence of an allocation from Middlesbrough Council of an appropriate site.

### **3.5 Anti-social Behaviour.**

A Neighbourhood Safety Officer of Middlesbrough Council, Debbie Shaughnessy, attended a meeting of the Parish Council and offered to liaise with the Parish Council - an offer which was

utilised several times during the year. The Parish Council expressed concern about the non-operation of CCTV at The Avenue Park and at the Southern Cross junction. Reports from Ms Shaughnessy, the Street Wardens and the police indicated that levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in Nunthorpe are relatively low - notable exceptions being the burglary at the Premier Store and the spike at the Avenue Park during the weekend of 19-21 March 2021. The Parish Council was represented at two meetings with the Mayor to agree several actions which might help reduce the likelihood of a similar experience. Several of these initiatives built on foundations already initiated by the Parish Council, such as liaison with Nunthorpe Academy, and use of social media and Greater Nunthorpe News to publicise contact details of PCSOs, Street Wardens, and the Neighbourhood Safety Team.

### **3.6 Benches**

The Parish Council's attention was drawn to a sculpture / bench which had been commissioned by a resident, but which had not been erected because of several unresolved issues. The Parish Council circulated a survey to residents of Nunthorpe Village, being the location proposed by the donor and sculptor. In the light of some concerns identified during this consultation, the Parish Council investigated a series of alternative locations, but eventually concluded that, on balance, the site originally proposed is the most appropriate. Other outstanding issues were also resolved, enabling the iconic sculpture to be unveiled, gaining considerable positive publicity for Nunthorpe.

The Parish Council agreed to liaise with our Greenways about the location of a bench in memory of Parish Councillor John Harrison and the location of a bench offered to the Parish Council by the Plymouth Brethren.

### **3.7 Community Facilities and Community Support**

At the start of the Pandemic, the Parish Council agreed to circulate a leaflet to residents, offering the support of volunteers for vulnerable individuals by delivering such necessities as groceries and prescriptions. This service was greatly appreciated.

The Parish Council sponsored prizes for events organised by Nunthorpe residents for the VE celebration, and made a donation to the Royal British Legion in November 2020. Financial support was approved in principle for the Nunthorpe History Society, the annual maintenance of the sculpture / bench in Nunthorpe Village, and the lease of land in Triangle Wood.

The Parish Council also agreed to contribute to town-wide initiatives planned for Middlesbrough over Christmas, and the Mayor responded immediately by exchanging ideas with us about complementary activities which the Parish Council might coordinate. Unfortunately Middlesbrough Council was unable to provide timely clarification of how our offer might be

incorporated, but the Parish Council proceeded with its backstop plan - support for the Community Council's Christmas Toy Appeal.

The Parish Council agreed to be the primary contributor towards purchase of a defibrillator, currently being installed at the Premier Store in The Avenue.

Funding was also approved for the purchase and erection of additional Christmas lighting on Guisborough Road.

The Parish Council endorsed requests to Middlesbrough Council for the provision of additional "dog bins", and has considered the potential purchase of a large bin at the Avenue Park. Although the impetus for this is the need to cope with the volume of waste generated at this location, it has been suggested that such a purchase could become an attractive addition to the features in the Park.

## **4. REPORTS**

### **4.1 Correspondence from Associated Organisations.**

The Parish Council received monthly reports from the Nunthorpe and Marton Playing Fields Association, and the Parish Council nominated the Chair to represent it on the NMPFA. In addition to liaison between the NMPFA and the Parish Council about Nunthorpe Grange, the most significant development during the year was the resolution of an issue between the NMPFA and the Nunthorpe Community Council, resulting in repayment to the Parish Council of a donation from the Parish Council to enable the Fireworks Event in 2019 to take place without an admission charge.

The Parish Council received regular reports from the Executive of the Nunthorpe Community Council. Although the usual activities of the NCC were curtailed by the pandemic, the Parish Council appreciated the leadership of the Community Council in relation to organised litter-picking, the Christmas Toy Appeal, and liaison with Nunthorpe in Bloom.

