

5 years

Thanks for Reading

of Quality
Citizen
Journalism



WETHERBY

ISSUE 95 - Sept 26

Free Press

Est 2021 Facts & Integrity

Council Comms Officer Resigns

We learnt this not from *Wetherby Town Council (WTC)* but a friend of the postholder on social media!

The 'dear friend' gave personal details which we assume the postholder wanted in the public arena. Yet neither the Town Clerk, Dianne Rickaby nor Chair of Staffing Cttee, Cllr Norma Harrington has said a word on the WTC website or Facebook about the resignation or whether the post will continue.

Even when we asked them directly, they said nothing. Open and accountable? If the post does continue, it will be yet more cost for us (£3000+ for recruitment).

We have always maintained that this post was costly and unnecessary for what little the Council actually does. We think the postholder was brought in to counteract the facts that we publish (so the Cllrs did not have to do it themselves).

A former Councillor, Billie Ager-Mills agrees, calling the new post a 'knee jerk reaction to deal with a self appointed journalist nutter' ie the Editor (she is, as we all know, a charming lady!).

The Communications Officer would not communicate with the only Community Newsletter in the town - the *Free Press*! Ironic. Surely that was part of her job?

Taxpayers deserve to know if her quitting is related to the job itself or the culture / management of WTC. It's her story to tell, not mine, says the 'dear friend', the so-called '*Wetherby Wailer*'.

The *Wailer* provides some background in her social media post we publish on page 4.



Free Press - Let's Learn from History

Well, here we are, 5 years old!

929 pages and about 200,000 words telling you stuff you will read nowhere else. Plus some funny jokes, useful information and highlighting the best of our community too.

The Editor started the *Free Press* in September 2021 because he suspected all was not as it should be in the *Town Council* and other influential organisations. His beliefs were soon proven correct.

The evidence showing low standards and poor performance in many areas was clear to see. Other residents were upset at the lack of accountability and joined the *Free Press* team.

The Editor thanks them, and all our contributors and supporters.

It does take some courage to cooperate with us when there are unpleasant people online and the *Wetherby Mafia*.

Personal insults and misinformation are perhaps not surprising when we are the only publication that dares to ruffle the feathers of those in authority, many of whom are over-sensitive and cannot take (justified) criticism like adults. Sadly, they also ignore our sensible suggestions to improve the town so little has changed since we began. See 'Back to the 50s' letter in Issue 94.

The decline of the *Wetherby News*, usually containing just 1 or 2 items of 'news', was another reason to start the *Free Press* - no serious journalism in the town. Change the paper's name, we say.

On pages 6, 8 & 11 we highlight our best reporting and the weird goings-on in a conservative, cliquey town from the first 40 Issues.

We should learn from history and not make the same mistakes.

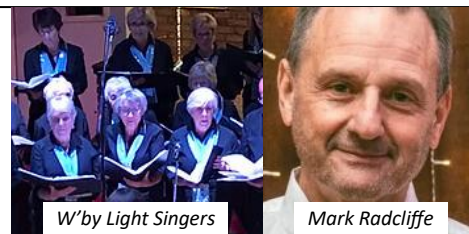
cont'd on page 7



wetherbyfestival.co.uk

Fri 2 Oct - Sat 10 Oct

The organisers say: "As the mince pies are on the supermarket shelves, you better get your skates on and book your tickets for your favourite October festival on your doorstep!" Tickets from Market Place on Thursdays or online.



This landmark issue may be the last for a while. *Microsoft* in their wisdom are doing away with their excellent *Publisher* software. So we have to learn a new desktop publisher. Meantime, it's up to you to highlight the poor behaviour and low standards of those in authority and make them accountable. The *Free Press* team wish you well.

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

We cater for the 1000s of **DIGITALLY EXCLUDED** with a **Full Copy at Library, Phoenix Café**

& promo copies at *Morrisons, Pubs, Cafés, Dentists, Care Homes, Churches, Takeaways etc*





* I remember when being told to go to my room was considered a punishment.



* What do you call an Irishman who bounces off the walls? Rick O'Shea.

* My wife recently opened my car door for me. A nice gesture you may think, but not at 60 miles an hour.

* At this point, if I get picked up by aliens, I'm just gonna go ahead and consider it a rescue mission.

* Last night I dreamt I had an identical twin. This morning, when I woke up, I was beside myself!



* What do you call a flying monkey with a fever? A hot air baboon.



More funnies on back page

Wetherby Show to make a comeback?

It's embarrassing that Wetherby does not have an annual show / festival / gala / carnival for the whole family. Many other towns, like Otley & Ilkley have at least one, and so do smaller places like Tockwith & Boston Spa. The *Free Press* have frequently highlighted this fact and those in authority have finally taken note.

It will have to feature something special to attract non-residents so this is a real test for our Town Council, Wetherby Lions etc. The Wetherby Show ended decades ago because there weren't enough volunteers and community spirit for it to continue. Let's hope that has changed.

We still think a River Festival would be better because if numbers are low, at least it is partly an educational event with the many environmental organisations that would participate.

Is it coincidence that it is being proposed now that the Town Council's *Welcome to Wetherby* is no more?

We wish those involved well and hope it happens in 2027.



WELCOME TO WETHERBY Disbanded!



Wetherby Town Council

No reason has been provided for the the disappearance of the *Welcome to Wetherby* Ctte, chaired by Cllr Buckle.

The reasons are obvious to us - we have pointed them out in Issues 85 - 87 when Cllr Lamb claimed it was doing 'an excellent job'. (Perhaps he should think

twice before praising his Conservative colleagues when the evidence against his view was overwhelming. We asked Cllr Lamb for his view now. No reply.)

