



ISSUE 57 - until 9 Feb 2024

YOUR Community Newsletter

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 **Contents overleaf** 



Wetherby Wombles Pick up 350+ Bags of Litter in 2023. Can You Help this Year?

The leader of the group, Julie-Ann Starr contacted us in the hope this positive news 'might encourage some new members and activity'. She would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those Wetherby Wombles who have litter picked regularly or just occasionally, as their efforts have made a huge difference to our town. She adds, "Regular 'picks' by members of the group really help to keep on top of the litter problem in and around the town".

363 was the exact number of purple bags filled with litter from in and around Wetherby for 2023.

A Womble managed to fill 5 of the distinctive purple volunteer bags, on his first litter pick of the New Year! This stash included 31 bottles and a 20 litre plastic container!

If you would like to join this voluntary group, drop Julie-Ann an email at

wetherbywombles@gmail.com

or find the group on Facebook, and she will forward all the necessary information.

Julie-Ann thanks us and ends with "Here's hoping for a more clean and tidy 2024".

We should all be thanking Julie-Ann and her volunteers for the fantastic work they do for our town. They are the unsung community heroes who improve the environment and our quality of life. And at no cost to the public purse. We will continue to publicise any similar groups, who send their news to us. We wish Julie-Ann & co all the best.

East Rigton Daffs out on 15 Jan '16

Eight years ago the Editor's photo of Rigton Bank was on BBC Look North with much-missed Harry Gratton (and Tanya Arnold).

The Editor got on his bike to check this year and the stalks were up but the flowers not yet blooming.



Town Council Vote Politically

We Told You So!

We knew when the all-Conservative Town Council said they were not a political council a couple of years ago, it was not true. A motion put forward by the sole Labour Councillor was not seconded by anybody so it was rejected. A vote then took place on the same issue (buses, see page 3) and the opposing view to Labour's was approved. Proof the Town Council is political.

4 Candidates for Town Council Election

It is absurd to say a Town Council is

non-political when the party is clearly stated next to the candidates name when we vote. Do they seriously think we ignore the party? We usually know nothing about the candidates so what else is our vote based on? See overleaf for candidates.

Removed from Wetherby Grumbler Group



The Editor has been silenced on the Wetherby Grumbler Facebook Group. He says "It was inevitable after the pressure put on Admin by the Wetherby Mafia. The Group was becoming less and less useful and effective anyway. Far too many posts were allowed, flooding the group and some were duplicated. Proper dialogue was made impossible by the morons who resort to insults and misinformation. Thankfully, there are still more civilised

and effective platforms, like **Wetherby Grapevine, Boston Spa Grumbler and Nextdoor.**"

Full Story on Page 5

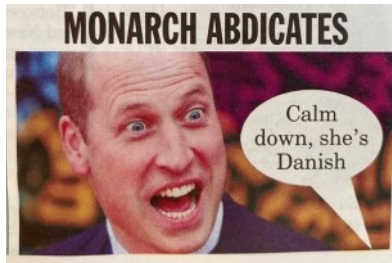


Which knight invented King Arthur's Round Table? Sir Cumference.

What's the easiest way to make a glow worm happy? Cut off its tail – it'll be delighted!

What do you call a belt made of watches? A waist of time!

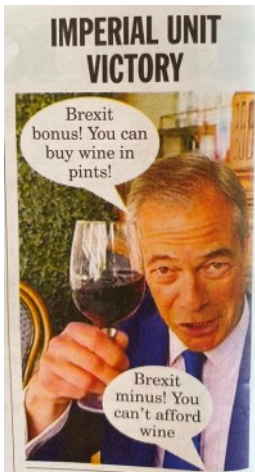
What do you call a pony with a sore throat? A little hoarse.



What do you call a building that makes pretty decent goods? A satisfactory

I want a job cleaning mirrors. It's something I can really see myself doing.

Thanks to  **PRIVATE EYE** for cartoons



Wetherby Town Council Meeting - Dec

Cont'd from last issue. Some very interesting matters.

The Town Clerk attended a National Conference on 11 & 12 October. *No clue as to location - London, Leeds, Lanzarotte?*

Almost £11,000 will have to be paid by the Town Council if the upcoming Cllr vacancy is contested. *That's the price of democracy.*

The Facilities Manager, Steve Cohen has resigned.

Minutes of a previous Staff meeting did not state who had resigned. Why? Now we know. He has only been in the job less than a year, and reportedly done it well. Should we be given a reason why he did not want to stay? It costs £1000s to recruit staff so was everything done to keep him? Was it the culture at the Council he did not like? I guess we'll never know unless he would like to tell us.

A Proposal to favour franchising of buses in West Yorkshire was rejected.

A proposal being rejected is a very rare occurrence indeed, because for years it was an all Conservative council. As we say on the front page this proves that Wetherby Town Council is political despite them saying it isn't a couple of years ago. The newer Cllrs voted with the Conservatives which may indicate they are sympathetic to that party. No allegiances are stated on the Town Council website.



See pages 3 & 7

Council Tax Precept Will Be Agreed Soon (up 80% last year)

£ **Next Meeting is Tues 13 Feb at 7pm. Or meet a Cllr every Thursday at T Hall b/w 11 & 1** £

4 in Town Council Election

Thanks to a group of Wetherby residents requesting a full election, we have a clear choice of candidates. Use your vote - this election is costing us about £11,000. We are very grateful to the candidates for volunteering for the role. We hope they will tell us something about themselves on social media or the Town Council website so we can make an informed decision.

