

# **Coop Lies to a Prominent Resident about Us**

Last year a prominent Wetherby resident wrote to the Coop and asked them to reconsider their decision to

**stop displaying the Wetherby Free Press.** She wrote that she regularly shops at the Ainsty Road store "and like so many local residents I am very disappointed that this store can no longer provide us with copies of the Free Press." She continued: "Being approximately 1 mile walk from the Town Centre many of us in North Wetherby are unable to walk this far."

Head Office replied that they stopped displaying it because the WFP had "published an article slandering one of the local charities we support." They go on to call us a "slandering publication" and that is why the decision would not be reversed.

**Their statement is untrue.** The WFP has never slandered or libelled anybody. Earlier this year we wrote to the



Chief Executive of the Coop, copying in the Chair and said: "For your company to spread such a lie is an absolute disgrace. Your employee meant 'libel' not slander". We said the story they referred to contained facts and reasonable opinions based on those facts and that nobody has sued us for defamation, or even threatened to. We showed them the good work we do for the community and requested an apology and compensation.

The same person who wrote the offensive email responded. They said they are "deeply sorry for any upset this matter has caused, it was not our intention to cause any offence or distress." But they will not reverse the decision or support the WFP in any way, despite saying "the good work you do for your community sounds very positive".

We sent a further complaint to the Chief Exec, Ms Khoury-Haq about the way this complaint was handled, as we had no evidence that this employee had passed our complaint to his superiors (it was in that person's interest to keep this quiet). No response.

# Comment

This case just shows that the ordinary person has no redress to justice. Anyone can tell a serious lie with impunity, unless the victim has deep pockets for a lawyer or the knowledge and contacts to take the transgressor on. *Continued on page 8* 

### **Coronation Event cost £4500+**

#### What could our £4500 been spent on instead?

Something permanent that improves things for more people?

eg Plants for Wetherby in Bloom to win awards for the town

Quality literature promoting the town eg food & drink



Richmond & Otley



Play equipment for children in our parks Or something for the less fortunate - how much food would £4500 buy for Wetherby Foodbank?

This is another example of our Town Council spending our money willy-nilly. Disagree? Write to us and we'll print it.



### **Read Full Issue at** www.pkmarketing1.com/wetherby-free-press



The Wetherby Business Association has not addressed any of the issues in our article last week. It appears that Chairman Jamie Hullah, wishes to have nothing to do with us (again). More unanswered questions in our secretive, silent town on page 7. Only story about the Wetherby area in the 8 June's so-called Wetherby News (£2) is about Walton.



Which type of insects are the best for renting out your room and how many? Tenants.

What do you call a place that makes products that are just good enough? Satisfactory!



What's better than Ted Danson? Ted singing and Danson!

I'm only familiar with 25 letters in the English language. I don't know why.

Two cannibals are eating a clown. One says to the other: "Does this taste funny to you?" Why did the golfer wear two pairs of pants? In case he gets a

hole in one!

### Wetherby Town Council Mtg - May

There was no explanation or apology by the Town Clerk for why the minutes of April's meeting were put online so late.

Cllr Dawn Payne was elected as Chair of the Council to serve as Mayor of Wetherby. Clir Mulhall is vice-Chair & Deputy Mayor.

Eight residents stayed after the Annual meeting for this one.

**Cllr Chapman** was the only councillor not present.

The Staffing Committee, and its members, were reappointed for a 4-year term from May 2023. Why did they not wait until they had a full council of 15 members before agreeing this? This is the committee that approved the massive expenditure on staff resulting in a massive 80% increase in our Council Tax precept.



Wetherby's New Mayor, Cllr Dawn Payne, Conservative

Image may be 5+ years old as it's taken from Council website. According to the 'Register of Interests' Cllr Payne does not work. There is no information about work for the community or *her interests, experience or skills* on the Council website.

The Chairmanships of ALL committees except one were decided upon. This seems suspicious. Was it to avoid a co-opted Independent being in charge of a committee? The same Conservatives in control as before means it is likely that standards will remain low, and noncooperation with us will remain. The new Independent Councillor Ager-Mills is not chair of any of the 11 committees.



'Paths Maintenance' is to be a standing agenda item. Why not buses, library, leisure centre, toilets, waste bins etc? There is an obvious error on item 26 23-24 Why wasn't it spotted?

No mention of the new £27K+ **Communications Officer.** Why? Interviews should have taken place.

The Town Council's 2022/23 Annual Report has still not been published online despite being printed over 3 weeks ago. Why?



