

Ward Councillor Report to Nunthorpe Parish Council - November 2023

1. COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

1.1. Council Meetings

- Since my previous report to the Parish Council, there were meetings of Middlesbrough Council on 18th September and 25th October. Although both meetings were preoccupied with the financial prospects for Middlesbrough Council, I took the opportunity in September to draw attention to various **problems faced by Nunthorpe residents** during the summer - including green bins unemptied for a month, bins in public areas overflowing, and erratic grass-cutting. In response, I was offered a meeting with the Executive Member for the Environment and his Director, which gave me another chance to make the case for several of Nunthorpe's continuing issues.
- During the October meeting, I queried the proposal for a small group of four Labour politicians to devise - in private - a comprehensive **Local Plan** ready for formal consultation, rather than first seek consensus on the principles of the Middlesbrough Vision to be implemented by a Local Plan. It will be a concern for Nunthorpe if the starting point, rather than the finishing point, of the Local Plan is a statement on the number of houses which could fit on the diminishing undeveloped areas of Middlesbrough. One potential component recently announced is the sale of the field at Muirfield for a housing development.

1.2. Planning Committee.

- The October meeting of the Planning Committee included on the agenda the proposal to provide additional equipment at the **play-park off The Avenue**. This was a surprise because the proposal was identical to that deferred at the previous meeting in order for further consultation to take place, and no-one in Nunthorpe appeared to be aware of any discussion since "Option 1" was first drafted. So, I persuaded Officers to remove the item from the agenda. There was then a meeting when I asked the relevant Council Officer to prepare "Option 2", whereby the exercise equipment would be relocated away from the footpath between The Resolution and The Avenue shops - the primary concern of residents about "Option 1". Since then, due to a significant increase in anti-social activity at and around the area, I have asked for an "Option 3", whereby all the funding allocated for exercise equipment (as distinct from the funding for children's equipment) might be diverted to the provision of improved lighting at the park. At the time of writing, no revised options have been provided by Officers. Meanwhile, as exercise equipment remains a significant gap in the facilities of Nunthorpe, an appropriate location will be sought for exercise equipment in the context of consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The October meeting also included an application to construct eight houses partly in a **Conservation Zone adjacent to Grey Towers Farm**. I vacated my seat on the Committee for this item, so that I could follow the Parish Council Chair in making the second of the two speeches against the proposal. Although Officers recommended approval, we managed to persuade the majority of Members not to create a precedent by building in a Conservation Zone. We also argued that, if any houses were to be built in Nunthorpe, we need bungalows rather than more "executive homes".

- The main item on the agenda of the November meeting was the application by Lidl to construct a store on the **former site of the College of Art and Design** on Green Lane. As we have ample experience in Nunthorpe of over-emphasis on housing development without commercial or community facilities, this proposal had its attractions. However, I concluded that Lidl had not made sufficient effort to adapt its standard “box” design as appropriate for a site immediately adjacent to the Linthorpe Conservation Zone, and therefore I voted against the application.

1.3. Overview and Scrutiny Board

- The Scrutiny Board decided to recommend to the Boundary Commission an increase of one in the total number of Middlesbrough’s Councillors. The debate will then begin within the Scrutiny Board on the most appropriate ward boundaries for equitable distribution of whatever number of Councillors the Boundary Commission allocates to Middlesbrough. In the context of the negotiations last year between Nunthorpe Parish Council and Middlesbrough Council on the boundary of Nunthorpe, the Parish Council will wish to make representations on whether our Parish / Ward boundary should change again.

1.4. Nunthorpe and Marton Playing Fields Association.

- At the time of writing, I have not yet been invited to a meeting of the NMPFA, despite being appointed to the Management Committee as a representative of Middlesbrough Council. Councillor Davison (Marton East), who was appointed to the NMPFA alongside me in May, has resigned from this role, and Councillor Smiles was appointed by Middlesbrough Council in October to replace Councillor Davison on the NMPFA.

