



ISSUE 41 until Fri 7 Apr '23

Free Press

Est 2021 Facts & Integrity

Citizen Journalism at its Best

↔ Contents overleaf ↔



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Upset at 80% Tory Town Tax Increase

As the dreaded Council Tax bills dropped through residents' letterboxes in this cost of living crisis, many took to social media to express their dissatisfaction at the 100s of £1000s the Town Council are demanding; mostly for extra staff, like Communications Manager & Ops Manager.

No clear, simple, brief explanation has been provided as to why these expensive positions are suddenly needed now, and why a 'Communications Manager' is needed at all, in such a small organisation with few responsibilities - playing areas, a cemetery, some buildings and a market.

Resident MC wrote on Wetherby Grumbler (26,000 members): "I have asked local councillors and officers to explain the rise on here before with no response from any of them."

The 3 Ward Councillors, two of whom are also Town Councillors, keep telling us to email them. Cllr Linda Richards, said in a social media post "Contacting directly by email is a better way of getting an answer". This is not true in our case, and it seems others too. They refuse to provide answers or explanations to simple questions eg why do we need a 'Communications Manager' for a small town council when others don't?

Cllr Richards claimed in the same post that she and her colleagues work "all year round not just at election time", a claim repeated in their newsletter delivered to every house. Our ward councillors are flooding social media with posts about their work at the moment. We were curious to see how the number of posts promoting themselves compared to 3 years ago when there was no election.

	01.04.2023 to 31.03.2024)	% change from 2022/23	
	£1269.82	3.0	
	£192.34	2.0	
West Yorks	£210.02	6.8	
Authority	£68.60	6.0	
	£94.59	79.8	
	£1835.37		

Double the Number of Facebook Posts compared to 3 Years ago

@WetherbyWardCllrs	Jan 2020 (before Covid)	Images of Cllrs (selfies) in those posts	Jan 2023	Images of Cllrs (selfies) in those posts	Increase in Posts
Number of Posts	11	1	27	7	16 (145%)
	Feb 2020 (before Covid)	Images of Cllrs	Feb 2023	Images of Cllrs	
Number of Posts	15	1	28	4	13 (87%)
Total Posts	26	2	55	11	29 (111%)

This year there is a large increase in the number of selfie images of Cllr Linda Richards, who is the Councillor up for re-election in May

The facts speak for themselves. Isn't this clear evidence that they put in much more effort just before elections than soon after they were elected? If you have a different conclusion based on fact, please tell us and we'll print it.



At least our Leeds City Councillors are visible. All but one of our Conservative Town Councillors are totally anonymous on social media. He is the youngest by far - Connor Mulhall, left. He responds to some posts on social media, though recently he deleted a simple question we asked. Mature behaviour?

When will the other 12 Tory Town Councillors join us in the 21st century and show us they care, are listening to us, can provide information and tell us their opinions? They may be thinking that the new unnecessary 'Communications Manager' can do all that for them when in post but surely that is unacceptable. There should be a clear distinction between councillors (party political) and council staff (impartial).

Readers may remember we asked simple, reasonable questions to each of our town councillors and most of them gave us no clue why they wanted to be a councillor, how much work is involved or their particular interests.

Nobody would take sole responsibility for a particular issue, like the library, a vital community asset. Not a single councillor shows any interest in our library and it is not a regular agenda item at any council meeting. Nobody cares that the so-called Wetherby News is not available there any more - see page 4.



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WE'RE BACK!
on 2 April

Opens 7am
£1 entry for buyers over 16s

Sellers: from 6am No booking necessary
£12 cars, £16 vans, +£3 trailers

Please have exact money

Dogs welcome on a lead

Ample parking, refreshments & toilets



Amazing Variety of Old & New Items to Buy Every Week!

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9 Weeks & Still No Mention of our 80% W'by Council Tax Increase in the so-called 'Wetherby News' (or Y Post / YEP)

Next Town Council Meeting - Tues 11 Apr at 7pm, W'by Town Hall



town council in the county with one.