Wetherby Town Council Election Thursday 8 February 2024



Statement of Persons Nominated Wetherby Town Council - West Ward

The following people have been or stand nominated for election to this ward. There is 1 vacancy for Councillor. Those who no longer stand nominated have a comment in the right hand column.

Candidate name	*Address of candidate	Description of candidate	Reason why candidate no longer nominated
JACOBS Anna Carol	LS postcode	Green Party	
MCINTEE Lesley Ann	32 King's Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX	Liberal Democrats	
OAKES Nigel Phillip	LS postcode		
SMITH Elaine	5 Lacey Grove, Wetherby, LS22 6RL	Conservative Party Candidate	

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NVQ Level 2 Qualification

References available

Call Kerry on 07876 525 589

As well as the excellent *Wetherby Free Press* Facebook page there is the *Wetherby Deserves Better* page too.

Both are edited entirely separately from the newsletter

Follow & Don't get FOMO! (Fear of Missing Out)

Enhanced Partnership (EP) instead of £Ms Setting Up Costs for Franchising?

The Mayor's Bus Franchising has received much publicity with help from the massive budget and resources of Metro / WYCA. Here is another way of doing things which is working well in some parts of the country.

This is a press release from those in favour of Enhanced Partnerships instead of Franchising. The exact survey questions are not provided, nor details of how the sample was chosen, so we would take their opinion polls with a pinch of salt.

“

Two-thirds of people surveyed in West Yorkshire think the financial risk of running the region's buses should remain with private bus operators and not transfer to taxpayers, which would be the situation if the Mayor chooses franchising. This clear evidence that the public is concerned about the burden of franchising is revealed in new research which also shows that 60 per cent want bus reform "from 2024 with an Enhanced Partnership Plus model between bus operators and the Combined Authority".

The poll of more than 1,000 people from across the region found that twice as many people want to see improved services from 2024 (60%) as opposed to 2026 (30%) at the earliest under franchising.

An alliance of bus operators from across the region have been arguing that whilst bus reform is needed, there is a quicker way of achieving agreed improvements with significantly less risk to taxpayers.

Andrew Cullen, Managing Director of First Bus in North & West Yorkshire, said on behalf of bus operators in the region: "These results deliver an overwhelming message that the public agrees with operators: Enhanced Partnership Plus, whereby we all work more closely with the Combined Authority, is what people want for West Yorkshire.

"We agree with the Mayor that bus reform is needed, but strongly believe there is a better alternative to franchising by choosing Enhanced Partnership Plus, an option which is truly unique to the needs of West Yorkshire.

"This bespoke solution delivers bus reform more quickly, at less cost and with significantly less risk to the public purse, at a time when local authority budgets are increasingly under pressure."

Research also found that more than half of respondents who had an opinion on bus reform felt that operators, with greater oversight from a public body, were best placed to run services (53%) as opposed to the Mayor and her team at the Combined Authority (38%).

The majority of people surveyed were not aware of the Combined Authority's predicted set-up costs associated with Franchising, which have been highlighted at upwards of £100m. When asked what spending priorities for this money would be, 28% of respondents said the money should be spent on road repairs, 23% said it should be spent on social care, 13% said it should be spent on bus reform and 12% said it should be spent on schools.



Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham spending £Ms to control buses and make them all yellow



Bus operators across the region are backing the Enhanced Partnership Plus model of bus reform, which they say can start delivering benefits of public control, simpler fares and a greener network of buses from 2024. They are promoting this option for bus reform under a campaign titled, The Best for West Yorkshire.

Mayor Tracy Brabin is due to make a decision on which option to take in March 2024.

”

Wetherby Town Council has suddenly taken an interest in bus issues now it is a political issue. It is political because the Labour Mayor, Tracy Brabin, is now responsible for transport in West Yorkshire. She is Chair of Metro / WYCA. Our Leeds City Cllr (& Conservative Leader) Alan Lamb sits on the board and has friends and Cllr colleague Norma Harrington on the Town Council.



Lone Voice Cllr Riddell

That is the only reason it has come up for discussion at our Town Council in Nov & Dec. Proof of this came when Labour party member, Cllr Alex Riddell proposed that the council should prefer a franchised model for bus operations. It was rejected unanimously and instead 'it was RESOLVED by a show of hands with 10 in favour and one against that this council prefers the option proposed for an Enhanced Partnership plus model' favoured by the Conservatives.

It is interesting that the newer non-Labour Cllrs voted with the Conservatives. They could be Conservatives for all we know and this might suggest they are. If they are Independents they could have abstained. It is surprising that they felt they had sufficient knowledge on this far from simple issue to have a firm view on it.

It would be better if the newer Cllrs told us what party they align with on the Council website. If none, clearly state that.

Who should Control our Bus Services - Politicians & Bureaucrats or Bus Companies?

We would not trust the Mayor or Metro / WYCA to run a bath, let alone the costly nightmare that is franchising. But the attitude of some of the bus companies to their passengers is appalling. Of course, there are good politicians and bus companies.



So what is the least worst option? We strongly suspect that bus services and infrastructure would not get any better under franchising; only time will tell if Manchester sees any real benefit. It's far too much of a risk to take now; we should wait and see their outcomes.

For politicians and unelected civil servants to tell a private bus company what to do is farcical. You may as well re-nationalise the whole industry and bring it totally back under public control so that the profits are re-invested into services, not given to shareholders and senior management in bonuses.