We believe the main reasons for the change to a simple *Events* ctte were that the town's organisations would not work with Cllr Buckle, & Hawkins before him, and the total lack of creativity and

imagination the Ctte showed. Many surrounding towns put us to shame with so many different events showing much community spirit eg Otley, K'boro & Ripon.

Wetherby has only 2 Council-led events - Remembrance Parade & Bonfire Night. But why give

up the name *Welcome to Wetherby*? There is nothing wrong with it (even though there isn't much of one, currently).



Cllr Dean Buckle, ex-Chair



Cllr Lamb supporting a failed committee

GIVEN UP

Communications Committee Disbanded!

Not one but two WTC committees have been disposed of! Chaired by Cllr Mulhall the Communications Ctte disappeared in July 2025 without explanation or any publicity at the time. Open and accountable? - they are having a laugh! The Town Clerk told us over a year later that "the committee lost its momentum".

How embarrassing for a young recently-awarded Mayor to be Chair of a committee that 'lost its momentum'. Yet he stays silent about why this was the case. Could it have something to do with the Comms Officer who has recently resigned her post?

This is another committee that has achieved little in our view. We have highlighted its low standards over the years. It is ironic that a communications committee was poor at communicating to the end. Each committee will now do its own public relations. Let's hope the costly Comms PR post is history.



Cllr Connor Mulhall, Con

As well as the *Wetherby Free Press* page on [facebook](#)



there's the *Wetherby Deserves Better* page too.

* Both are independently run from the newsletter



TADCASTER ALBION FOOTBALL CLUB

www.tadalbion.com

Home Results & Fixtures

Date	Day	Kick Off	Opponent
22nd Aug 2026	Won 2 - 1	15:00PM - FA Cup	Stalybridge Celtic
5th Sep 2026	Draw 0 - 0	15:00PM - NCELP	Rossington Main
15th Sep 2026	Lost 0 - 3	19:45PM - NCELP	Pickering Town
25th Sep 2026	Friday	19:45PM - NCELP	Knaresborough Town
3rd Oct 2026	Saturday	15:00PM - NCELP	Albion Sports
13th Oct 2026	Tuesday	19:45PM - NCELP	Retford FC
24th Oct 2026	Saturday	15:00PM - NCELP	Handsworth
14th Nov 2026	Saturday	15:00PM - NCELP	Parkgate
5th Dec 2026	Saturday	15:00PM - NCELP	Bottesford Town

BIG CLASHES AHEAD! BRING THE FAMILY!

See website or social media for any changes



W C S
WETHERBY CIVIC SOCIETY
Proudly Serving Our Town

Welcomes More Members

Love Wetherby?

Help shape what happens next

Wetherby is changing. New housing on every side of the town, pressure on roads, schools and the riverside, and planning decisions made in Leeds that will shape this town for decades. Those decisions get made either way — the only question is whether the people who actually live here have a voice in them.

That's what the Civic Society is for. Year after year, we've been the residents' voice on **planning, heritage and the public spaces we all share** — and the more members we have, the harder that voice is to ignore.

What membership gives you

- **A real say.** Full voting rights at the AGM — the Society's direction is set by its members, not for them.
- **Know what's coming before it arrives.** Regular updates on planning applications, local projects and community matters — by email or post, whichever suits you.
- **First to hear, first to book.** Early notice of talks, visits and events — at reduced member rates — and you're welcome to bring friends.
- **Get stuck in (if you want to).** Hands-on projects from heritage research to conservation work — as much or as little as you like.

All this for £1 a month

Individual membership is just **£12 a year** — less than a single round of coffees. Joint membership for two people at the same address is **£20**, and full-time students join for **£5**. Pay however is easiest: cheque, standing order, bank transfer, or cash at a meeting.

It's a small amount — but multiplied across our membership, it's what keeps an independent voice for Wetherby alive.

JOIN TODAY — IT TAKES ONE EMAIL

Contact our Treasurer, Angela Winterbottom, at angela.winterbottom@hotmail.co.uk

Tell her which membership you'd like — she'll do the rest. You could be a member by the weekend.



Boston Spa Methodist Church

Lunchtime Concert

1pm, Friday 9th October 2026



Ruth and James Sanderson

TICKETS £6
Light lunches served from 12 noon

ENQUIRIES: 0113 268 2041

Wetherby Foodbank

**September 2026
Foodbank Wish List**

- Long-life fruit juice
- Instant coffee
- Instant hot chocolate
- Pasta sauces – jars
- Microwave rice
- Tinned chilli con carne
- Tinned custard
- Instant mashed potato
- Sugar
- Chocolate bars
- Tinned sweetcorn
- Squash / cordials
- Jams & spreads
- Laundry liquid/powder/sheets (small)
- Or... make a donation via our website

Thank
you!



The Free Press thanks all the many volunteers in Wetherby & Boston Spa for their fantastic work



After every edition of the Free Press, we ask our Town Councillors to comment, to provide information and to tell us if we have got the wrong end of the stick.

Not a peep out of any of them following the last edition.

It looks like they now leave it to the Town Clerk, Dianne Rickaby. We are grateful for her responses to some of the issues in Issue 94 (not all were addressed).

New Cllr Roberts

Only one person wanted to be a Councillor in Wetherby East following Kazia Knight's death. What does that say about the Council or the people of Wetherby?

Daniel Roberts does not tell us on the WTC website what political party he follows so we will assume he is a Conservative, like nearly all the others. There is no other information about him on his profile on the Council website.

The only thing we know about him is that he was involved in the new BMX park near the racecourse, which was given many £1000s by WTC and took over a year to finish (no clear reasons provided for delay and near completion nobody could give a straight answer to the question 'Is it open or not?')

