

Skeeby Parish Council Chairman's Annual report 2025/26

Good evening everyone. A warm welcome to one and all, and thank you for attending this year's Annual Meeting (your parish meeting) – in our newly refurbished Village Hall.

For those who do not know me, I am John Frankland (known by many by my initials JF), and it has been my honour to serve on Skeeby Parish Council for about 4 years now.

As the current, recently appointed Chair of your Parish Council (PC) it is my pleasure to present a brief review of this year's key achievements, challenges and financial health – but not necessarily in that order !

I am told that the Chairman's report should apparently be brief, positive and memorable – I can promise at least one of those things tonight !

Before doing so, it is fitting to recognise & acknowledge the commitment, dedication and achievements of all our previous Councillors and Clerks.

In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight, and applaud the lengthy dedication of service given by our former Chair, John Budden, and hope that you will join me in extending special thanks to him and wishing him well.

I feel sure that most of you will be acutely aware that, for a variety of reasons, this has been a particularly challenging year for both the cohesion of the village & the Parish Council itself.

However, it was very humbling, and indeed, reassuring to see the public show of support at our extraordinary meeting early last month – I didn't realise we had so many residents !

Thank you for your continued support.

I would also like to extend my thanks for the support we have received, and continue to receive, from our County Councillors Angus Thompson & Carl Les, without whom we could not have continued to move forward so effectively.

I am also pleased to welcome our newest Parish Councillor, Neil Morton, who will be no stranger to many of you. Neil brings a wealth of local knowledge, understanding & life experience to the newly forming Parish Council.

My hope is that Neil will be just the first of our residents to express a desire to step forward and volunteer his time to fill the Parish Councillor vacancies, and to help us progress.

Form an orderly queue at the end of the meeting to leave your details with our Clerk if you are even slightly interested in finding out more about what the Councillor role might involve.

Your village needs you !

As part of the drive to move forward positively, it gives me great pleasure to introduce & welcome our new Parish Clerk, Charlie. She has agreed to take us on board, despite clerking for 4 other local Parish Councils. Yes, you did hear that correctly – it wasn't a typo !

She has already demonstrated a strong desire to help Skeeby PC get back on track, (despite being aware of some of our recent struggles).

She brings to the table her considerable experience & a calm and professional 'can do' attitude – for which we are hugely grateful and appreciative.

You will be a great asset to the PC, and hence, to the village itself Charlie.

Q. What is a parish council ? What makes a parish thrive ?

A PC is sometimes described as the level of government closest to the people it serves.

They say that PCs deal with the small things in life – dog bins, planning applications, and streetlights for example.

But these small things matter enormously – why is that?

Because they shape the everyday life of our community. And while PC meetings may not make national headlines, what happens here affects the place we all call home.

Behind every agenda item is a real issue affecting real people – creating a parish where people feel connected and proud to live.

And now you have had some of the positives, perhaps time for some of the negatives in the sandwich ?

We continue to receive complaints in relation to parking issues in the village, including on the Village Green outside Skeeby Manor, and the ongoing problem caused by inconsiderate pavement parking, opposite the Travellers Rest and other areas along the main road.

Just to be clear - it IS illegal to drive up onto a pavement & more importantly to also cause any obstruction thereon.

Whilst I understand why drivers make the decision to park partly on the pavement, perhaps in the false belief that they may be helping the flow of traffic - it is a fact that traffic is still unable to pass them whilst opposing vehicles flow past . It can often actually be counter-productive when an impatient driver tries to squeeze through the reduced gap with the inevitable clash of door mirrors or worse.

This is something the both the PC & the Police are monitoring, and is an issue that is being actively addressed by the Government for action later this year on unnecessary & illegal pavement obstructions.

As you all know, this is a busy main road used by large vehicles and buses & we only have one main pavement available for the safe use of pedestrians & users of pushchairs, mobility scooters etc. There are no restrictions on parking on the road, apart from the double white line system on the bend opposite the pub – (endorsable offence) - so please park considerately and responsibly and pass the word on.

Let's try harder to keep each other safe.

In other news in June last year we organised and advertised a defibrillator training session for residents here at the Village Hall – sadly no one attended (£210 cost!).

That's enough of the negatives let's get back to the good stuff again !

What about our Skeeby Xmas Lights (aka "Skeeby Vegas") then ?

A renowned local attraction which must surely be visible from space & continues to wow & always receives such positive feedback – whilst importantly raising funds for great causes – with last year's total of £1886 going to the GNAA (Great North Air Ambulance) – just wow guys – well done to all involved – you know who you are !