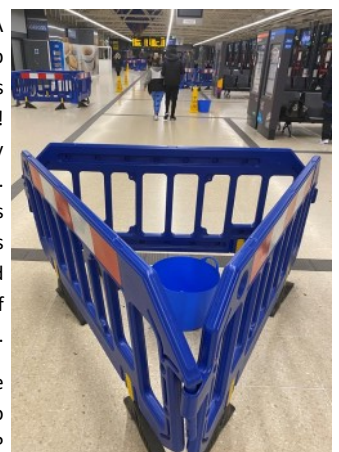
The compromise seems to us to be the Enhanced Partnership + model. Working together with bus operators to ensure the highest standards seems like a sensible way to go. And save 10s of £Ms in franchising set-up costs.

Many independent commentators say that the EP model works well in some places, like the West Midlands. See blogs from @busandtrainuser for a comprehensive analysis.

At the end of the day, whichever system we get, it is the quality of the people involved in making it work that is vital. Sadly, high quality management are few and far between these days.

Metro / WYCA cannot keep their flagship bus station dry! Years of a leaky roof at Leeds Bradford Bus Station has recently closed because of defects.

How can we trust them to control buses?



MP Alec Shelbrooke - No Comment on his own Knighthood

Alec Shelbrooke has been our Conservative MP for 13.5 years since May 2010.

In 2019 he won 58% of our vote beating Labour by over 17,000 votes. He was a Remainer.

From Dec '19 to 21 June 2023 he has voted 640 times out of 817 (78%) In that time he has rebelled twice against the party whip. *Source - www.publicwhip.org.uk/*

He refused to inform his constituents whether or not he supported Boris Johnson in the No-Confidence Vote.

Alec was a strong supporter of Liz Truss in the Leadership Battle. Prime Minister Truss promoted him to a junior ministerial post in Sep '22, which he then quit / was sacked after 49 days, the same period his boss lasted in post.

In June 2023 Alec voted **for** the Privileges Committee report which stated that Boris Johnson repeatedly misled parliament ie knowingly lied about parties in Downing Street whilst the rest of us had to follow the rules.

Source - www.theyworkforyou.com/



Very Old Photo
Alec still uses


Space for Alec to Say Anything to Constituents

(Unedited, max 400 words)

Nothing received
since we began 2+ years ago

alec.shelbrooke.mp@parliament.uk

In Dec '23 it was announced that Alec will receive one of the highest knighthood honours; the Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE), which entitles him to be addressed as "Sir". It was given to him by Liz Truss, for whom Alec once tweeted his support more than 250 times in a 2-month period. Himself, nor his close Conservative Councillor colleagues, made any comment about his award on their social media accounts (Twitter / X or Facebook). Other KBEs are David Attenborough, Paul McCartney, Terry Wogan & Edmund Hillary.

 17,000+ Followers. Still no comment on his own knighthood.

Between 17 Dec & 17 Jan: Number of Original Tweets specifically about his constituency: 0

Number of Reposts attacking Keir Starmer: Three

Other posts: Supporting Tory mayor for North Yorkshire, 2 about Israel & Hamas war, PO Scandal

Total Number of Original Tweets: Four



Alec appeared on
Talk TV on 8 Jan

 facebook

2.9K Followers. Still no comment on his own knighthood. Posts about constituency b/w 17 Dec & 17 Jan : Two - a repost from a Cllr about B Spa / Thorp Arch bridge being closed and MP Surgery information.

Think All Councillors Are Selfless, Nice People?

It beggars belief that the mainstream media only took notice of the Post Office scandal after an ITV docudrama. *Private Eye* readers knew about the disgraceful actions of senior Post Office management years ago. Strange how the part *Private Eye* played is rarely mentioned. The Truth is often ignored as we have found out here at *WFP*. But it always comes out in the end.

The many cases of disgraceful behaviour from local politicians are also usually completely ignored by local and national media.

So, if you are under the illusion that they are all wonderful, kind-hearted selfless individuals, think again. Most are good people, of course but here are some examples of those that aren't. They are taken from *Private Eye* in their lowlights of 2023.

- * A Tory Cllr's company in Fareham went bust owing 10s of £1000s to unhappy customers. He promptly set up a new company with a similar name and carried on as before.
- * A Returning Officer read out the wrong name of the winner of an election in Lancashire. The Labour loser incredibly took up the seat for 3 months attending meetings etc before doing the right thing. Crazy world, folks!
- * Labour Liverpool City Council officers cancelled 50 parking tickets for 14 Cllrs after Cllrs had made it clear there would be 'consequences' if they weren't cancelled.
- * Rishi Sunak's own local Councillor resigned after being manhandled by the Tory Whip during a vote in which she was about to vote against the party.
- * The Labour Mayor of Hackney lied about his friendship with a paedophile former councillor and quit 2 weeks after his lie was exposed.
- * Camden in London spent £17K+ in just 4 months on a luxury chauffeur service for the Mayor.
- * "Bullying, intimidation & abuse of power" says a report on the regime of a Cheshire Tory Council Leader who resigned after *P Eye's* report.

Abuses take place in many public sector areas because policies and procedures are lax, misinterpreted or don't exist. It is the system that tempts the ne'er do wells to take advantage. When the mark is overstepped, it is a brave person who does the right thing and informs a higher authority. Whistle-blowers are the real heroes in our society. They step up and do the right thing though they are often victimised for their efforts. If you know of any abuse of power from Councillors or any publicly paid or funded individuals, plse do the right thing: tell somebody eg Police, your MP, whistle-blower organisation, the Press.