Wetherby's New Deputy Mayor, Cllr Connor Mulhall, Conservative

He is Chair of 3 Town Council Committees including Planning! He seems very young to have much experience to carry out such an important role.

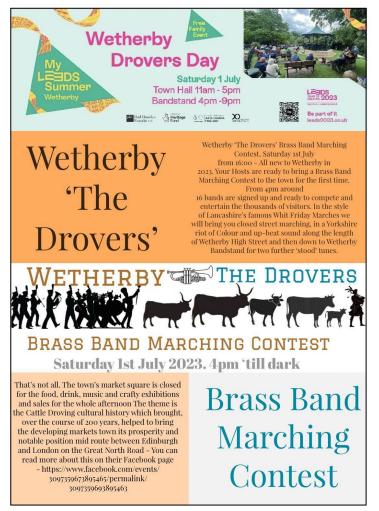
He works in Telecommunications.

## Wake Up Folks - Look What's Happening Around You



Artists Around Wetherby began in 2014 and was so popular that it was decided to make it an annual event.

It is 2 weekends of art for the public to meet the artists and see them at work in their own studios.



This year 30+ artists and makers will be taking part in the event which takes place on

- \* Sat 24 June & Sun 25 June
- \* Sat 1 July & Sun 2 July

Paintings, prints and cards will be on sale, as well as other items from members.

This year all studios provide refreshments for a donation to their chosen charity which this year is St George's Crypt in Leeds.



"Our artists are supporting St George's Crypt an awardwinning charity that has been helping the homeless, the vulnerable and those suffering with addiction since 1930"

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**TRANSPORT NEWS** 

Bramham Horse Trials has started and it ends on Sun 11 June. Traffic queues and delays to bus no. 7 are possible.





£2

## **Single Bus Fares**

## Chaos Coming to Wetherby? Harewood Bridge closing

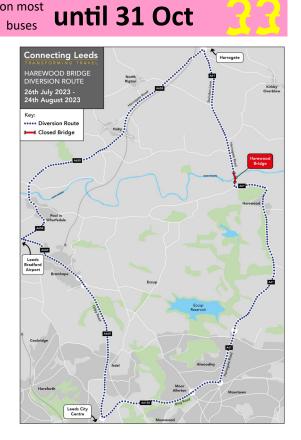
Leeds City Council: "The historic Grade II\* listed Harewood Bridge carries the A61 Leeds to Harrogate road across the River Wharf at Harewood. The important crossing sees 17,000 vehicles use it each day. The closure and works are planned to coincide with the school summer holidays, with reduced levels of traffic. The council will carry out waterproofing, resurfacing and footpath repair works. The previous work carried out temporary repair patches to extend the longevity of the carriageway, but now unfortunately these repairs can no longer continue without fixing the underlying problem."

These works will take exactly 4 weeks - Wed 26 July to Thurs 24 Aug.

The City Council can't spell Wharfe correctly.

Why do they think motorists will take that long diversion route? Surely they are more likely to go through Wetherby to get to Harrogate or Leeds.

*The least we can expect is more fun and games at Wetherby bridge mini -roundabout.* 



Cost of Unleaded Correct on Thurs 8 June to nearest p

Diff b/w Shell & H'gate to fill av tank is £2.75

Shell £1.47 Morrisons £1.45

Sainsbury's Harrogate £1.42

Email us at:

WetherbyFreePress@PM.me

### **Councillor Criticises Council**

Cllr Norma Harrington, right, Conservative, has criticised Leeds City Council (Labour) for 'not being transparent and not involving the local community'.

We nearly choked on our cornflakes with this one. Should it come under





#### we wondered?

The irony of this statement is astounding, when Cllr Harrington is a member of one of the most unaccountable and non-consulting councils in the country - Wetherby Town Council.

In almost every issue of the Free Press, including this one, we have asked simple, reasonable questions because the answers are not in minutes of meetings, official publications, or on their incomplete and unattractive website.

Cllr Harrington, her colleagues and Town Council staff have ignored most of the questions and provided



robotic unhelpful answers to the rest. At least Cllr Harrington knows the frustration of being ignored and when there's no transparency. She may now feel more inclined to address the serious issues of

openness and accountability closer to home.

Got an opposing view? Tell us, we'll print it unedited.