We could not find one. Their staff manage to do it themselves, as part of their jobs.

We googled 'Town Council Communications Officer Manager Yorkshire' to find out if there is any other

Why can't ours?



I thought this lady was staring at me for 5 minutes, till i realized it was a magazine 😂😂😂



What's the difference between a well dressed man on a unicycle and a poorly dressed man on a bike? Attire!

What does the plant Heather have in common with the letter A?
A Bee goes after it!

I bought some shoes from a drug dealer. I don't know what he laced them with, but I was tripping all day!

Does anyone need an ark?

I Noah guy that does!



The Idiocy of the BBC

Donut Worry, Be Happy!



Bus Driver Highlights Vehicle Blocking Station Exit

Cost of Unleaded *Correct on Thurs 23 Mar to nearest p*

Shell £1.56 Morrisons £1.54

Morrisons Harrogate £1.44

Diff b/w Shell & H'gate fill av tank is £6.60

Price Stability

Same for 4 weeks

Jake Charlesworth often drives the X98/99 to Leeds and has cheered many passengers up with his bear, called Brad. Recently, he wrote this on the main Wetherby Facebook



Brad the Bear does not want our bus delayed

group (Wetherby Grumbler with 26,000 members):

“Not to GRUMBLE but Brad the Bear can’t get past when you park on the corner near the bus station opposite Mojis pizza, to run into the shops or collect your takeout!!! Please keep off the corner!!!! It’s a small ask!!”

Passenger Barbara Wright agreed and said “the X99 waited a good 5 minutes the other day, a car parked right on the corner !!!”.

We have highlighted this problem for well over a year now. When will something be done?

Topic	Important because:	Improvements Needed	People Responsible
<p>Constant Blocking of Wetherby Bus Station Exit by Vehicles</p> <p>Date first raised: Nov 2021 in Issue 7 page 3 & Issues 8, 13 & 32 example below</p>	<p>1 Passengers suffer frustration and inconvenience</p> <p>2 Need to keep bus services reliable</p>	<p>Paint Double Yellow Lines (or even better red) by Moji’s pizza place, preferably with zig zag lines and large writing “Bus Exit”</p>	<p>Leeds City Council Highways Dept</p> <p>3 Wetherby Ward Leeds City Councillors</p> <p><i>Metro / WYCA, Town Cllrs & Bus Companies should also have input</i></p>

Progress: None Lines were re-painted a few metres away in the wrong place at the junction with main road

Warning - Don't Believe the York Timetable!

412

● Tockwith
● Long Marston
● Rufforth
● York Station
● York Piccadilly

Towards York

	NS				NS
Wetherby, Bus Station	0645	0850	1030	1250	1630
Bickerton Lane End	0650	0855	1038	1258	1638
Tockwith, Spotted Ox	0659	0900	1043	1303	1643
Long Marston, Sun Inn	0704	0905	1048	1308	1648
Rufforth, Church	0709	0909	1051	1311	1651
Acomb, Shops	0712	0912	1054	1314	1654
York, Rail Station	0720	0920	1102	1322	1702
York, Piccadilly	0725	0925	1107	1327	1707

Wrong info x2 - Doesn't run on Saturdays and wrong York timings

If you are catching a train at York rail station or any other connection, you may miss it, if you believe the 412 timetable in print and online.

The Editor caught an on-time bus in Wetherby which then drove normally picking up an average number of passengers - no delays. The timetable says York Rail Station at 9.20. We were at York Ring Road at that time. We arrived at the station 15 minutes later than advertised. That is a lot. Common sense tells you it takes more than half an hour to get to York going via Tockwith and picking up passengers. That is what a car would take going straight there.

We wrote to Craig Temple, MD of Connexions, pictured, who said ‘Good feedback re the 412 thanks’. No apology for the Editor’s missed connection and no assurance that the timings will be changed either online or in print.