We highly recommend reading "Rotten Boroughs" in *Private Eye* - out fortnightly, on Wednesdays and costs £2.99 (cheaper on subscription).



PRIVATE EYE



The Weird World of Wetherby Grumbler - Don't Upset Anyone (with the Truth or Reasonable Opinion)

It was a befitting end to the Editor's membership of this Facebook group. It was a mess, like much of what had gone on before.

I initially sent a post promoting the Wetherby Free Press which I do once every 2 or 3 weeks. To repeat, that is just one promotion post every 2 or 3 weeks. As usual, Admin refused to publish it. The platforms mentioned at the bottom of this article, and others, all published it.

So I sent another post without the link or email address and just mentioned 'a community newsletter'. Again, this one was censored.

So, I sent a third and final post complaining that any post about WFP is not allowed, whilst another not-for-profit community organisation posted 6 times in one day. See image below.

Admin published this one, which breaks their own silly rule about not mentioning the only serious news source for Wetherby - the Free Press! Where is the consistency and the logic in publishing this one and not either of the others? They have published a post that was clearly a message meant for Admin only before, so I was prepared for that and asked "What do folks think?" at the end.



The Editor's Last Post

Critics made out that I was criticising the Wetherby Christmas Lights Team, despite me clearly saying

"Great work they do"

and putting an image of them up hard at work.

My point was obvious - that Admin censors a single post from a community asset yet allows 6 posts from another. And that flooding the group with too many posts makes it much less effective.

Two perfectly valid points.

Abuse from the less intelligent follows, and confusion about whether I am banned or not. In the end I am.

Banned forever? Admin won't say.

It's a shame but see below

So, what's behind all this? Well, here's a few facts with reasonable opinion.

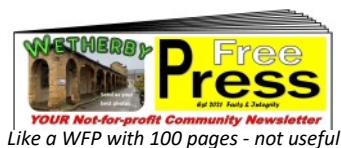
- ◆ Vicki Buchanan of Wetherby & Melissa Watson of Walsden (near Todmorden) are the Admin of this group.
- ◆ Vicki once told me "I have no power". She can stop ordinary people like me from giving facts and perfectly reasonable opinions to a possible 29,000 people. She is one of the most powerful people in Wetherby but seems not to realise it.
- ◆ Admin stopped me promoting WFP because of a 'lot of complaints'. They would not tell me how many, who made them or examples of offending posts. Is that fair? We are a not-for-profit community asset, like Grumbler (we promote them but the favour is not returned, sadly).
- ◆ Admin also said it was because of 'the negativity that surrounds it (WFP)'. So they appear to be blaming me for the critics who cannot write civilised comments and resort to nasty insults instead. They are giving in to the bullies who don't like free speech or have the intelligence to debate issues.
- ◆ The Wetherby Mafia have put immense pressure on Admin from the beginning to ban me. Admin deny this but there is no other explanation for Admin's actions and the content of their messages to me.
- ◆ I have always been polite with Admin in my messages requesting explanations despite my frustration with them.

Indeed, I've always thanked Admin at Christmas for the difficult job they do. I wouldn't like it, especially the time it must take up. But they must be made to be accountable for their actions, which have been totally illogical at times.

Of course, it's their group and they can do what they want but we live in a fair society, don't we? It feels like Admin are denying me my freedom of speech. Admin have a moral responsibility to make reasonable decisions and judgements based on facts, not opinions from haters of free speech.



But the Editor's ban is no bad thing. Wetherby Grumbler is becoming less and less effective with every passing day. There are now far too many posts and the chances of you missing something important or interesting increases. The platform is being flooded with posts and local politicians are using it too much for their own ends, and sometimes duplicating each other. There are far too many haters, morons, wind-up merchants, attention-seekers and keyboard warriors who don't want a proper dialogue - they just resort to offensive insults they would never say to people's faces. Every insult demeans all members of the group and gives



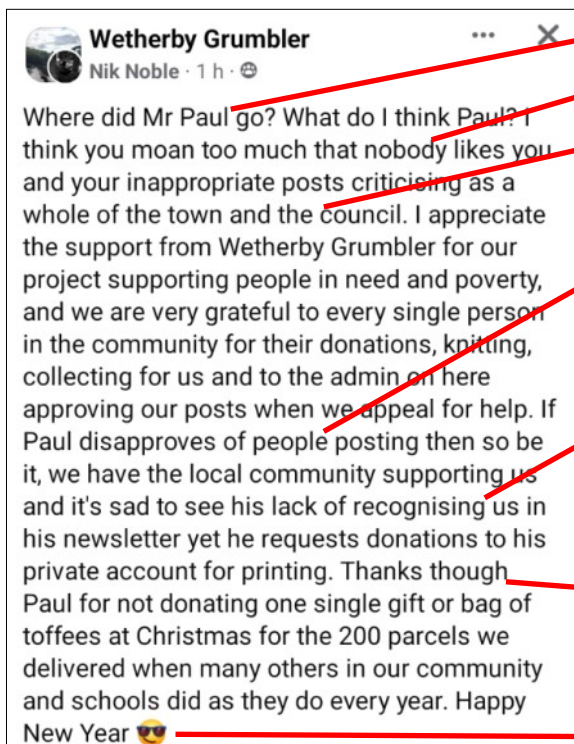
a poor impression of our town (with 29K members, many are obviously not residents).

