

Tickhill Town Council Electors Meeting Speech 2023

By the time you read this we should have started on a remodeling of the Pavilion, a project severely impacted by Covid. The intent remains to turn the building into an asset, of use to the community, rather than the financial burden it has become over the past few years. We perhaps need to remember that it belongs to all of us. The more it's used by us, the cheaper it becomes on a day-to-day basis. We have already installed an impressive sound and video system, which is simply waiting to be used.

We have installed EV charging points into St Mary's car park. Although the initial take-up was slow, they are steadily increasing in use, a trend we hope continues. We have done some preliminary maintenance to the surface and have started to build a cash reserve which will hopefully pay for full resurfacing in about 3 to 4 years' time. In the corner of car park is a smart new notice board. Although we make extensive use of online media, we have a legal obligation to 'display notices in a prominent position'.

Doncaster Council levy a business rate on the car park which costs us around £3,500 a year. We continue to dispute this, as to date, we have levied no charge to those parking there. As difficult as it is, we need to develop a solution which makes this facility cost neutral. It has also become a significant cost over the past few years and like the Pavilion, it needs to become cost neutral.

During the year we initiated two fundraising campaigns. Firstly, we'd tried to light the town beacon on the Buttercross in celebration of the Queens Jubilee. Perhaps the least said about it, the better. We worked out that a permanent installation on the Buttercross would cost us around £2000. We raised about £400 before some kind individual popped £2000 through my letterbox. Dexter Pollard also came to our rescue by constructing a suitable housing below the surface of the paving, so our thanks go out to both the mystery donor as well as Dexter Pollard. It is our intention to light it at 9pm on Friday 5th May at the start of the coronation weekend, something we're not required to do, but in the light of the jubilee non-event, we'll 'risk it'. I should also mention our supply of logs, kindly donated by Tickhill Barn Dried Logs.

Hopefully you'll have all noticed the lights on the Buttercross. Numerous colours along with the fact that we're using them to mark different events throughout the year, and yes, we'll be marking the Coronation. If you have any requests, please let us know. We're already looking at lighting for Xmas 2023, and further work on the Buttercross lighting remains on the table.

We also entered into a Crowd Funding Venture with a view to providing a speed camera on Northgate and upgrading the existing cameras on both Westgate and Sunderland Street.

Unfortunately, we failed to attract sufficient support and returned all donations. Its perhaps ironic that Road Safety easily tops the number of messages we receive and yet we are unable to persuade either residents or public bodies to contribute to improving this situation.

Our relationship with City of Doncaster Council is improved but has a long way to go. Perhaps the most significant challenge remains the perception that Tickhill is an affluent society. As such we, along with places such as Bawtry and Wadworth are excluded from a number of city initiatives. It's an issue I've taken up with Nick Fletcher MP as well as our two ward councillors.

Last summer we entertained Dr Billings, South Yorkshires Police and Crime Commissioner for a morning walking around Tickhill. He left us with the feeling that the relationship with Tickhill's invisible Police force would be improving. It's difficult to believe that things could deteriorate further in terms of visibility and accessibility, but unfortunately, they have. Having contacted Dr Billings again we have the name of yet another Community Police Sergeant who commenced his duties in January with the brief of introducing himself to local Parish and Town Councils. Tickhill was not on his list!

We were told of a public Planning Enquiry brought about by occupants of a field within the green belt, turning it into a permanent camp site. It took significant effort before the issue was taken up by our MP and details of the relevant Planning Inspector being released. The Enquiry is scheduled to start on May 5th and we await further details.

We await progress on the improvement to the junction off Tickhill Spital. This is being undertaken by Barratt Developments as part of their planning agreement with Bassetlaw Council for their housing development off the Tickhill/Bawtry road. This is an issue we've constantly raised with Doncaster Council whose engagement with ourselves, and local residents, remains lamentable. We expect work to start as early as June.

We remain committed to raising the profile of Tickhill thereby encouraging footfall and investment. Foot paths remain challenging. Not only those associated largely with leisure where we've had some success in replacing existing stiles and gateways, but communication links primarily between Tickhill and Wadworth remains perilous for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Parking remains challenging. Meetings have been held between Doncaster Officers as well as attempted dialogue with the Police. Until we can get some improvement in enforcement, further restrictions appear largely irrelevant. Irrespective it's a subject which remains on our agenda.

One of our priorities is the establishment of a Community Speed Camera. This entails the provision of a Speed gun and the associated paraphernalia along with the training of a volunteer team. The idea is to run a series of high visibility campaigns aimed at acting as a deterrent but also catching data of the average speeds. No motorists will be penalised by the use of these guns although excessive speeds may warrant further investigation. Let's hope the imminent target training date is met this time.

We had hoped to have published our revised Neighbourhood Plan by now but met with some challenges from Doncaster Planners. It was suggested that we appoint a consultant to represent our views. Early in the year we retained the services of Andrew Towleron who quickly convinced us that a Technical Planning Document would address many of the reservations put forward by Doncaster. We applied for a grant to fund this exercise resulting in the appointment of AECOM. One of their first recommendations was to instigate a Housing Needs Assessment also funded by grant. We now have a draft 85-page assessment lodged with Doncaster and published on our own website. The arrival of the initial draft Planning document is imminent which will also be forwarded to Doncaster and published. The Neighbourhood Plan should then be reduced in size and much of it take the form of a cross reference document.

We have taken the opportunity to enhance our heritage status. This has been enabled by Doncaster's adoption and recognition of this government initiative. The items we have put forward include items as diverse as the Worsted Factory in Lindrick as well as the ornate lamp post directly opposite. We've added in all the pubs along with relatively minor buildings such as the Toll Cottage just beyond the motorway bridge. This work is ongoing and open to all to contribute.

Primarily through the use of social media the council has raised its profile. Our website has a more UpToDate look and feel, and we give our thanks to Maxine Gravill for much of this work. With it however comes more work. We can either be reactive or proactive. Experience shows that by engaging at an early stage we can do much to lessen the input of detractors and correct any incorrect assumptions. We have budgeted this year to increase resource and perhaps utilise the resource we already have in a more productive manner.

Our budget increase is not popular. However, the annual increase per average household is significantly less than the cost of a pint of beer. It remains cheaper to live in Tickhill than it does to live in say Armthorpe. As mentioned, we have recognised the need to budget for future demands on our finances, such as the resurfacing of the car park. Only this month we have learned that preceding councils appear to have leased a number of the stone flower beds located around the town and which are now in need of repair.



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Moving forward our priorities have to be maintenance of our balanced budget, and whilst recognising our falling and aging population endeavour to attract younger residents and to improve the quality of life in what remains a very pleasant environment in which to live.

Before finishing I have to acknowledge the input of fellow councillors and our clerk, without whom I would sink into a morass of seemingly endless red tape. My thanks to you all.

Yours sincerely

P Walker

Mayor Tickhill Town Council