### **4.2 Correspondence from Individuals**

Communications from residents have always been reported on the list circulated to Parish Councillors for every meeting. A more detailed outline of the concerns of individual residents, and actions taken to resolve them, is now presented within a new item entitled "Chair's Report". Correspondence has included concerns about a pony, rats, hedgehogs, overhanging branches, and pavement congestion.

## **5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Parish Council approved publication of a statement in the Winter 2020 edition of Greater Nunthorpe News outlining the role of the Parish Council in the process of residents obtaining planning permission from Middlesbrough Council. We were disappointed not to be successful in our request for Middlesbrough Council's Scrutiny Committee to review the difficulties experienced by residents in utilising the Planning Portal. Few of the applications submitted during the year by individual residents were opposed by the Parish Council, but particular scrutiny was given to applications entailing the incidental removal of trees, and applications for the private acquisition of land previously available to the public. In the interests of equity, the Parish Council has taken a strong stance against developments undertaken by the owners of two properties before planning permission was obtained (particularly as applications for retrospective planning permission were denied in both of these cases.)

## **6. PARISH COUNCIL CONSTITUTION and ORGANISATION.**

### **6.1 Membership**

During the year, Membership remained at three elected Parish Councillors and three co-opted Parish Councillors. At the meeting held on 17th June 2021, it was agreed to co-opt Carol McArdle and Mike Eccles. On 5th May 2021, Morgan McClintock was re-elected as Chair, and Wade Tovey was re-elected as Vice-Chair, both having been first appointed to these positions in May 2020.

Most Members undertake roles as Lead Councillors on significant areas of the Parish Council's activities. At the end of the period covered by this report, they are as follows:

Wade Tovey.	Nunthorpe Vision.	Neighbourhood Plan.
Stephen Thomason.	Planning Applications	Traffic.
Adrian Walker.	Anti-social behaviour.	Bridleways / Pedestrian Rts of Way
Mieka Smiles.	Grey Towers Village	

The Parish Council recorded its appreciation of the service of Ken Tomlinson, who retired as Chair of the Parish Council just before our meeting in May 2020. As a token of appreciation for his service as the leader of the Parish Council for nearly seven years, and for the many contributions to Nunthorpe by Leslie Tomlinson (particularly as Secretary of the Community Council), the Parish Council agreed to present Ken and Leslie with an ornamental gift.

### **6.2 Clerk**

During the year, the Parish Council negotiated an agreement with the Clerk on a written contract of employment and on an associated job description.

### **6.3 Finances**

The meeting held on 17th June 2021 endorsed the draft statement of accounts for 2020/2021, and the associated statements confirming that the arrangements for financial governance are acceptable to Parish Councillors, and comply with the relevant regulations.

It was noted that the reduction in community activities entailed by the pandemic had resulted in income (£10,489) exceeding expenditure (£8,176) by approximately £1,000 during 2020/2021, (after taking account of the commitment to contribute a large portion of the defibrillator cost.) Balancing the need to retain sums for contingencies and the need to cover our recurrent operating expenses alongside the availability of annual income (from the precept) and the availability of the disposable component of the reserves, the Parish Council is in a position to allocate approximately £10,000 on grants, events, equipment, facilities and projects during 2021/2022.

Although the Parish Council noted that its risks are minimal, it endorsed arrangements to manage these risks. As insurance is one component of risk management, the Parish Council reviewed our insurance cover before accepting a policy proposal for the following year.

### **6.4 Schedule of Meetings.**

After discussion at several meetings, it was agreed to schedule regular meetings every two months from January 2021, rather than every month. This change is in recognition of the enhanced arrangements for liaison between residents and the Parish Council. These include sponsorship of a quarterly publication (Greater Nunthorpe News) in which every edition leads with the "Nunthorpe Parish Council Update" and other information items; regular announcements on the Parish Council webpage, the Parish Council Facebook page, and the Nunthorpe Vision Facebook page; and an enhanced network of communications through the range of partners represented on the Nunthorpe Vision Group. All of these provide opportunities for feedback which are increasingly utilised by residents. The Parish Council agreed a resolution on communication with residents between meetings, and refined arrangements for communication among Parish Councillors and between the Parish Council and other organisations.