We recommend Wetherby Grapevine and Boston Spa Grumbler Facebook groups. And Nextdoor. These are all groups that are administrated well and fairly. The Wetherby Mafia and haters of free speech will no doubt continue to spread misinformation and fear, to have us banned from these groups too. Good Luck to them - we have built up a solid readership base over the years who read every issue and want to know the truth about some of the unsavoury goings-on in this town, including the Mafia's behaviour.

Vicki & Melissa have a Right to Reply 5 on our Platform. We don't on theirs.

Homeless Project Manager Criticises Editor - My Response

Nik Noble of the Boston Spa Community & Homeless Project made critical comments underneath the Editor's final post on Wetherby Grumbler with a membership of 29,000. The Editor was removed from the group so did not have the chance to respond. Here is his response.



"Mr Paul" Who speaks like that, apart from a child?

"nobody likes you". Immature exaggeration.

"inappropriate posts criticising whole of the town and the council". Another silly exaggeration and no example provided to back up such a statement.

"disapproves of people posting". Ridiculous thing to say. Nik obviously did not understand my post - I was complaining that my 2 posts were rejected when 6 from the same organisation were approved on the same day. What is wrong with that?

"lack of recognising us". This says it all. The arrogance of that statement. Nik's project has a very low profile. I have never heard of it. Whose fault is that? **Nik has not written to me once to promote her project.** Why should we promote it when she can't be bothered to write a simple email to us, or send us a press release? Unbelievable!

"Thanks though Paul for not donating one single gift". Again, the arrogance is astounding. Looks like Nik Noble expects everybody in Wetherby to donate to her project - not just me but everybody, I am nobody special. Why is she singling me out from all the other non-donators? She is trying to imply that I am uncaring and don't do anything for the community. For her and other critics, it's none of your business but I've described my community work on the back page anyway. It's like me saying to her "Thanks for not donating a single penny to the only community newsletter in Wetherby". It's laughable.

Happy New Year to you, Nik (but without the childish smirk).

The Editor adds: As I say, I've never heard of Nik Noble or her project. It is disappointing that a person in her position would publicly want to criticise me in such a way. So what is the 'Boston Spa Community & Homeless Project' that Nik writes about but oddly does not name?

It is not a charity. It therefore has no rules to keep to, or obligations, and cannot be investigated by the Charity Commission. Nor is it a not-for-profit Community Interest Company. It is a 'project' which has no legal standing.

Anybody can set up a 'project' and take donations with no safeguards in place. Before we promote Nik's project, she would have to answer a few basic questions. Like why she isn't a charity, not-for-profit community interest company or any other officially recognised organisation. And inform us what functions she carries out that other organisations do not, like the Lions, Foodbank, St George's Crypt etc? It seems there is some overlap here.

Boston Spa Community & Homeless Project

Readers can make their own minds up about Nik Noble as a Project Manager from the post above and the Project's website.

The website does not specify Nik's qualifications. It says she works 'in social care', which is rather vague - she could be an admin officer or a senior manager with 40 years experience. Why is it not stated?

There is no photograph of Nik Noble or her co-founder in the 'About' part of the website. There are no (annual) reports so we don't know how much has been raised and how much was spent on admin etc. It would help with public confidence if this basic information was available.

In our view there is not enough information provided on the website to make a clear judgement on whether this project is a better cause than the 100s of other charities / organisations in the area who ask for donations and whether it is run professionally.

If Nik wrote her post in haste and now regrets what she said, an apology would be accepted, a line drawn under it and the post not mentioned again.

BEFORE YOU POST... THINK!

Everyone who posts on social media should be aware that you may have to justify what you say. And if a post is ever used as evidence in a court of law, you may have to explain it to a judge or magistrate.

So, don't be a sheep and join in the 'pile on' like at school. Let's be mature and have civilised exchanges. Try to give clear examples to back up your opinions. Re-read what you have written, check for errors and leave it at least an hour before posting.

Wetherby News

We are recording the number of **general** news items about Wetherby / Boston Spa & villages. And the no. of letters/emails from residents about the area in the published paper, now £2.10.

We do this in the hope they will wake up and take up some of our stories. Nothing so far. They are ignoring the serious issues in our great town and do not deserve to have 'Wetherby' in their title.

Issue of 11 Jan '24

News Items - 1 Letters - 0

Press Release from St Martin's in Boston Spa. A front page headline read "Big Decisions for Council". You can guess which Council. Not Wetherby or Leeds. The cheek of it! **This is why we are needed.**

Issue of 18 Jan '24

News Items - 0 Letters - 0

Yes, let's play 'search the paper for the words Wetherby, Boston Spa, Leeds, West Yorkshire'. Not even the Boston Spa tragedy mentioned.

*They have had **one story maximum** per issue about Wetherby & area for the last few months!*

Wetherby Deserves Better

Wetherby Town Council - Plea for Examples where they have Excelled



The 15 Wetherby Town Councillors are unpaid volunteers. Most are Conservative & raised our Council Tax precept by 80% in a cost-of-living crisis in 23/24, much of it to pay for new staff. The Town Clerk is Iona Taylor. The new Assistant Clerk is Rowann Fitzpatrick. The new Communications Officer is Helena Briden. These 3 salaries alone cost about £100,000 per year. There is also a Facilities Manager, now vacant. Work is also contracted out. *There is still no up-to-date details of Town Hall staff on their website wetherby.co.uk; no images of staff (unlike Otley) and no easy-to-find diagram showing the line management structure.*



This Council produced a much-needed leaflet to promote the town in Autumn 2023 (too late for Summer visitors). It took years to produce and failed in its main objective of showing Wetherby at its best and full of friendly people. It contained small poor images without a single smiling face. And the map missed out the bus station!