Will Cllr Roberts make a difference to the culture of avoiding individual responsibility for anything in this Council? Unlikely, but let's hope so.



*Cllr Daniel Roberts
A cropped image from WTC website, which was a tiny size of only 57KB. Typical of low standards of this Council. As we have reported on before, they are clueless about image file sizes (basic computer knowledge)*

Town Council has Large Pot of Money to Give Away



We used this image on social media to remind folk that a pot of £800K+ exists. It could be used to make our town so much better.

It's OUR money so let's spend it!

The Ctte responsible is the CIL, chaired by Cllr O'Byrne. neil.obyrne@wetherby.co.uk



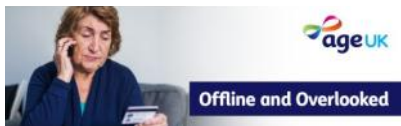
Useless Tourist Info Sign. The Town Clerk tells us "This sign is maintained by Leeds City Council and has been reported numerous times by WTC."

Funny how we have NEVER seen this mentioned in any meeting minutes,

certainly not in the past year. No details - who reported it and to whom? How many is 'numerous' and why have our Conservative Leeds City Cllrs not chased it up? A poor response to an ongoing embarrassment.

Parking on Hallfield Lane by Mason's Field Park. The Town Clerk tells us: "WTC are looking at options to create parking spaces in the cemetery for residents visiting their loved ones."

We Don't Forget the many 1000s of people who are offline - those who do not have (or want) internet access or a smartphone.



We ask all organisations to include a phone no. and put information on PAPER eg leaflets, posters

Communication with the 'offline and overlooked'.

The Town Clerk tells us "Yes, we use social media and our website, but we also cater for our residents who do not use technology and have had several centre page articles in Wetherby NOW magazine to update our residents. Every home in Wetherby has a copy delivered and some extras are in the Town Hall."

They do not cater for those offline very well at all, as we pointed out in Issue 82 when this Council printed ONE copy of their 2025 Annual Report and you had to read it in the Town Hall. Not a single copy in the library! Where is the 2026 Annual Report and will there be more copies?

They should carry out some simple research in the town centre asking (elderly) people if they read the Wetherby Now magazine and what format they would prefer the information.

Background to Comms Officer Leaving

The 'Wetherby Wailer' is an anti-Free Press person on social media. Their name is a little misleading - they don't often 'wail' about anything.

The person supports the status quo and defends the Council and other organisations, like the *Wetherby Business Association*. Sycophantic would not be too strong a word for

the opinions we have seen. If you agree with the exaggerated language she uses below, then you clearly don't believe a word we say. But she is entitled to her opinion, just like we are. Here is her post:



Last, but by no means least, my dear friend Helena has stepped out of her role as Communications & Events, and Markets. As many of you know, Helena took ill at the beginning of the year, with no option but to go on sick leave so she could get back to rights. The story is not mine to tell, but ultimately Helena decided to step down.

I am delighted to inform you that she is doing fantastically well, and is back to slaying it like the Boss Queen Babe she is. Helena put her heart and soul into her work; she adores Wetherby, the people, and the ethos of community, and everything she did, she did it for us.

It was a pleasure, honour, and privilege to serve the town alongside her, and I very much miss seeing her all over everywhere.

It has, however, been exciting from a marketing perspective to see the evolution of Town Hall's Social Media & Comms, which I personally think is clear, concise, grabs attention, and informs well.

Local Author Launches Not-for-profit Book

Dave Gregson has written a new book, which he describes as an adult fairy-tale suitable for readers of all ages. He says:

“It is a magical tale and has strong messages about the importance of such as community, caring and anti bullying. It's wrapped up with mysticism and folklore, involving garden gnomes coming to life in the moonlight. These days we need a feel-good, positive story.

The story is set in actual locations which include references to Wetherby and Trawden, the village where my father grew up and many of my family members lived.

This is a story that I have always wanted to write and now has been published by me and printed by Book Empire, a local business.

The book is being distributed to libraries and community groups and local bookshops, where I have donated copies. The book is a not-for-profit project and I don't receive sales or make any money for myself.

I actually launched the book on the anniversary of my Grandmas passing in 1979 and I was made welcome by the volunteers at Trawden community Centre. I have also presented copies to Kemps in Wetherby and other community groups. The book is also now listed with archives of the British Library.

The book is dedicated to my parents, who live in Wetherby with me and have been married since 1964 (my mother was recently awarded the BEM for her decades of voluntary service).

The book is a short novella running at 27 pages and the illustrations were done by my friend Sam Batley who works as a graphic illustrator.

There are many charities, community organisations and others referenced and acknowledged as part of the not-for-profit mission. ”



Dave with community volunteers at Trawden, nr Colne



Hi Folks,

In the latest Community Green Group newsletter there's plenty here for local residents, churches, community groups and decision-makers who want to understand what's happening locally and find ways to take part. We have been nominated for the Kings Award for Voluntary Service 2026.

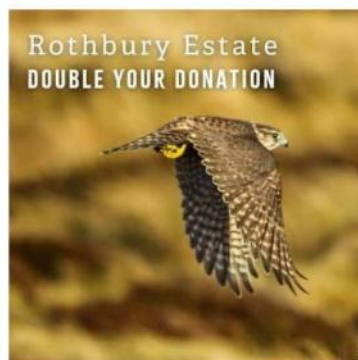
Adrian Balcombe, Chair

adrian.balcombe@bostongreengroup.co.uk

Boston Spa, Wetherby and Villages Community Green Group is non-politically affiliated and is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Registered Charity Number 1204438)

Our September newsletter is packed with ways to make a positive difference locally and beyond.