Sadly not seen many butterflies so far. This one is among the most well-known in Britain. The striking and attractive patterning and its appearance at almost any time of the year in urban areas have made it a familiar species. It is one of the first butterflies to be seen in spring and in the autumn it often visits garden flowers in large numbers. It is one of our most widespread species. Source: www.butterfly-conservation.org/

## **Book of the Month**

Markets

Harrogate

Father's Day Craft Market

at

Crimple

Sunday 18th June

10am-3pm

Indoors & Outdoors

COLIN SPEAKMAN

YORKSHIRE Ancient Nation, Future Province





🕝 Bee-Crafty Markets

Vork well simp large Engla darn few o opini forw meas need infra trans popu

Available now in Reading Roots Bookshop Yorkshire Lovers, as well as those who are simply interested in the largest county in England. It's simply a darned good read and a few common-sense opinions are put forward for good measure. Colin sees the need for improved infrastructure and transport, as populations outside the big cities increase (in towns like Wetherby).



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Citizen Journalism At Its Best

# **Annual Town Council Meeting**



The Town Clerk, Iona Taylor, has not yet apologised for the wrong time for this meeting on their website calendar. Nor has she responded to our other points made in the last issue.

#### Zero Interest Last Year - More This Year

Last year no residents attended and the meeting started at 7.30pm. This year it was better attended, about 10. *Not surprising after an 80% increase in Council Tax precept this year*.

A Reader (AR) who attended has written to us with their experience.

#### **Unfriendly and No Introductions**

Arriving at the meeting, AR says they were rather anxious seeing so many people there and "Nobody said hello, I didn't know where to sit, it was not a friendly atmosphere. The room was laid out with tables and chairs in a square with further tables around the room. When I saw this arrangement through the door, my stomach dropped and I nearly left. The Agenda and the Annual Report 2023 were on some



seats and there was pile on the table. They did not provide the minutes for the last Annual Town Meeting. Nobody spoke to each other. We all sat in silence until the Mayor opened the meeting."

AR says "None of the Councillors introduced themselves. Many did not speak either". This is what needs to change. Being a Councillor is a responsible role and it seems many are not even willing to introduce themselves, let alone tell us their opinions or provide us with useful information. It all sounds very amateurish and unprofessional.

#### AR says Questions from Residents were about:

- how they would measure whether the new Facilities and Communication posts were value for money
- why residents were not informed that the Mercure Hotel was going to be housing Afghan refugees
- why many businesses are closing down or moving out of Wetherby

#### Workshops with Public? Suggestion from Cllr Mulhall

Cllr Mulhall suggested that the Annual Meeting was held more regularly. AR says: "When there was no response, he offered to hold workshops with residents to help understand their issues and to discuss the matters that arose further. How he will contact the residents to arrange these workshops, I don't know."

Cllr Harrington joined the meeting at 45 minutes after it started. AR says "I smiled at her but she glared at me and we've never met. She spoke a few things to clarify a few points. She's used to public speaking."

#### **Every Single Wetherby Request Rejected by Leeds?**

Cllr Harrington said that every year each Leeds City Councillor is asked to provide a list of objectives for funding and each time they are refused. She says she gave them 50 objectives last year and each one was refused. AR wondered if this list is published anywhere, and whether LCC have a complaints process where Councillors or residents could lodge a complaint. It was implied that this is because Leeds City Council is led by Labour. *This list should be released to the public by Cllr Harrington so that we can judge whether it contains the priorities of residents or those of councillors, and whether they were rejected for good reason. It is hard to believe that politics play such a large part in Wetherby getting less funding, if indeed we do get less funding (fact or popular myth?)* 

#### Minutes Published in a Year!!

AR says "It is ridiculous that this meeting is only held annually. You don't find out the outcome of any actions from the meeting until the following year." We agree, it is absurd to wait a year before the 99.9% of Wetherby non-attending residents can find out what was discussed and agreed at the meeting. Who benefits from such a long time? Not residents, that's for sure. But that's democracy for you, folks.

#### Un-professionalism, non-communication, unhelpfulness ...

Finally, AR says "There are so many people who prefer to stick their head in the sand and others who will moan a bucketful but don't do anything. There are so many people not doing their jobs properly in so many areas; un-professionalism, non-communication, unhelpfulness, unkindness, hiding behind processes and procedure..."

Please write to Councillors or the Town Clerk if you want change.



# Still no images of any Town Hall staff on their awful website, even in the "Who Does What?" part.

Why the anonymity when councils like Otley have had their staff details on their website for years?

**Still no party allegiance or individual councillor email addresses either.** *This lack of basic information is disgraceful.* 



Cllr Mulhall -Offer of Workshops

Let's hope our new Town Councillors can raise standards!