There is to be no re-print and nobody apologised for it. For a fuller critique see Issue 54. Copies of the old leaflet are still in one estate agent, see left. They have not even distributed it properly despite having a Communications Officer.

This is just one example of why we believe this Town Council is satisfied with low standards. Another is their dreadful website. It is vastly inferior to Otley's.



Bus Station Left Off!

Old Leaflet on display in Renton & Parr

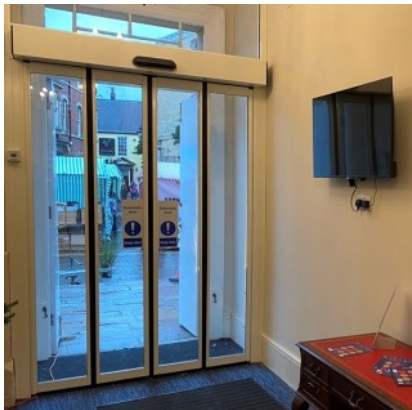
*People sometimes write messages supporting the Council on social media but never write to us. If you are so sure our criticisms are unreasonable, provide us with details why and we can have a mature debate. The fact that Town Councillors themselves rarely defend themselves or answer simple questions speaks volumes. **We would love to publish some positive news about this Council where they have done a really good job, exceeded expectations and used creativity & imagination. But there is none that anybody is willing to tell us about.***

Space for any of our Town Cllrs to say Anything to Residents - Unedited, max 400 words

Dec '23 Minutes cont'd from page 2

More Speed Indicator Devices throughout the town would cost about £11,000. *Do drivers ignore them? Is it worth the money?*

Refurbishment of Town Hall. There are a number of significant number of outstanding issues relating to the quality and finishing of works. The works have not been satisfactorily completed. *This has cost many 10s of £1000s yet there has been nothing said on social media or publicly from the Town Council that we have seen. There are large changes at the entrance - new automatic doors, TV screen etc, see image.*



Problems with Refurb at Town Hall

brigade is an old-fashioned term and heard on repeats of Trumpton & Camberwick Green, see right. Last year a Conservative Councillor used the term 'binmen' in a party leaflet - a sexist, inaccurate and old-fashioned term.

Crime Figures for Nov - 9 incidents of anti-social behaviour and 133 other crimes. *Still no comment or discussion about these figures or trends or comparison with previous month or last year.*

Wetherby in Bloom's Autumn 2023 newsletter was acknowledged. *Wetherby Free Press still ignored - Clear bias against us and childish behaviour.*

Monthly Expenditure: *We recommend residents look at the expenditure for the month. The List of Payments shows what few areas the Council is actually responsible for yet has a large number of staff. Staff costs tend to increase, especially as more staff are appointed and so will our precept.*

Fire damage and anti-social behaviour in Scaur Park to cost over £2000 to fix. Similar issues with graffiti at the Nidd Approach playground.

Garden of Rest: The tiles have been replaced in the Old Man's Parliament.

The Property Committee used the term 'Fire Brigade' twice to describe our Fire & Rescue Service. *This shows just how out of touch our Town Councillors are. Fire*



Trumpton: "Pugh Pugh, Barney, McGrew"



Struggling to afford food? No money left at the end of the month? Here are ways to get help from us We offer a non-judgemental listening ear and support. If you're struggling to afford food and other essentials, please get in touch!



6 Ways to GET HELP

- ★ Phone the Helpline on 08082 082138
- ★ Phone us direct on 07840 455725
- ★ Call in at the One Stop at Wetherby Library
- ★ Send us a DM on Facebook or Instagram
- ★ Talk to a Referral Agent (list on our website)
- ★ Call in & see us!

Tues. Fri & Sat 10am - 11.30am at Barleyfields, Wetherby
Mondays 2pm - 3.30pm at The Barn, Tadcaster



Simple - You Write it, we Publish it. It's Your Newsletter.

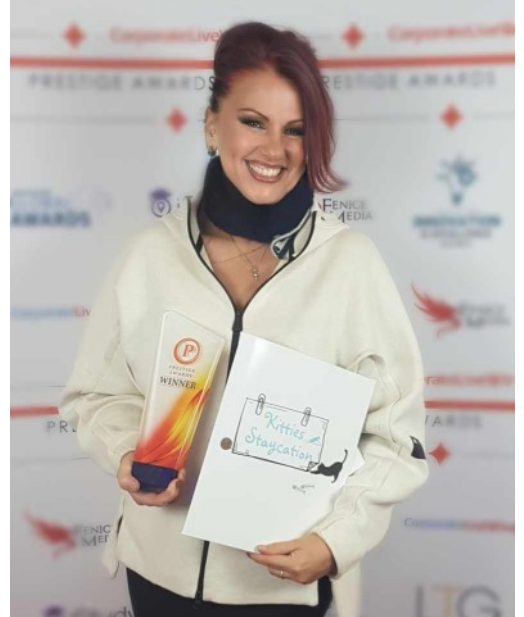
Business Owner & Fundraiser wins a Prestige Award

Abs Green has won an award for her business “**Kitties Staycation**” offering a service looking after cats whilst the owner is away. The award was presented at a lavish ceremony at Hazlewood Castle off the A64. “I was so surprised when I was told and enjoyed every second at the awards event.”