This is poor customer service. It's a sorry state when you cannot believe the times in a timetable.



No Mention of Buses in Tory Newsletter



Our Conservative Councillors have claimed to be interested in improving bus services in recent months. It was therefore surprising and disappointing to see no mention of this in their pre-election newsletter. Perhaps it was because their efforts ie meetings have achieved nothing.

They have met with a private bus company’s MD Alex Hornby, twice as far as we know. They have **not** met with publicly-funded Transport Authority Metro / WYCA or the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin - the people they can influence. We have highlighted the abysmal performance by Metro in Wetherby but our Councillors have never given a public opinion about this. Their meetings with Alex Hornby did not affect the cutting of the 7 to Leeds & Harrogate from every 30 mins to hourly. Nor have their efforts stopped the cutting of the Saturday services to York and Otley. They have not met with the 2 other bus companies that serve Wetherby (Connexions & Arriva) as far as we know either.



Single Bus Fares



£2



on most buses

until 31 June



No Wetherby News in the so-called 'Wetherby News', again



What a Cheek!

The so-called 'Wetherby News' has NOT ONE item of news about Wetherby this week. And not for the first time. They should change the title immediately. I would love someone to defend this so-called 'local' newspaper costing £2. And they still have not published a single word about the whopping 80% increase in the Town's part of the Council Tax (mostly to be spent on PR and 'Operations' Managers). What sort of journalism is that?

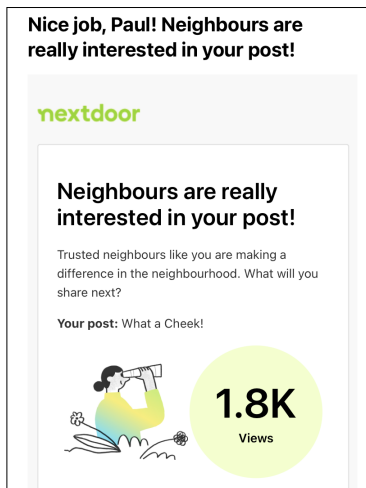
Many residents are waking up to the Council Tax scandal of our Conservative Town Council now bills are dropping through letterboxes. See Issues 38, 39 & 40 for the facts and comparisons with Otley.

The Wetherby Free Press will continue until we have a proper paper that makes people accountable for their actions/inaction. Funny how we find plenty of stories and could easily fill 4 more pages every issue.

The above text and image is a post we put up recently on Wetherby social media groups. We wanted somebody to defend the appalling coverage of our great town by the 'professional' press. Nobody did. Some preferred to criticise our newsletter or the Editor instead of addressing the issue. We are used to these distraction techniques.

We are pleased to say that the post inspired a talented local to write this wonderful poem.

**Wetherby News, oh how you've changed
Your stories now seem so estranged
No longer do you cover our town
But news from elsewhere, that's all we've found.
Should you change your name, we wonder
To better reflect your news from yonder?
Or bring back stories from our own
To make Wetherby once again known.
For the heart of a paper is the place
Where it finds its voice and its grace
So Wetherby News, don't lose your sight
Come back home and shine your light.**



Posts are seen by 1000s. Another Facebook site the post was on has 26,000 members

Like anyone else, the Wetherby News has a right to reply. But we doubt they read the Free Press, just as they are not members of local social media groups where they could get an idea of what is bothering people and get ideas for stories to investigate.

The following week (23 March edition) the paper had just the one Wetherby 'story' - from a charity press release.

If you would like to defend the paper, please write to us and we will print it.

Leeds City Council - A No-Can-Do Organisation

In the last issue we highlighted the disappointing and varied responses from 2 employees at Leeds City Council.

After we promoted the new bins in Wetherby, we complained that we received no response to a follow-up email suggesting we sponsor bins in return for giving them space to inform Wetherby in the only serious printed news media in the town.