2. NUNTHORPE DEVELOPMENTS

2.1. Public Rights of Way and Bridleways

- When the formal Order proposing the diversion of one of the PRoWs near **Nunthorpe Village** was published, I reminded the relevant Officer that neither I, nor the Parish Council, is likely to lodge an objection to the Order if account is taken of our concerns. This resulted in a written statement sent to me about maintenance of the diverted PRoW, an undertaking to improve access for those with limited mobility, and a commitment to regular review walks along Nunthorpe’s PRoWs, starting with the one which the Rights of Way Officer undertook with Councillor McArdle and myself on 15th November.
- I have been briefed about a major drainage project at The Avenue Park to enhance the pathway at the rear of **Cornwall Close**.
- Following representations from Nunthorpe’s farming and equestrian residents, I have drafted a paper for Middlesbrough’s Director of Environmental Services on the danger for horses of uncontrolled **ragwort on Council land**, such as on the area adjacent to the Medical Centre.

2.2. Speeding

- In response to requests, I have negotiated with our local PCSO the locations for Speedwatch operations in Nunthorpe which will begin soon.

2.3. Traffic and related infrastructure issues.

- As Chair of the Traffic Infrastructure Group preparing the Traffic Infrastructure component of the **Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan**, I have taken on board all representations made to me about issues affecting pedestrians, cyclists, users of public transport, and motorists. This includes Nunthorpe's perennial problem of inconsiderate and/or illegal parking near schools, which I observed when accompanying police during their operations outside schools at Chandlers Ridge and The Avenue. Publication of this chapter of the draft Neighbourhood Plan will enable feedback from all residents on how best to deal with these critical matters.
- Meanwhile I used the meeting with Councillor Gavigan (see 1.1 above) to outline the state of Nunthorpe's **pavements**, drawing particular attention to Guisborough Road. I underlined this more recently during a "Ward Walk" on 8th November when I literally pointed out to a team of Council Officers some examples of the problems faced by Nunthorpe's pedestrians.
- Although I have managed to get some large **potholes in roads** repaired in recent weeks, I keep drawing Middlesbrough Council's attention to the growing backlog in dealing with potholes, quite apart from responding to the need for the comprehensive road resurfacing required in parts of Nunthorpe.
- Although the issue of **bus routes** has now been resolved, I continue to press for accurate and comprehensive timetables at bus-stops. (Four agencies have a role in this, but none accepts overall responsibility.)

2.4. Area Care

- At the meeting with Councillor Gavigan, I showed how the inadequacies of the contingency plans were compounded by very poor or zero **communications** to residents about a range of poor services. More recently, there was a considerable improvement in their announcements about how the Council would support residents impacted by Storm Babet.

2.5. Anti-Social Behaviour

- Residents of **Marton Moor Road / Rookwood Road** are concerned about verbal abuse and property damage, which we are trying to resolve with assistance from Middlesbrough Council and Cleveland Police.
- There has been a resurgence of complaints about persistent dog-barking disturbing the sleep of residents at **High Gill / Matfen Avenue**, the seriousness of which I have emphasised to the relevant Council Officers.
- Following the disturbing incidents at **The Avenue Park** (referred to at 1.2. above), Cleveland Police undertook to increase the frequency of patrols in this area and I attended a meeting about enhancing arrangements for reporting incidents through improved liaison between Cleveland Police and the Nunthorpe and Marton Neighbourhood Watch.

2.6. Grey Towers

- There has been some progress in relation to management of the public open spaces and Pond 1, but in other parts of Grey Towers Village, I am assisting the residents who remain dissatisfied with the response from David Wilson Homes.

3. OTHER NUNTHORPE ACTIVITIES.

3.1. Community Support

- In addition to responding to developments relating to my role as a Parish Councillor, I have continued to support events and activities organised by a range of Nunthorpe's community organisations, including the Methodist Church, St Mary's Church, Nunthorpe and Marton Knitters, and ourGreenways.

3.2. Case Work.

- Above all, I try to help residents who come to me with a range of issues. I am pleased with how residents have responded to my standing invitation to come to the Ward Surgeries at the Methodist Church where I am joined by the Parish Council Chair or Vice-Chair on the first Monday of every month (or second Monday when the first is a public holiday).

Councillor Morgan McClintock

19th November 2023