Abs is based in **Newton Kyme** between Boston Spa & Tadcaster and set up her business two years ago. “I’ve always loved cats” she says “they give you so much love and attention, and always make me smile, brightening my day up. Snuggling up with one is just the best.” Abs has completed two diploma courses in understanding feline anxiety and feline first aid.

The **Prestige Awards** were launched to celebrate the Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) businesses and individuals that consistently offer excellent products and services to local residents, ex-pats and tourist visitors alike.

More details at www@kittiesstaycation.co.uk or call 07305 792152



Hazlewood Castle



Tragedy in Wharfe at Boston Spa

Our deepest sympathies go out to the family and friends of the man whose body was found after he was seen jumping from the bridge in Boston Spa. And to others involved, like witnesses and the emergency services.

A bus driver had raised the alarm late night after spotting a male get out of a car which was blocking the bridge, before jumping into the river.

A large number of emergency personnel quickly attended the scene, including specialist water rescue firefighters and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service Hazardous Area Response Team. The bridge was closed for many hours. Crime Scene Investigators were at a location around a quarter of a mile downstream from the bridge.



Boston to Tadcaster Road

West Yorkshire Police said that the man has been identified and his relatives have been informed and are being supported by specially trained Officers. The death is not being treated as suspicious and a file will be prepared for the Coroner.



Thanks to YappApp for the images. They keep you informed of incidents throughout Yorkshire. They verify, edit & share your stories. Join them with the QR code.

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Breaking News & Incidents
The page that turns you, the public, into anonymous reporters
Help shape your local news



We Say What We See and Ask Questions

This awful sign is right outside the Town Hall.

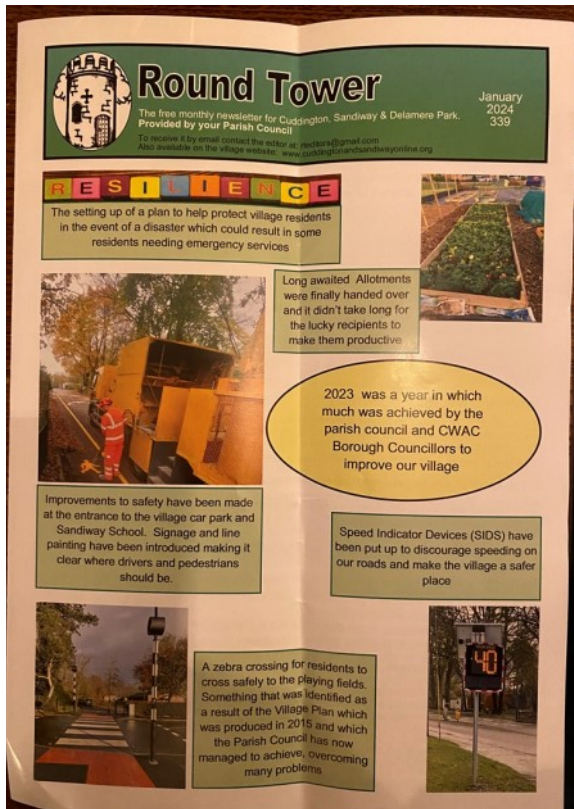
Have the Town Councillors, especially those on the Welcome to Wetherby committee, even noticed it? We’ve not seen it in any minutes of meetings.

The sign is sending visitors directly to Lloyds Bank! It is in a poor state giving visitors a poor impression of the town. It should say “Library with Tourist Information” and point in the right direction.

Will this straight-forward matter be taken up by the Town Council and a proper sign installed before Summer?

We will report back.

Why has Wetherby not had a Council Newsletter for Years?



Sandiway & Cuddington is a village in rural Cheshire looking with a Parish Council looking after 6000 residents.

They have managed to produce 339 newsletters, the latest of which is very good quality, see left. It is produced by volunteers and costs a tiny amount of money to produce.

Wetherby Town Council stopped producing their newsletter years ago. The final issues were simple black and white photocopies. Many 1000s of residents without internet access have been totally unaware of the Council's progress (or lack of it) or how their Council Tax precept was being spent.

The all-Conservative Council were happy to keep us uninformed. The Wetherby News stopped reporting Council meetings and issues many years ago.

The Parish Council in this Cheshire village want to be accountable to their residents and in the January issue informed them of their achievements of 2023, along with useful regular information about two valuable community assets - their library and train station.

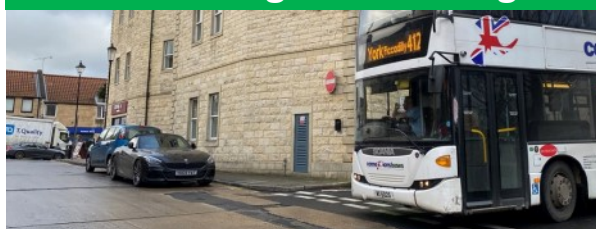
Why has Wetherby Town Council not produced something similar or better than a Cheshire village? It simply gave up producing anything. To add insult to injury they have not improved their dreadful website to partially compensate for the lack of a newsletter. It costs Cheshire's taxpayers next to nothing to produce theirs. No Communications Officer needed, just competent volunteers.

So why have Wetherby Town Council not produced a simple Newsletter? A few possible reasons are:

- * Felt no need to communicate with residents and businesses (including the many 1000s who aren't online)
- * Unwilling to put anything in writing so they could not be held accountable
- * Incapable - Not one of the 20+ Councillors and Town Hall Staff had the skills
- * It may show that what they actually do with our money is not as much as we think

We now employ a Communications Officer, Helena Briden, so can expect our upcoming newsletter to be of an excellent quality at the lowest possible cost to Council Tax payers.