Highlights include our **Bring & Buy sale on Saturday 12 September** at Millennium Gardens in Boston Spa, the final chance to support the **Rothbury Estate appeal**, and a call to have your say in the **Yorkshire Wild Waters survey**.



All this and more [in our latest newsletter](#) (find under 'News' on our home page bostongreengroup.co.uk, alongside last month's issue). Don't miss out, subscribe to stay informed.



Excess fruit and veg?

We are running a **bring & buy sale** on Saturday 12th Sept from 9.30am - 12noon outside Boston Spa Library.

Help reduce waste. You are invited to support us by donating. Want to know more? please contact; adrian.balcombe@bostongreengroup.co.uk

We're also marking **Second-hand September** and **Fairtrade Fortnight**, highlighting opportunities to get involved in **wild-river campaigning and air-pollution monitoring**, and sharing details of the new **Home Energy West Yorkshire collective buying scheme** for solar panels, battery storage and EV charging.

Plus, there are several dates for your diary, including our **autumn nature walk** and **People, Planet, Pizza** Christmas gathering



Catch DalesBus direct to

GRASSINGTON 1940s WEEKEND

Sunday 20 Sept

W'by Bus Sta: 8.35, all stops on A58 to Leeds
Grassington: 11.06 Return at 5pm

The 874 runs every Sunday until 18 Oct 2026





Highlights of a Unique Newsletter

Learn from the past.
Prepare for the future.
Perform in the present.

Issue 1 - Sept 2021

Market Place Bus Crash

Harrogate Bus Co & Wetherby News gave no information at all about it - we are told 4 years later it was bus driver error



Issue 2 - Sept 2021

Bus Stop Fiasco

Incompetence from Metro / WYCA.
Ben Still, MD, still in post on £200K+.



1 - No Route Numbers 2 - Wrong Info Twice 3 - Final Effort Better Than 17

Issue 3 - Sept 2021

Wombles of Wetherby Are We

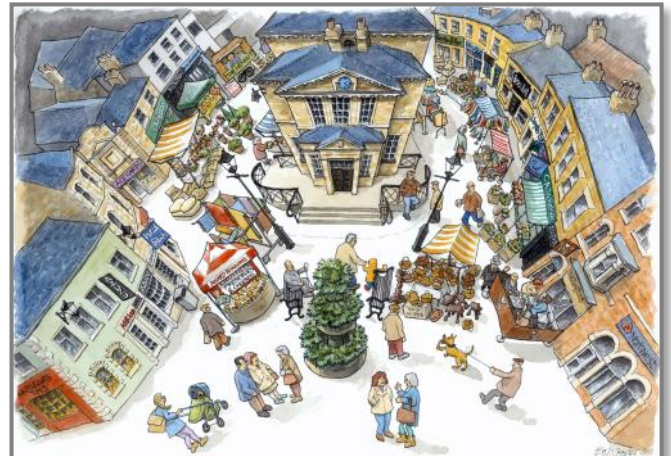
Litter Picking Group



Issues 4, 5 & 6 also carried many important stories the public should know about, still relevant today. They each got over 1000 views online and 1000 of each newsletter were printed. They make interesting reading.

Issue 7 - Nov 2021

Bob Cooper's Brilliant Artwork



In 5 years we have promoted:

- Ladies Forum
- W'by Civic Society
- Green Group
- W'by in Bloom
- Mens Forum
- Arts Festival
- B Spa Meth Church
- Friends of S'ham Park
- Many Local Businesses
- W'by Foodbank
- W'by Cinema
- Cancer Research
- B Spa Gardening Soc

Issue 10 - Jan 2022

Spate of Graffiti



After 4 months - £600 donated, £600 earned with advertising

Didn't cover printing costs but we carry on.



Issue 13 - Feb 2022

Local Hero Claire Wiggins



Issue 14 - Feb 2022

Flooding on Ings

Collingham Under Attack!

Local Historian Philip Powell tells a fascinating story:

On the night of 25/26 September 1916, the German naval airship L14, commanded by Hauptmann Kuno Manger, crossed the Yorkshire coast near Hornsea at about 10pm. It was part of a four-airship force sent that night against targets in the industrial North and Midlands.

L14 headed inland towards York, dropping bombs at Heworth damaging windows and a doctor's house. A woman nearby died of shock, though no one was struck by the blast itself. Coming under anti-aircraft fire near Fulford, Manger turned north, dropping further bombs near Pilmoor, at Newby with Mulwith, on the Ripon Rifle Ranges at Wormald Green, and near the Royal Flying Corps landing ground at Dunkseswick. None of this caused serious damage.

From Dunkseswick, L14 continued south towards Harewood and then Collingham. A Special Constable on duty outside Wetherby Police



Bombing Harewood and Collingham

Station tracked its approach as it was reported by telephone from village to village, recording flashes and explosions as the airship passed through Sicklinghall and Linton before reaching the Wharfe valley.

At Harewood 13 incendiary bombs fell within about five minutes, landing in fields around the village. One struck the corner of a cottage roof, passed through the slates, and fell into a water cistern beneath, where it was extinguished; the bottom of the cistern was damaged and flames spread onto the landing before neighbours put out the fire with buckets of water. The occupants and their child escaped the house, and the roof was repaired the following day. An empty hen house belonging to Dr Matthews was also destroyed. Harewood House, then in use as a VAD auxiliary hospital under the West Riding Territorial Association, housing wounded servicemen convalescing from the Western Front, was undamaged.

