

### Chairwoman's Report 2023

I was voted in and appointed as new Chairwoman on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 along with Vice Chairman Cllr Dave Woods. Due to his retirement in November, Cllr Jonathan Whittaker was voted in as Vice Chairman. We currently have 8 councillors with a vacancy of one as the limit is to have 9 councillors for Epworth Town Council. From the recent election we will now be only 5 councillors and so need to recruit more. We meet once a month here in The Imperial Hall at 7pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday and for the committees they are held in the Chapel of Rest at various times. Notices of our meetings are placed on our notice board in the marketplace outside HSBC.

The Precept for 2022/23 was £73,000 to maintain town council properties which includes Cemetery Lodge, The Chapel of Rest & the Cemetery grounds plus QE 2 Field and playgrounds and staff wages. We have a Clerk and Groundsman whose wages have increased with inflation and local government pay scales. We also maintain the closed churchyard at St Andrews.

For the following 2023/24 our Precept is £76,176 and we received a grant of £1,699 from NLC and together, this will help us to support and deliver the town projects.

Grants we have provided in our community are:

£800 for the Epworth Business Forum towards the setting up costs including road closures for a Christmas Market in 2022.

To The Isle of Axholme short Mat Bowls Team we gave £5,460 for an electronic rolling mat as the mat they use is very heavy.

The Isle Choral Society recently granted £500.

The Music Day organised by Peter Barnard was granted £961 for this year.

The Old Rectory £675 grant towards children's crafts during holidays. This was very successful during the Easter Holidays.

For LIVES we gave £200 to help purchase lifesaving equipment.

Isle of Axholme Orchestra £200

Parkrun £1,176 for the startup costs enabling purchase of IT and equipment etc.

We received a grant of £250 from NLC toward the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June last year for events, such as, a Ceilidh by the Norman Invasion at The Imperial Hall and Marina Mae a local celebrity singing in The Thurlow Pavilion a medley of wartime and modern-day songs. We held children's games in the park including face painting, and a tree was planted at The Axholme Primary Academy. Also, we held a best dressed shop window and a best dressed residence competition. There was a collage of Queen Elizabeth 2<sup>nd</sup> drawings that was displayed at St Andrews Church by children from Axholme Primary Academy and they will too for the forthcoming King Charles 111 Coronation Celebrations. After receiving a further £250 grant from NLC which will assist us to purchase bunting, flags, a bench with a plaque for the cemetery, tree planting and best dressed shop/business competition and much more activities will be held by the Churches such as a tea party, coffee morning, picnic, etc.

During the last year we have seen Northern PowerGrid update our town's substation and with a link to Haxey's substation increasing power to both towns therefore incurring road closures, diversions and obstructions. As a thank you to the community they gifted something with sustainability for ETC

which is an 8-piece gym equipment and is installed at The QE 2 Field in Epworth. This was greatly appreciated and helps physical activity and wellbeing for all, with inclusion for wheelchair access too.

5G Broadband has been installed via a mast and cabinet at the top of Tottemire Lane which we asked NLC for them to be painted green to fit in with the landscape and now they have, it looks so much better. KCOM have placed the cabling around the town for residents and businesses to use the fibre optic 5G and new tarmac surfaces have been laid on pavements to cover their work carried out.

The Beacon may be gifted to us from NLC therefore we are in the process of looking at potentially moving it from a privately owned field near Maws Mill to the top of Yealand Flats by the footpath which is land owned by NLC and therefore no restrictions for its use. The cost of moving versus having a new beacon is still in progress.

At The Epworth Show last year we had a stand on which Cllr Ros Whittaker displayed our activities and successes to inform the visitors and local community and we were also able to answer any questions from the public about ETC. We are now storing x3 gazebos at the showground for our use at town events these are kindly on loan from NLC.

Costs of repairs in our two playgrounds in the QE 2 Field are rising and well over £1,000 currently is due to damage of play equipment by vandalism including burning of a new litter bin. This has been informed to the local police and even to contemplating having security cameras installed.

Hanging baskets are displayed annually around the town centre from the end of May to early September. The organising of these is by Cllr Ros Whittaker Chairwoman of the Combined Environment & cemetery meeting. These are purchased together by ETC and with shop owners contributing to the cost of watering them.