The town's public servants who work for us and are paid out of our taxes are: Iona Taylor - Town Clerk, Barry Riley - Deputy Town Clerk, Stephen Cohen - Facilities Manager, Burials Manager - Margaret Holmes (ex Deputy Clerk), Operations Manager - ? Communications Officer - ?

## Local Democracy Page - Our MP & Councillors

#### Alec Shelbrooke has been our Conservative MP for 13 years since May 2010.

In the last election in 2019 he won 58% of our vote beating Labour by over 17,000 votes. He was a Remainer. From Dec '19 to May '22 he has voted 467 times out of 560 (83%) and has rebelled once against the party whip (Mar '22). He refused to inform his constituents whether or not he supported Boris Johnson in the No-Confidence Vote. He was a strong supporter of Liz Truss in the Leadership Battle. She promoted him to an MoD Ministerial post in Sep '22, which he then quit / was sacked within 2 months.

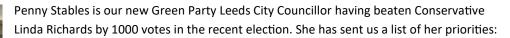
## **Space for Alec**

### ip nce al

Very Old Photo Alec still uses on Facebook

### Unedited (max 400 words)

alec.shelbrooke.mp@parliament.uk



**Nothing received** 

- \* Trying to prevent a 5G telecoms mast from being sited at the top of Spofforth Hill outside a residents house
- \* Examining the Lidl proposal & the Church Street development, Boston Spa
- \* New Accessibility Group for Boston Spa
- \* The future of the Wetherby to Knaresborough bus
- \* Bus reliability and frequency
- \* Resident parking issues on Westwood Way & Lee Avenue, Boston Spa
- \* Grass cutting regimes
- \* Bins not collected & over-flowing

Housing issues

Penny at Leeds Civic Hall

\* Ladies toilets in the Shambles - I have asked for repairs and a deep clean - should be happening imminently, if not done yet.

Penny says she is also trying to help improve the lives of the Afghan Refugees currently in the Mercure Hotel, by helping them to access items such as bikes, sewing machines, laptops, and link them up with community groups.

We wish Penny well and will report her progress.

If Cllrs Lamb & Harrington want to send us their lists, we will gladly publish them.



Overflowing Bin opp Leisure Centre this June

# Silent Wetherby - A Town of Unanswered Questions



Residents deserve to know the answers to these questions so we will keep asking them. Residents can also put pressure on those who (should) know the answers to tell us (in brackets)



NIO

1 What was the cause of the Market Place Bus Crash in July 2021? (Harrogate Bus Company, Town Councillors, MP) 2 Why aren't important public facilities, like the Library, Buses, Leisure Centre, Bins & Bin Collections & Toilets regular agenda items at Wetherby Town Council meetings? (Wetherby Town Councillors)

**3 Why has nothing been done about vehicles blocking the bus station exit since Dec 21?** (Leeds City Councillors, Metro/WYCA)

4 Why has our dull, grey Town Council website (www.wetherby.co.uk), which lacks basic information, not been updated or improved for many years? (Wetherby Town Clerk / Councillors)

5 Why have the majority of our Conservative Town Councillors refused to tell us about their relevant interests, experience & abilities, and about their actual work as a Councillor since WFP began? (Wetherby Town Councillors)
6 Why is the Inspector of our North East division of West Yorkshire Police, Richard Horn, totally anonymous without a photo available of himself online? (Chief Constable John Robins & Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracy Brabin)

7 Why doesn't Inspector Horn respond to residents' crime issues raised in Wetherby's comprehensive news source, WFP? (Chief Constable John Robins & Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracy Brabin)

There are many more unanswered questions we will ask in future issues.

If you know any of the answers, please inform us.



Wetherby Free Press

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Citizen Journalism At Its Best







When will the Town Council (Welcome to Wetherby), Wetherby Business Association (with 10s of £1000s in the bank), Property Agents & Owners get together and make this town look more attractive?

There are creative people in the town who would, no doubt, love to use these public spaces. Artists Around Wetherby (on page 3), for example. There's Wetherby Camera Club too. And any would-be Banksys, like the blue tit artist underneath the A1(M). The examples above give a poor impression and let us all down, especially volunteers like those in Wetherby in Bloom who put so much time and effort into making the town look lovely and welcoming.

### **Coronation Event cost £4500+**

The Council's own image showing 200 people max at peak period



#### The Facts

- No Consultation with Residents
- No Discussion about Value for Money afterwards
- Poor Attendance a tiny percentage of W'by taxpayers
- Failure of Welcome to Wetherby to "arrange a fancy dress event" because "the organisations contacted did not submit any proposals"
- Context this Conservative Council forced through an 80% increase in Council Tax precept in a cost-of-living crisis

### Comment on Coop cont'd

Apparently saying someone has libelled/slandered somebody when they haven't is not automatic defamation itself!