Between Harewood Park and Collingham, 16 bombs fell in total, most of them incendiaries. Several landed in or near the Park itself. One passed through the roof of a further cottage and lodged in a water tank beneath the slates. Another fell in the road directly in front of the Harewood Arms, and a further bomb fell in the yard behind the inn, destroying a hen house there. The remaining bombs fell along the banks of the Wharfe. Despite bombs landing near houses, roads and the riverbank, the recorded damage at Collingham was limited to the destroyed hen house, the damaged cottage roof, and a severed telephone line.

A mobile 13-pounder anti-aircraft gun and searchlight, positioned somewhere between Collingham and East Keswick, engaged L14 as it approached the village. The gun crew fired nine rounds without success. L14 answered by aiming three high-explosive bombs at the searchlight, cutting the telephone line between the gun position and the light, before climbing away to the north-east at height.

No casualties were recorded at either Harewood or Collingham. Manger appears to have believed, by this point, that he was some fifteen miles further west, over the River Aire near Leeds, possibly misled by the sound of Harewood Church clock striking midnight, picked up by microphones suspended from the airship's gondolas, together with the river running below. The same night, L22 killed twenty-eight people at Sheffield and

ZEPPELIN L14: TECHNICAL PROFILE

THE GERMAN NAVAL AIRSHIP THAT RAIDED HAREWOOD AND COLLINGHAM, 25/26 SEPTEMBER 1916

1. IDENTITY

Naval designation: L14
Builder's number: LZ 46
Type: German Naval Airship
Class: P-class Zeppelin
Builder: Luftschiffbau Zeppelin, Friedrichshafen

2. BUILD AND COMMISSION

- Built in 1915
- Commissioned into German naval service in 1915
- Home base: Nordholz
- Unit: German Naval Airship Division

3. COMMAND AND CREW

Commander on the 25/26 September 1916 raid: Hauptmann Kuno Manger
Earlier commander: Kapitänleutnant Alois Böcker
Typical crew about 18-20 men

4. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Length	approx. 163.5 m
Diameter	approx. 18.7 m
Gas volume	approx. 31,900 m³
Propulsion	4 Maybach engines
Speed	approx. 95-100 km/h
Bomb load / payload	up to about 2,000 kg

5. OPERATIONAL RECORD

- 17 bombing raids
- 42 reconnaissance missions
- More than 22 tonnes of bombs dropped on England over her career
- Took part in major raids on London, Derby, Edinburgh/Leth, and the Yorkshire raid of 25/26 September 1916

6. THE YORKSHIRE RAID CONNECTION

On the night of 25/26 September 1916, L14 crossed the Yorkshire coast near Scarborough and headed inland. It bombed around York, Ripon and Dunkseswick. After navigational error or misidentification of the river below, the airship continued south-west and dropped bombs near Harewood and Collingham.

7. FATE AFTER THE ARMISTICE

- Survived the war
- Decommissioned after the Armistice
- Destroyed by her own crew at Nordholz in June 1919

AT A GLANCE

L14 / LZ 46 Naval Airship	P-class Zeppelin	Home base Nordholz	Commander on 25/26 Sept. 1916 Kuno Manger	Crew 18-20 men	Bomb load up to 2,000 kg	Destroyed at Nordholz June 1919
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L21 killed thirteen at Bolton; against that record, Harewood and Collingham escaped with comparatively minor damage.

A fuller article can be read in the link below this page



cont'd from front page. The conservative clique in the town, who were not used to being made accountable before, did not take our *calling a spade a spade* approach very well. We received nonsense threats about harassment but that has never deterred us. Asking reasonable and legitimate questions will never be harassment in a free society, and if the Police are stupid enough to take it to court, the Editor would not mind - the facts would be given a wider airing. Those in authority would not want that.

In the case of the Town Council, they wasted £1000s of our money on solicitors, probably regarding the *Free Press*, though, of course, the public were never told why the money was spent.

Unfortunately, the *Free Press* has also cost Council Tax payers tens of £1000s in election fees by encouraging independent people to put themselves forward for Councillor vacancies. The Conservatives usually prefer to choose their own kind when it is not contested. Unfortunately, the contested elections were a waste of time and money too - we live in a Conservative town where they vote for the party, not the person.

We have been told in person this year by one Conservative Town Councillor that they have a lot of sympathy for the *Free Press* and realise the Council could be better. Things will change, they promised.

We say "Yes, there is hope. Things never stay the same but it will take years unless the old guard in the Council and their colleagues in other organisations are forced to leave their posts or change quickly".



We call this what it is



Highlights of a Unique Newsletter

Issue 17 - Apr 2022

Ignored by Wetherby Business Assoc'n. Still No Sign on A1(M)

£Millions pass by every year
Why are we letting all that business fly past?

We've all seen vehicles queuing up to get into Wetherby Services. Just imagine if a fraction of those people visited Wetherby instead.



Our hospitality businesses would do a roaring trade!

For Wetherby to prosper, this town needs to do much more to attract motorists. What about having 2 big signs on the A1, one in each direction? Look at the M62 where there are dozens of signs all along it on farmer's land, see page 2. Large ads would be very effective, especially when highlighting the large difference in fuel prices. See example below.

cont'd



Issue 18 - Apr 2022

Current Mayor Mulhall
Unaccountable to us and refusing to answer questions for 4+ years 🗑️



CELEBRATING



Issue 21 - June 2022

Clifford Beer Festival
Harry G & Christine T



44,000 read our tweet following Harry's sad death



Issue 23 - July 2022

Free Press Kept for Prosperity at British Library



Issue 24 - July 2022

'Vibrant, thriving' place for businesses says Better Wetherby Ltd



Unfortunate facts - 10 empty premises, many for years like on Cross St. Still empty (and unsightly) now in 2026.

Issue 29 - Oct 2022

New Wetherspooons
Heard It Here First !



