

After what seems like a very long time since the Parish Council took back full control of Osboldwick Village Hall in Autumn 2022 it is a relief to be able to write a Chairman's Report that is able to say that the renovation/rebuilding project is almost complete.

The past year was once again dominated with dealing with this project that saw the Parish Council secure an additional PWLB loan to complete the fit out of the building and whilst increasing the Parish Council borrowing was not something to be desired it was like the original loan transacted in the knowledge that the payments are to be met from the rental payments from the Montessori Nursery operating from the building.

Even whilst works were ongoing to parts of the building the Montessori Nursery began operating from the building and rent payment commenced in July 2024 which was vital for the business to get underway and for the Parish Council to meet loan obligations, the business continues to attract more customers and most importantly from the Parish Council perspective operates with minimal impact on neighbours in terms of parking and noise.

There is still minor decoration to finish inside the building, the allotment area to finish and access issues to conclude with Northern Powergrid to that area but all major expenditure has concluded and the separate Finance Meetings that we have had to run for the last two years have concluded.

Thanks must be extended to the Clerk for all the additional work and time this project had brought her as most of it was well outside the remit of 'normal' Parish Council administration, once this year's audit is concluded then the Parish Council work should return back to normal levels for the Clerk.

There are still some loose administrative ends to tie up, notably with regard to an erroneous Business Rates demand for the period the building was out of use due to the renovation, the fact that the PC have been unable to even submit the required information through the ludicrous VOA system is now the subject of a complaint to the Adjudicators Office. Correspondence is ongoing with Northern Powergrid over access to the land at the front of the substation to the allotment area which had been in place since 2014.

The York Design Awards Judges visited the building on the 12th May after one of the residents attending the open weekend events in March suggested we entered.

The open weekend and official opening event were held in March and were well attended and the public space in the building is now in regular use for various classes and events.

So with this project as good as finished it's important to reflect that the works have been done with minimal cost to parishioners, the structural integrity of the building has been restored with a much improved energy performance and a very much increased property valuation

The main proportion of the borrowing will be repaid within ten years and it is hoped future Parish Council memberships recognise the work put into this project to protect this building for the future whilst still retaining it under Parish Council ownership.

Whilst this project understandably took much of the time and attention of the Parish Council in the last year the usual matters were not neglected and as ever Parish Council land was maintained to a high standard by contractors along with usual enhancements on CYC Highways Land with barrels and troughs replanted.

The Parish Council were active in making representations on planning matters throughout the year including the ongoing student HMO conversions that so upset parishioners.

It needs noting however that the Parish faces huge development pressure in the coming year since the York Local Plan has been approved, a huge 845 home development (ST 7) is awaiting the submission of its application for the piece accessed from Murton Way, the strategy of the Parish Council obtaining planning permission for the 10 acres of land within ST 7 as a Green Burial Area (now lapsed) should become apparent in coming months.

As well as this huge house scheme there is the very real possibility that every field between Osboldwick and Murton will be industrialised with Battery Electrical Storage Systems (BESS) installations to link into the National Grid site, as this report is written we await a date for the Public Inquiry into the refusal of one of these large applications.

If as feared this Inquiry upholds the appeal then all the ongoing BESS applications would likely then be approved representing a permanent and very damaging change to this area.

The Parish also faces huge developments around the area that will have great impact on the highway networks around and through Osbaldwick.

At the moment we await progress by CYC on resolving the parking issues deliberately created in areas of Osbaldwick by University and Archbishop Holgate's School related parking, it's certainly my view as Parish Council Chairman and Ward Councillor that I will oppose any attempt by CYC to impose expensive residents parking zones in this area.

This Parish Council remains disappointed in the lack of communication with North Yorkshire Police and equally the lack of any visible police presence on the streets in the Parish, a situation that has only got worse in the last year.

Of particular concern to a good many residents in the early part of January was the flooding event that took place through Osbaldwick Village, the Foss Internal Drainage Board, Environment Agency and City of York Council are being engaged in correspondence at the moment to come up with answers and reassurance.

Hopefully future Chairman's reports will not be dominated by the Village Hall and progress on other matters can come to the fore such as renovation of the Parish Council bus shelters or the Green Burial Area in the future.

Mark Warters.

20th May 2025.