The Leader of the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team (CNT) responded to the article with 2 emails. The first

"Good morning Mr Kirby,

First of all I would like to apologise for not responding earlier. It's been a really busy couple of months.

I have sent your request to my managers to see if there is anyway around you advertising on our bins,

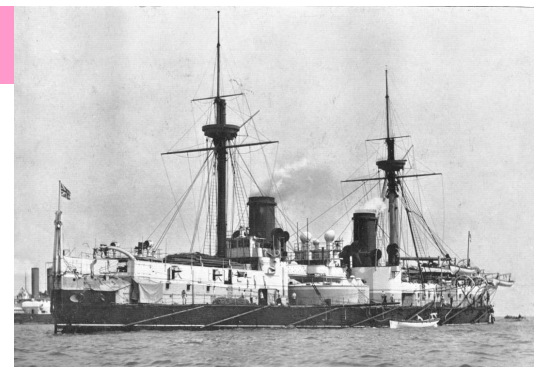
With regard to other illegal fly posting as I have said previously we deal with them on an individual basis.

I will get back to you when I have something more definitive

Apologies again for the delay" **was acceptable in tone (but English grammar poor).**

The second email was not acceptable on any level:

"Good afternoon Mr Kirk," *To get people's names wrong is unprofessional. Last November I was called 'Mr Kirkby' by this Officer. In her email template she has "East Wetherby, Harwood and Alwoodley wards". Has none of her colleagues or managers noticed that Harewood is spelt incorrectly? With these errors (plus her colleague's emails described in the last issue) this poor attention to detail and English does not inspire confidence in Leeds City Council.*



HMS Inflexible 1876 - 1903

Leeds City Council - A No-Can-Do Organisation cont'd

The Officer says that there are no plans to introduce a scheme for advertising on bins. She does not explain why this is.

A shame when it could raise much needed funds, like their sponsored signs and roundabouts do. The Council seem to have no flexibility or imagination.

A disappointing end to the email:

“Please note that my response above in (sic) in reply to your direct question for information. If you wish to receive a formal quote for publication (on this or any other Council matter), can you please ensure you redirect your query through the Council’s press office.”

In other words, here is another public servant who does not wish to be accountable to the public for what they say or do. They pass it on to the press office, who anonymise everything and give us the best spin instead of facts and reasons. We give everyone a right to reply so why is this necessary? We do not want to personalise this and have therefore respected the Officer’s anonymity this time.

Adding another person into the mix adds unnecessary complexity and dehumanises the whole process. Why can’t the public be given all the facts and provided with straight-forward reasons for decisions whilst being treated in a polite, sociable manner by the one person responsible, not someone in PR who will have no knowledge or context of the issue?

It is sadly the world we live in now. Public organisations, including small charities, spend money on expensive PR staff instead of services. We strongly suspect that this is why our Town Councillors want a Communications Manager, so that they don’t have to bother with people like us who ask difficult questions.

what are other words for push away?



push aside, repulse, repel, push off, spurn, jostle, shove off, push back, push, fight off



NEWS SNIPPETS

Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd will be hosting **"Conversations with Better Wetherby"** one evening in early April. Attendance is 'first come, first served'. Contact roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com for further information. BWPL Directors are Roger Owen, Peter Swales & Cllr Lamb & Cllr Harrington.

Leisure Centre criticised by Cllr Harrington. She claims it is in an 'awful state' and has a 'dingy gym'. A spokesperson said they are funding new equipment but the age and layout of the building mean improvements are limited.



Employee Stole over £64,000 from Floor Design. 57 year-old Gary Schulze took the money when dealing with client invoices over a 1 and a half year period. None of the money has been paid back by bankrupt Schulze. The Tadcaster man got a 16 month jail sentence at Leeds Crown Court.

Lidl have re-submitted their plans for a store with bakery & toilets, 108 parking spaces with EV charging points, an 84-bed care home and 8 senior living Eco-homes for the over-55s. This is for the site of the Mercure Hotel, currently housing Afghan Asylum Seekers. The Leeds City Council reference number is 23/01507/FU. Email planning@leeds.gov.uk quoting this number with your support or otherwise.