Issue 26 - Aug 2022

MP, Alec Shelbrooke
unaccountable to us and refusing to answer questions for 4+ years



Conservative



1 - 21 Aug:

Tweets in Support of Liz Truss	165
Tweets about Constituency Issues	0
Tweets about Cost of Living Crisis	0

Liz Truss,
Failed PM



Issue 30 - Oct 2022

W'by in National Media
Minority of locals want no Spoons (or visitors)



3,000+ Readers of Issues 29 & 30

Thank You

In 5 years we have promoted: B Spa Festival * DalesBus & Local Buses * Churches Together * W'by Scouts * St Joseph's RC School * W'by Bandstand Concerts * Beer Festivals * Craft Fairs

Town Clerk Responds to Issues We First Raised Many Months Ago



Dianne Rickaby, Town Clerk

We are grateful to Dianne Rickaby, Wetherby Town Council Clerk for responding to the questions we have asked in the last 3 issues. Judge for yourselves whether the issues are properly addressed.

1 why we were not given any hint of the contents of a 'Confidential Report by Town Clerk' (Issue 87).

What "hint" are you asking for all confidential reports are covered by the Data protection act 2018 particularly when the information relates to employee personal information. Also see point 4.2 of the TOR of the staffing committee (link provided).

2 why 3 Council staff were present at a Welcome to Wetherby mtg and whether the Council is overstaffed (I87). Staff attend various committees when the business carried out may relate to their duties.

3 why the staff organisation chart lacks vital information (I88). We are currently reviewing the staffing structure and this will be updated when the review is completed with all of the information required by the Transparency Act.

4 why staff costs have DOUBLED in 3 years and now cost us almost half the £725K budget (I89 Extra).

There was a independent

staffing review carried out in 2023 at which it was identified that more staff were needed to carry out the services of the council. This was all put into the public domain along with the precept rise.

5 why staff costs are now hidden from us in their official documentation (I89 Extra & I90). The monthly accounts show the total amount of staff costs, PAYE, pension and oncosts. It is a collective amount as data protection identifies this as a preferred method to protect individual's personal data. The accounts are all available within the minutes. The website is also undergoing some updates and a new finance page is being added.

6 why the Council cannot keep staff - the Admin Officer lasted just 1 year. Recruitment is costly (I90). Staff movement is a natural course, people move on for various reasons.

7 why January's Staff meeting minutes were still NOT published 2.5 months after the meeting (I90 & 91). This was due to a clarification on the minutes and then needed to be received by full council at a later date. - It is within the terms of reference for the Staffing Committee that it has delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the council (link provided).

8 the disgraceful slur written in the minutes against us regarding Kazia Knight (I90). I am unable to reply to this as this was a councillor's comment.

9 why they added clauses to the complaints procedure so that they can dismiss reasonable complaints as 'vexatious' to avoid difficult questions (I90). With regard to the complaints policy/procedure, I enclose the definition of 'vexatious' and what the ICO (Information Commissioners Office) guidelines identifies as vexatious requests and their impact (link provided). I would ask that you review this and understand that it is within the remit of the person dealing with the complaint to determine the impact of such request and if repeated. This then follows up with the question 'does the value of the request justify it's impact' - please see explanation here (link provided).

If you check other Town Councils you will see that they too have (or should have) this procedure with regards to vexatious requests. Hopefully now you will understand that this is recognised nationally as a support to all local government administration should repeated vexatious requests occur.

10 our view that 'staff remuneration is within guidelines' means they are paid the maximum (I90). As mentioned above there was an independent staffing review carried out by an organisation who is fully conversant and experienced in the NJC pay scales for local government employees. There are various parameters when assessing the scales and they are reviewed against other local authorities of the same stature.

11 why they do not compare staff costs with other nearby town councils (I90). As above

12 the claim by a former Cllr that the Comms & Events Officer was employed as 'a knee-jerk reaction' to us, the Wetherby Free Press (I90). I am unable to comment on an alleged "former councillors claim" as you have worded it.

13 why 2 Admin staff resigned at the same time and why the Council can't retain staff (I91). Repeated from question 6

14 why there was no summary or anything at all about a 'comprehensive staffing report' in minutes (I91)

There is always a comprehensive report given to the staffing committee which covers all employability some of which is covered by Data protection (as stated above). The minutes are not verbatim and cover information within employment guidelines and laws.

I trust that the above answers your questions and you can relay to our public that the council adheres to all transparency protocols. The minutes reflect council business.

As you will understand my role entails many facets with time constraints, however I always make time and I am happy to discuss matters with our residents.

Best, Dianne.

W'by Town Council Precept

W'by Town Council Precept	%	Total
2023 / 24	80%	
2024 / 25	0.5%	
2025 / 26	9.6%	£675,000
2026 / 27	8.5%	£725,000

SHOCKING FACTS

- * Staff Costs **DOUBLED** in 3 years from 21/22 to 24/25.
- * In 24 / 25 staff cost us about **HALF** the total precept. So this year it would be half of £655K = **£327,000 just on staff** (a staggering amount).
- * They now **HIDE** the cost of staff so we cannot compare with previous years or other Councils.
- * The **increase of 80%** in 23/24 was never fully explained. What benefit have you noticed since then?
- * This Council have **not produced a news release** about this year's large increase **BEFORE** the bills dropped on our doorstep. No explanation, nothing.

Wetherby Free Press
News, Funny Stuff & Improving Accountability
YOUR Community Newsletter

from the 'low tax' Conservative party!

PRICE INCREASE ALERT!

They will spend **£725,000** of our money next year, **£50K more** than last. Why?