North Lincs in Bloom donation from NLC granted ETC £234 towards the purchase of planting up our x8 planters situated around the town helping it to look colourful and eye catching for both locals and visitors.

The new Axholme Flag designed by Mr Robert Fish was gifted to ETC 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 by NLC and is flying at ETC office and outside The Mechanics Institute. This flag depicts the images of strip farming and fields of wheat outlined by 4 local rivers and the wheatsheaf emblem is taken from the arms of the Sheffield family. The red shield depicts the previous Mowbray landowners, 12 mini stripes represent the 12 parishes, and the cross is the 2 main roads the A161 & A18.

The Spring in Bloom is a competition run by CPRE which is a North Lincolnshire countryside charity who awarded us 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Best Kept Small Town category. We lost by one point most likely in the cemetery area but now with a cemetery groundsman in place keeping the grounds tidy and very well maintained I am sure we will gain points this year.

Millea Group Ltd have presented a project proposal to the town which consists of land owned by Mr David Holmes at and around The Epworth Holmes & Garden Centre to be sold to developers for various sized housing, retailers etc including a new build garden centre. A planning application is due to be submitted following lengthy discussions of ideas with the residents at a public meeting and ETC & NLC councillors attended but did not comment or participate.

A meeting was held with ETC & NLC Highways dept on 23/06/2022 to discuss Turbary Road and its ongoing surface maintenance.

It was agreed.

1. To register the land. Although we are taking advice from the barrister of financial and legal implications of doing so.
2. Granting of easements to the residents.
3. Entering into an agreement with NLC about the maintenance of the road.

The outcomes are dependent on the barrister's advice which is due imminently.

A youth council has been set up with support from Epworth and Belton Parish town councils together with students from our South Axholme Academy. They have recently attended our ETC to observe how a council worked and have spoken about matters that are of importance to them. Vice Chairman Cllr Jonathan Whittaker is supporting this youth council and the link to our council through the project Isle Education Trust to increase levels of communication between councils and young people in both South and Central parishes in the Isle of Axholme.

Vice Chairman Cllr Jonathan Whittaker is also posting updates on our Facebook Page following him being nominated as our moderator of social media. This includes community activities we support and are involved in. We have 1K followers currently and increasing due to the effectiveness of his posts. We are also using it to promote the recruitment of future potential councillors.

I have been asked by radio presenter Mark Walmsley to give an interview at 1pm on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May about Epworth and the Council on local TMCR the Today's More Choice of Radio on 95.3/107.5 FM. They are based in Thorne and a mast placed at our council office which is the highest point in the town they can transmit to a wider audience and are able to promote Epworth and the local businesses.

We are also aspiring to be a dementia friendly town providing a free of charge meeting venue at our town's Cemetery Lodge. We have improved this Lodge into a meeting room for both the council and the public to use.

ETC have recently purchased a defibrillator with the help of a £2,000 grant from NLC and we will install it in the unused telephone kiosk in the marketplace. This will very soon be painted and reglazed ready for the installation. Total project cost is £3,965.

We supported the Great British Spring Clean 17<sup>th</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023 in our town, actively litter picking with our local litter picking group Epworth Ecoists who pledged 20 bags of litter which was achieved.

With the 5 newly elected councillors sitting next month, together we will be able to appoint the new Chair and Vice chairperson to help deliver another successful year working with our community and Ward Councillors Tim Mitchell and Dave Robinson whom I thank for their support. I look forward to helping with this and am very thankful for the opportunity I have had serving as Chairwoman this last year.

I wish to thank the Clerk Gary Johnson for his unwavering help and advice throughout the year and all the councillors for their hard work and commitment. Mr Steve Quantrill our groundsman for all his achievements in the work involved at both QE 2 playing field and the cemetery and for making a big difference. Also, to Mary Addlesee who is our cleaner for the Chapel of Rest and Cemetery Lodge a big thanks. Lastly to all the Xmas Lights Team who help with not only the lights but for the hanging of the bunting around the town centre and the remembrance poppies each year. Not forgetting our local tradesmen for providing quotes and maintenance work on our behalf, thank you all.

Caroline Finch 17/04/2023