Wildlife of Wetherby

Cormorant

Commonly seen flying low over the Wharfe, or wings outstretched on a post, these birds often rest on one of the small islands next to the bridge.

It is more of a coastal bird and can easily be confused with the Shag. These birds main diet is fish.

The Cormorant is black and conspicuous with an almost primitive appearance with its long neck making it appear reptilian.

There are no concerns over its numbers - breeding colonies are now widely distributed across Britain & Ireland.



Thanks to
Phill Andrews



Real or Not? Answer in future issue



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.



Very Old Photo Alec still uses

Space for Alec & Cllrs Richards, Lamb & Harrington

& other Wetherby Town Cllrs (Conservatives)

Unedited (max 400 words)



Cllr Linda Richards

Cllr Alan Lamb

Cllr Norma Harrington

Email them at: linda.richards
alan.lamb norma.harrington
@leeds.gov.uk

Nothing received

alec.shelbrooke.mp@parliament.uk

Classic Quote from a Resident on Social Media

"I would like to think that the town councillors have increased the precept for good reason and not just for the sake of it."

Yes, it is quite astounding that someone can have such blind faith in politicians after the last 2 years of utter chaos. It is a shame the person can't be bothered to find out for themselves. Wonder if they have any hesitation in trusting the police

after the Met was found to be institutionally racist etc?

We would all like to believe that everyone is competent, sensible and well meaning. But the fact is they aren't.



Notes on Town Council Mtg - February

Cllr Attendance 9 / 15 - Cllr Jo Maltby absent (33% attendance last year)

* "Concern was expressed" - *Obvious mistake not picked up*

* Internal Audit recommended "Ensure that the council's website contains the **latest version** of documents". *We have been telling them the website is not kept up-to-date for well over a year*

* Internal Audit also recommended 'Improve cash handling practices' *A little worrying*

* **Markets Committee** - 6th January 2023.

Approved: Reduce the value of the current stall erection contract to £1400 per month from 1st April 23

* **Police & Communities Together (PACT)**. 3 reported cases of anti-social behaviour and 89 reported crimes in Jan. *No comment or comparison with Jan 2022. A new PCSO starts in March so 'full strength'. Doesn't say what 'full strength is', is it 1, 2, 3?*

* There was **no List of Correspondence** - *Why?*

* However the Clerk reported on one item received: that **Wetherby Business Association have declined to send a representative** to a Town Council meeting until the Chair is "at a point [he feels] the association is ready to show the councillors why



and how we can work together." The Association also commented on the fact that many of the businesses in Wetherby **see the market as negative** as it takes business away from local shops rather than bringing in revenue.

* TWO Council meetings were '**not quorate**' in January - Planning & Markets. *No decisions could therefore be made in these 2 very important areas, especially with a failing market*

* Climate Emergency Group - **Cllr Harry Chapman resigned** as 'part of the streamlining of his Council commitments'. *Simple English please! Councillor Harrington gave an update on the work in resolving issues around bus services and securing services for the future. Crazy, I know but how's about informing the 1000s of electors of your 'work' in the minutes of your meeting? We are very interested and have no evidence of any effectiveness of this 'work' - a cosy chat with a company CEO as far as we know.*

* **Welcome to Wetherby** - Agreed that a member of the Wetherby Wharfedale Rotary Club be invited to this ctte. *We ask again why none of the other numerous groups in the town want to join this ctte. In response to the suggestion about whether a leaflet should be issued for public consultation, this was not considered necessary. WHY? We have strongly advised in the past they should consult with the public because of low standards. This is disgraceful. Low standards will, no doubt, continue.*

Consider Becoming a City (paid) or Town (unpaid) Councillor

These elections take place on Thurs 4 May

Cllr Linda Richards (Conservative) 4-year term of office as a Leeds City Councillor ends.