The facts we highlighted on social media earlier this year



Questions Answered? Our view on next page

Our opinion

note they do not reassure us that staff have left for reasons other than the dissatisfaction with the role, management or councillors. It makes us suspicious that that is often the case. We know that has happened on at least 2 occasions in the last few years.

We asked why staff costs have doubled in 3 years and cost about half their budget. An independent report said they needed it, comes the reply. It was not totally 'independent' as the Town Council paid for it. The Town Council probably said the Town Clerk is too busy or incapable of dealing with the *Wetherby Free Press* so we need a media person. They got one and we think that post was a terrible waste of our money. We saw very little, if any, improvement in openness, communication and accountability, certainly not in addressing our legitimate issues. The postholder did not contact us about anything we published!

It is quite right that the Town Clerk does not respond to former Cllr Billie Ager-Mills (correct) view that the Comms Officer was employed because we exist. A Councillor should respond to that issue, like Councillor Harrington, Chair of Staffing Ctte. We expect more from this highly influential figure because she is a professional, paid Councillor, representing us on Leeds City Council. Her silence on these, and many other matters, is unacceptable.

The Council won't even inform us of the overall figure for staff expenditure, like they used to. Why? Because it is highly embarrassing for a Conservative-dominated Council, obviously. It goes without saying if the top person has more staff to manage, they will ask for / get more money to do their job. It is common in public services that managers who cannot do one aspect of their job (eg media) then ask for another person to help and heh presto, less work for more money. We are not saying this happened in this case because we do not know for sure. Whatever the circumstances, the salary bill rises and we all pay for it.

The lack of detail in the Town Clerk's answers is frustrating eg Q7. The Town Councillors lack of interest in comparing themselves with Otley, Knaresborough etc speaks for itself.

As for why there is a large turnover of staff (at great cost to us), there are no answers. If they were open and accountable they would ask a truly independent person/organisation everybody respects to carry out exit interviews and collate responses, to see if there is a clear pattern of dissatisfaction.



We asked the Town Clerk whether the policy of not responding to reasonable questions from a resident of 30+ years (the Editor) has now been rescinded. No response.

In her original email, Dianne Rickaby used the word 'misinformation' in relation to our reporting. We asked her to specify which of the 14 issues or questions contained misinformation so we can defend or explain our words. No response.

There was no response either from any Town Councillor; all of them were copied in to these emails.

Ordinary residents have no power over the Town Clerk - we can only vote for Councillors who are supposed to represent us. They are responsible for spending over £1.5M of our money (inc CIL Fund) but, without good reason, they refuse to provide any opinion or information on important matters. This shows what type of people they are. Ultimately though, we get the Councillors we deserve.

You can write to the Town Clerk at clerk@wetherby.co.uk & Norma Harrington at norma.harrington@wetherby.co.uk

Dianne Rickaby provided no explanation (or apology) as to why it has taken so long to respond to these issues. Or why she responded and not Cllr Harrington, Chair of Staffing Ctte. It was not even co-signed by Cllr Harrington.

The Town Clerk's responses are defensive and not comprehensive. The poor English grammar in her first sentence is not of a standard expected of the top manager in an administrative organisation - 3 errors. Elsewhere, the lack of commas provides more evidence. No wonder minutes of Council meetings are often of a similar poor standard.

The Town Clerk is basically saying that the tax-paying public are not allowed to know any general information about their secret reports and meetings. We (the public) don't want names or any details, just a general gist of what is happening. They give us nothing. Open and accountable? We



*Cllr Norma Harrington, Conservative
Chair of Staffing Committee*

Silence

Except to say "Great responses Dianne. Thank you" in an email she then wanted to recall when she realised we were copied in!

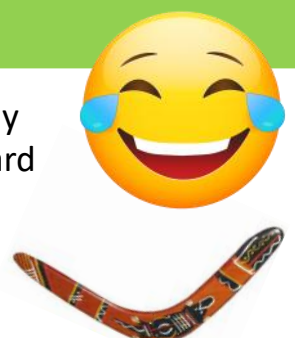


Winning Joke at Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2026



We have made you laugh, or smile, with some highly amusing jokes in the past 5 years. This won the award for best joke at Edinburgh this year:

"I remember thinking, as I taped a piranha to my boomerang, this could come back to bite me."





Highlights of a Unique Newsletter

Learn from the past.
Prepare for the future.
Perform in the present.

Issue 32 - Town Council Deputy Clerk retires. Then is appointed Burials Manager - Internal Applicants only!



Issue 32 - Nov 2022

Unpopular Committee

Only one town organisation wanted to join the 'Welcome to Wetherby' Ctte. Chair was Cllr Victor Hawkins, left. It continued to be unpopular for 3.5 more years until its recent demise.



Ctte. Chair was Cllr Victor Hawkins, left. It continued to be unpopular for 3.5 more years until its recent demise.

Issue 33 - Nov 2022

Competition for Tories?

Local businesswoman's effort to unseat our MP Alec Shelbrooke. She later becomes a Town Cllr (and writes nonsense about the Editor & Free Press online, telling us that she is a 'woman'. Why say that, unless she wants special treatment?)

vote jane lavocah



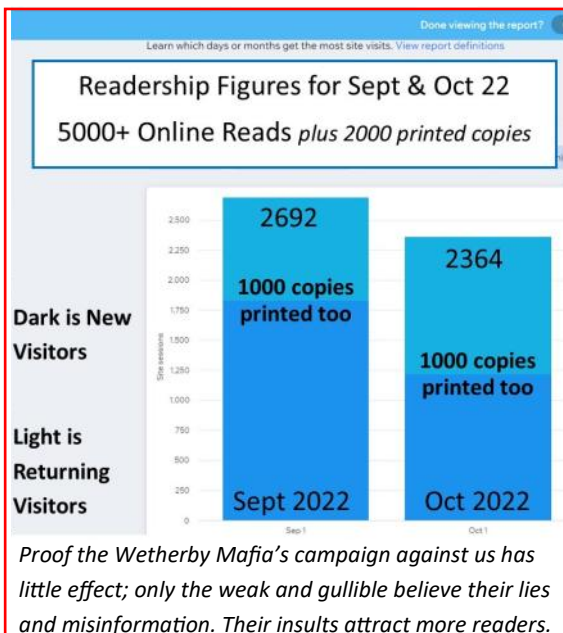
independent mp for elmet and rothwell

Can Conservatives trust her?