An apology from a junior employee who doesn't know the difference between 'libel' and 'slander' is not good enough. **The Coop should be ashamed** of the way they have treated the Editor & the Free Press. They have made a false judgement without even contacting us to check the facts first. Disgraceful.

**Before this incident we had always held the Coop in high regard** and thought they were very much part of the community. Their actions here suggest otherwise. The Wetherby shop staff were very supportive and have nothing to do with their management's decisions. This is an example of the country we live in, folks. Civil law does not exist to help ordinary people, like us. It is there to let those in authority or with money carry on with little fear of penalty. We still have our Freedom of Expression though (but only just!).

If anything derogatory is said about us, please check with us for the facts. Defamation is a serious offence, even if our only redress is to expose liars in these pages. Email us at: 8 WetherbyFreePress@PM.me





## It wasn't to be. After only 3 years in the Premier League, Leeds United were relegated.

They lost 4 - 1 at home to Spurs and went down with Leicester. Tiny Luton Town take their place with a ground holding only 10,000.

It perplexes the Editor how a team with such a large,

devoted fanbase, excellent training facilities and a glorious history cannot stay in the top league. And they are the only team in the city - others like Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham & Nottingham can



sustain two. Why does success currently elude them? The area needs the prestige of a premier team doing well but maybe the city itself bear some responsibility, with its lack of imagination and basic modern transport infrastructure ie a tram network.

Sadly, big name footballers in Wetherby will be a rarer sight now.



The Magic Weekend at St James Park, Newcastle was a superb festival of rugby league but mostly ignored by TV news, local and national. You wonder what the RFL pay their press/marketing team for.

37,000 attended the first day.

Leeds were paired with Castleford Tigers and hit the ground running with an easy try after 5 minutes. A see-saw tussle saw Leeds stretch their lead to 8 points soonafter the break. But the Tigers, second-from bottom of Super League weren't



Olpherts in Strange Kit done yet. A great passing

movement gave them the lead for the first time

which they managed to

points. Leeds lost 24 - 26.

keep along with the 2

Happy Tigers Fans

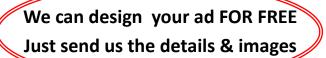
Wakefield v **Rhinos** on Sun 11 June at 15.00 **Rhinos** v Huddersfield Giants on Fri 23 June at 20.00 **Sky sports** Warrington Wolves v **Rhinos** on Thurs 29 June at 20.00 **sky sports** 

Adverts **50%** of *On Your Doorstep* rates: 1/8 page (size A) - £25 or £80 for 4 issues

1/4 page (size B/C) - £40 or £130 for 4 issues

1/2 page (size D) - £60 or £200 for 4

Sponsorship on front page - £25





Next Issue 47 - Fri 30 June





News, Funny Stuff & Improving Accountability

Editor: *Paul Kirby* Email: WetherbyFreePress@PM.me Twitter: @wbyfreepress

Everyone mentioned in the WFP has a right to reply. The reply will be published unedited.

If facts are wrong, we will apologise publicly and correct the error. We quote directly to avoid any misunderstandings. We don't do interviews.

We encourage everyone to write to us with their views, whatever they are. People have died for our Freedom of Expression so never be afraid to use it. You can remain anonymous if you wish. We or you cannot be sued for libel/defamation as long as what is published is:

**True** or **Honest Opinion** or **in the Public Interest** Unjustifiable threats of legal action is bullying behaviour and will not be tolerated.

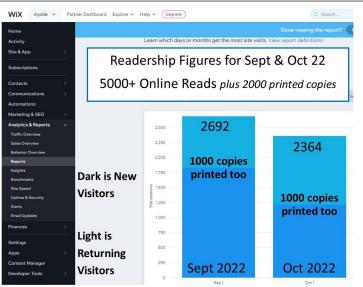


www.pkmarketing1.com/wetherby-free-press

to cover printing costs

Thank You

The British Library at Boston Spa keep copies in their catalogue. The WFP lives forever!



They are surprisingly good figures. The main reason was our exclusive on Wetherspoons buying Sant Angelo. If you don't believe the figures, we can send you a printscreen image.

## In 2022 we Supported





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to WetherbyFreePress@PM.me

Let's Make Wetherby Better Together in 2023