Bus Blocking - No Change



After years of nothing being done, it could happen again today, tomorrow, the day after etc

X98 / 99 Bus Service

There has been no real progress with the difficulties on the X99 'Sky Class' buses to Leeds, as described in Issue 54.

East Keswick Parish Council is encouraging residents to email Transdev (Harrogate Bus Company) and Metro / WYCA directly to ask for a better service.

Their emails are: paul.turner@transdevbus.co.uk tracy.brabin@westyorks-ca.gov.uk
simon.warburton@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

A meeting is to take place about the route this month so the more 'people pressure' the better.

Town Council Promote Parking Consultation online but not Library Consultation. Why?

Wetherby Town Council are encouraging residents to give their views on parking charges on the Town Council website. But there is nothing at www.wetherby.co.uk about the equally important consultation on cuts in Library/Hub services.



This shows that Town Councillors are more interested in some matters than others. The Library is an important public service. Not a whisper from them when hours and newspapers were cut in recent years (or the decline of the now dreadful Wetherby News).

The Editor noticed paper copies of the Parking Charges Survey on a table displayed at Wetherby Town Hall. Where were the copies of the Library Survey? The Editor asked at the library if he could take some copies over but library staff had to consult their bosses first. Common sense won the day and the Editor was pleased to see the Library Survey on the Town Hall table the next day. The Town Council employs a Communications Officer who should ensure ALL consultations are publicised. Both parking charges and library cuts are important issues and should be treated equally.

Leeds City Council says that it, like many Local Authorities, is probably in its most challenging financial position since 2011, caused by;

- Reductions in funding from central government
- Increased costs due to the energy crisis.
- Rising cost of living, creating more demands on services
- Increased demand for social care rising by £46m over the past 12 yrs

Their proposals are to reduce the Opening Hours of Community Hubs / Libraries, but they give no detail of what the cuts may actually be. They say the changes would not undermine their statutory duty.

The Consultation Survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Pick it up at the library and hand it back before Mon 12 Feb or complete online at <https://surveys.leeds.gov.uk/s/e3ndlX>



After a comfortable 3 - 0 victory at Peterborough in the FA Cup, United were back in Championship action at Cardiff City.

Leeds were dominant throughout the match and it was no surprise that Bamford scored their first after 13 minutes. It was a scrappy goal with Bamford kicking it in whilst on the ground, see pic. Summerville was influential as ever, and was involved in the second goal, setting up a tap in for James. 2 - 0 up at half time and the result looked never in doubt.



Bamford with Leeds first

Leeds were given a dubious penalty in the second half when Rutter went down in the box. But Summerville was not to get on the scoresheet as he hit the post.

The third and final goal came in the dying minutes to send the travelling fans home very satisfied after their trip to the Welsh capital. The Cardiff defence were all over the place and Rutter took advantage with a fine shot. Cardiff were booed off the pitch by their fans.

This was the Whites third 3 - 0 victory on the trot and ended a run of 3 defeats away from home.

Leeds are a favourite of Sky Sports at the moment. With many



Wonder who he supports!

high scoring games and the chance of promotion many of their upcoming matches are attractive propositions for the TV channel and are being televised in February.

Meanwhile, this great result was not mentioned on the BBC Look North bulletin an hour after the match finished, nor any other scores. Looks like BBC Yorkshire continue to give the area's most popular sports - men's football & rugby league - little coverage.

FIXTURES

Utd v Preston on Sun 21 Jan at 12.00

Utd v Plymouth on Sat 27 Jan at 15.00 *FA Cup*

Bristol City v Utd on Fri 2 Feb at 20.00

Your Community Newsletter Editor: Paul Kirby



Email: WetherbyFreePress@PM
Tel: 07840 862861 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 don't do interviews, as we are part-timers and aren't trained in short-hand. We are not 'journalists' - we say what we see. Simples.

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 can be seen as harassment

The Editor has had 4 'Meet the Editor' events so far. None of our harshest critics have ever turned up to have a civilised debate.

Please donate online at

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!



Advertising Rates

"Cheap as Chips"

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1/4 A4 page (size B/C) - £40 or £130 for 4 issues

1/2 A4 page (size D) - £60 or £200 for 4

Sponsorship on front page - £25



**We can design your ad FOR FREE
Just send us the details & images**

NEXT ISSUE Friday 9 Feb 2024



News, Funny Stuff & Improving Accountability

www.pkmarketing1.com/wetherby-free-press

In response to the same old comments our critics love to trot out, here are some uncomfortable facts for them.

"You're not a journalist" Correct, I'm not, there are none in Wetherby. I do have the qualities and skills of a professional journalist though & have high standards (not been sued yet)

"What do you do for the community?" Not that it's any of your business how I spend my spare time but I:

- ⇒ volunteer for a Community Interest Company
- ⇒ campaign on transport issues (getting buses on Boxing Day)
- ⇒ have raised over £1500 for Cancer Research in last 3 years (and put nearly £1500 into the coffers of a local independent business in the town).

Oh, and I edit a community newsletter promoting many good people, events and organisations.

(And pick up litter near my house, and glass bottles everywhere)

The critics (who are in a minority) have been spreading misinformation again on social media. If you want to know fact instead of fiction, read Issues 54 & 55. Or ask.

In 2023 we Supported 25 Local Charities & Organisations

Send us your

to WetherbyFreePress@PM.me



In Sept 2022 we had over 2500 online readers