2022

Tory Councillor spells word wrong many times - that word is 'Councillor'!
No Resident attends Annual Town Council mtg and it lasts only 4 minutes
Tory Town Council spends £1000 on unwanted mugs in cost-of-living crisis
Cllr praises polluter of River Wharfe and its regulator
Our Tory MP with 17,000 Twitter followers prioritises Facebook
Town Hall event is not promoted on the Council website's What's On



We highlight the beautiful wildlife and photographers of the area

Issue 39 - Feb 2023

We Raise Alarm on 80% Tax Increase at Town Council

Unbelievably, a report said we needed an Ops Manager ie a second Town Clerk! As it was, the Conservatives employed a costly Comms & Events Officer, which Otley TC does not need. Not a word about it in the so-called 'Wetherby News'.

80% Council Tax Rise by Wetherby Town Council: THE FACTS

	22/23	23/24	
Otley			
Personnel (Staff) Budget	£213K	£229K	+ 7.5%
% of Total Budget	39%	37%	- 2%
Wetherby			
Personnel (Staff) Budget	£161K	£305K	+ 90%
% of Total Budget	54%	56%	+ 2%
Total Budget	£300K	£540K	+80%

- ⇒ Otley to spend £76,000 less than Wetherby on staff
 - ⇒ Otley does not need or want a 'Communications Manager'
 - ⇒ Wetherby spends well over half their total budget on staff
 - ⇒ Otley have always spent less than 40% of their total budget on staff
 - ⇒ You won't find these % or comparison figures in the Council's 'Budget Bulletin' or the 'Wetherby News'
 - ⇒ Otley is Lib-Dem Dominated, Wetherby is all-Conservative (a low tax party!?)
- See page 5 for what Wetherby Town Council needs over half a million quid for.

TIME TO WAKE UP WETHERBY!
An 80% increase in these hard times?



Issue 40 - March 2023

Sewage Anger on National TV

Local diver highlights filth in our river. What's changed 3+ years on? It's being monitored!



MAFIA



To the sad people of the Wetherby Mafia (and their supporters) who have done their best to discredit the Editor and the newsletter in the most cowardly way, we say this:
"We pity you because the truth always comes out in the end. It can't be nice living in fear of that every single day."





Leeds Third in Table

Early days yet but after 4 games the Whites have not lost a match in the Premier League. Two wins and a draw have left them chasing the big boys Man City & Arsenal.



Calvert-Lewin scoring Leeds third in demolition of Newcastle

Optimism is high at Elland Road after a 4 - 1 drubbing of Newcastle United. It's an extraordinary record in the evening kick-offs at home under German manager Daniel Farke - the team have played 24, won 20, drawn four, and lost none. The fans are even singing about Europe - a little premature perhaps!

Post-match Farke said "The boys were brilliant". He added of Calvert-Lewin: "It's not just the goals though, the way he plays is outstanding. He's one of the standout strikers in this league."



Farke

Utd v Crystal Palace on Sun 20 Sep at 2pm
Arsenal v Utd on Sat 10 Oct at 12.30pm
Utd v Man Utd on Sun 18 Oct at 2pm
Sunderland v Utd on Sun 25 Oct at 4.30pm



No League Leaders' Shield for Leeds

The Rhinos missed their chance to finish the season top of Super League but they blew it. Leeds have been top since May. In a sell out at Headingley they faced the formidable Wigan who were also fighting for the Leaders' Shield having 14 straight wins under their belt.

With home advantage expectations were high for the Yorkshire side. But Leeds were second best for most of the match. There was one point



The old enemy Wigan back to winning ways after no trophies last year

where they gained some momentum but the Warriors were just too strong.

Reasons for a poor performance were Maika Sivo, who did not make the squad after recovering from a broken arm, and Lachie Miller who limped off with a hamstring injury

early in the game. The Rhinos lost by 32 points; it finished 8 - 40.

The embarrassment continued with a shocking performance in the last game of the regular season at home to lowly Hull FC. They lost 12 - 18. Not the confidence booster they needed going in to the play-off semi-final

on Fri 25 Sept at 8pm

The Grand Final takes place at Man Utd's Old Trafford on Sat 3 Oct at 6pm.

Many congrats to the 6 Leeds players who dominated the Dream Team. Jake Connor, Maika Sivo and Ash Handley were amongst those selected in a line-up picked through a process involving journalists, fans and former players.



Free Press
Est 2021 Facts & Integrity

News, Funny Stuff & Improving Accountability

Your Not-for-Profit Community Newsletter

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

If we get important facts wrong, we will apologise publicly and correct the error.

We don't do interviews, as we are not journalists. Professional journalists are very rare indeed now. Most are 'cut & paste from press releases' merchants. We have high standards and not afraid to say what we see.

We encourage everyone to write to us with their views, whatever they are. Our countrymen and women have died for our Freedom of Expression so do not 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 8 'Meet the Editor' events so far. None of our harshest online critics have turned up yet to have a mature face-to-face discussion.



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if sent to us*



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Issue 81 of WFP had over 2000 online visits - Thanks for Reading