The reduction in frequency of meetings also necessitated the introduction of some alteration in the conduct of meetings, such as the circulation of written reports prior to meetings, and the introduction of specific points on the agenda for contributions from residents who are not Parish Councillors.

Finally, at the meeting held on 17th June 2021, it was agreed to schedule future meetings on the third Thursday of every second month, to facilitate attendance at the Wednesday meetings of Middlesbrough Council.

## **6.5 Functions and Boundaries**

As the focus of the law regulating the operation of Parish Councils is on the exercise of the “functions” of a specific Parish Council, Nunthorpe Parish Council asked the Principal Solicitor of Middlesbrough Council to clarify the rights and responsibilities of Nunthorpe Parish Council, as decreed when we were established in 1986. He replied that Middlesbrough Council does not have records relating to the critical period of 1984-1986. An appeal for help from readers of Greater Nunthorpe News was also unsuccessful in tracking down the relevant formal minutes of Middlesbrough Council’s meetings. The result of considerable time spent investigating this matter is that, although we know that Middlesbrough Council was instructed to arrange the first elections for Nunthorpe Parish Council in March 1986, no terms of reference or “functions” appear to have been established for the first Parish Councillors, or subsequently.

On the other hand, the boundaries of Nunthorpe Parish are very precisely identified. They are not identical to Middlesbrough’s map of the ward of Nunthorpe, with the result that the residents of Yew Tree Grove and Milan Grove are not within the Civil Parish of Nunthorpe. This divergence became very apparent during the exercise to answer the question “Where is Nunthorpe?” for the purposes of designation of boundaries for the Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan. The issue was underlined when Middlesbrough Council discovered that it had erroneously included the Parish precept on invoices to these residents. Middlesbrough Council was then asked by the Parish Council to permanently rectify the anomaly by aligning the boundaries. We were informed that this would require a major exercise overseen by Middlesbrough Council known as a “Governance Review”. As this would only be worth the effort if there is consensus in favour among the relevant residents, the Parish Council undertook a survey of the households, which indicated considerable support for proceeding with this initiative.

## **6.6 Other Constitutional Issues.**

Standing Orders were amended in relation to correspondence, and recast in a gender-neutral format. The Co-option Policy was amended to align with the current practice of requiring recent attendance at three meetings. Draft revisions to the Code of Conduct were considered. A webpage accessibility audit was undertaken.

The Parish Council endorsed the objections lodged by the Middlesbrough Alternative Planning Partnership to changes proposed by the Government to the national planning framework.

## **6.7 Parish Council Logo and Photography**

The Parish Council sponsored a competition in Greater Nunthorpe News to find a new logo to sit alongside those of Nunthorpe Vision, the Community Council, and ourGreenways. Colin Hurworth was successful with his design of a map of Nunthorpe, incorporating a compass and a railway track.

Another competition sponsored by the Parish Council attracted a number of outstanding photographs of Nunthorpe. Kay Gannon's entry was voted by the public to be the winner, and her beautiful picture of rural Nunthorpe featured in the Spring edition of Greater Nunthorpe News.

*This personal perspective of the Parish Council's activities during 2020/2021 was presented to Parish Councillors in June 2020 and amended to incorporate additions and refinements received by Parish Councillors before publication during the meeting held on 7th July 2021.*

Morgan McClintock,  
Chair,  
7 July 2021

## **Appendix      MEETINGS of NUNTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **2020**

May 6  
June 3  
July 1  
July 29.      (Nunthorpe Vision consultation)  
September 2  
October 7  
October 21.      (G.N.N. Business Plan approval)  
November 4  
December 2

### **2021**

January 6  
March 3  
May 5  
June 17.      (Accounts 2020/2021 and Co-options)