This responsible post comes with an allowance of around £17,000. Expenses are paid, as well as extra payments for extra committee responsibilities.

For the Town council it is an 'all-out election' where anybody can stand.

If you want to stand as a councillor, contact your preferred party, ask the Town / City Council staff for information or visit

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england



Treat People How You **6** Would Like To Be Treated



After a disappointing 2 - 2 draw at home to Brighton, Leeds needed a win at Wolves to have any hope of escaping the dog-fight at the bottom. It was the first game on Match of the Day with



No 1 on BBC Match of the Day

plenty of drama, chances and goals. Leeds went into the break very content with a 1 - 0 lead. They doubled their tally and even went 3

- 0 up with a Kristensen strike. Game over, surely.

Not quite. Wolves pulled two back to make a dramatic finale.

Thankfully, Wolves self-destructed and had a man sent off for a reckless challenge. There is only 4 points between 9 teams at the

bottom! All to play for with 11 games to go.



Kristensen scored Leeds' third

Arsenal v **Utd** on Sat 1 Apr at 15.00

Utd v Brighton on Tues 4 Apr at 19.45



The Rhinos visit to Castleford came after a resounding 26 - 0 victory over Wakey.

Leeds' confidence should have been sky high after beating the Champions St Helens too. Cas were looking for their first win of the season. At a muddy Jungle, Cas were the first to score in front of the Sky cameras.

Leeds hit back with a Richie Myler try and went in just ahead at the break. There was only one more try in the second half and that went to the home side. Final score was Tigers 14 Rhinos 8. The crowd joyfully sang 'Sweet Caroline'.



Richie Myler scored equalising try

Leeds are in eighth place after 5 games of the Super League season. Poor Wakefield are bottom (12th) with not a single win to their name.



RYGBY PLAYER BODY FOUND
Abismil Spylling by GB News

Rhinos v Catalans Dragons on Sat 25 Mar at 13.00

Hull KR v Rhinos on Fri 31 Mar at 20.00 **sky sports**

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Next Issue 42 - Fri 7 Apr



Free Press
Est 2021 Facts & Integrity

News, Funny Stuff & Improving Accountability

Editor: **Paul Kirby**

Email: WetherbyFreePress@PM.me

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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. You, nor ourselves, can be sued for libel as long as what is published is:

True or Honest Opinion or in the Public Interest

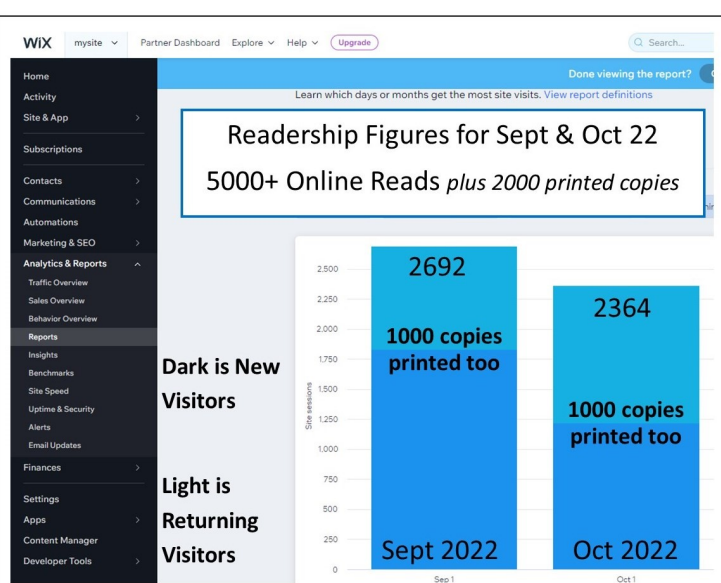
Unjustifiable threats of legal action is bullying behaviour and will not be tolerated.

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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

25

Local Organisations & Charities

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to WetherbyFreePress@PM.me



Let's Make Wetherby Better Together in 2023