Thankyou for putting Skeeby well and truly on the map.
Could it possibly grow even bigger & better this year – who is up for the challenge ?

Whilst we are not officially entered in this year's Richmond Round Table Best Kept Village Competition, it is pleasing to report that, following on from the previous year's success as "Best Newcomer" (plaque displayed on the stone bus shelter), we have been awarded a certificate as "Highly Commended For The Encouragement of Community Life" – well done to us all & thank you for continuing to take pride in our beautiful village – keep up the good work !

Your Community Speed Watch team (or the SAS, 'Skeeby Against Speeding' as they are known) has continued to be deployed in it's endeavours to encourage safer driving through the village.
My personal thanks go to all of you who regularly commit your time willingly in support of this initiative throughout the year in all temperatures.

And whilst we can never have too many volunteers in the pool we draw from, we are pleased to have recruited 2 new members last year – thank you Derek & Cameron.
Roll up if you have spare time in your day – occasionally – new volunteers are always welcome !
(CSW results Spreadsheet).

On that note, most of you will have noticed that the Vehicle Activated Speed Matrix Sign (VAS) was mounted just across the road in January this year – at least I hope you have seen it before being flashed to 'Slow Down' !?

This was made possible by grant funding from Harmony Energy – the local solar farm project, and we hope to be able to acquire another mounting post further down the village in the near future to allow the matrix sign to be moved around.

Still on the theme of speed - following some concerns brought to the PC by residents on Scurragh Lane, & our support for a speed reduction to 40mph - subsequent NYC Highways speed flow data & analysis, now means this reduction is to be implemented in due course – which is great news !

We will continue to work with NYC Highways and NY Police to monitor speed concerns to ensure village safety for all users. To this end, the NYP Safety Camera Partnership van visited us in June last year to assess suitable deployment sites, and we are now assured that Skeeby will be on the visit lists this year !

Watch this space & perhaps your speedo too – just in case!?

The PC continues to take responsibility & pride in maintaining our public spaces, including the Village Greens and the play areas, with essential upkeep being carried out throughout the year.
This includes the grass cutting as well as beck clearance work.

We will also be recontacting the developers of the 'new build' properties at 40A & B Richmond Road, in order to ensure that they correctly fulfil their commitment to reinstate the Village Green area in front of these, & we will continue to monitor access issues to ensure our registered green remains protected for all our residents.

We can perhaps soon return to some normality after such a long period of disruption for both the village green and our residents.

The PC has also resolved to place some more white posts & No Parking signs in order to further protect our village green areas.

We have reviewed several local planning applications over the last year, including the sale of the former St Agatha's church – all of these can be accessed on the NYC Planning Portal.

Whilst the PC is a statutory consultee for matters within the parish, can I take this opportunity to remind you all that any resident can make their own observations / comments / objections individually on the portal.

Our Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26 will soon be published and available to view as a statutory obligation.

You will note that there has been a need to request an increase in the precept this year, partly to cover the requirement for a revision of the weekly hours required to be worked on the Clerk's contract of employment, and also to meet increasing costs.

The clerk is the sole employee of the PC and is the Responsible Financial Officer of the council, with an associated workload and responsibility.

It must be said that the role involves much unseen background work to achieve a legal, professional & effective council on your behalf – thank you Charlie.

In order to improve efficiency, security, and our digital transparency, the PC has transitioned to a new .gov.uk website, (www.skeeby-pc.gov.uk), with councillors also allocated an official .gov.uk email address – this process was diligently investigated & facilitated by our former Clerk, Nadine, for which I would like to extend thanks both from myself & on behalf of the PC.

And finally – yes I know, perhaps not as brief as I promised earlier !

As part of our strong desire to help to redress some of the disconnect with our residents – we have reviewed the format of the Parish Council meetings & these have been amended to now include a period of Public Speaking within the meeting itself - rather than the 10 mins prior to the meeting. We hope this change will go some way towards making the meetings more inclusive.

Please don't forget that you can easily bring matters to the attention of your PC by letting the Clerk know at least 7 days before a meeting - this ensures that the subject matter can be addressed as an agenda item for discussion accordingly.

At this point, I would like to reiterate that we, the PC, the Councillors, are here to represent you, the residents. We are obviously much better placed to represent your views, & address your concerns / issues, if you let us know your thoughts directly.

Get involved, share your thoughts – we want to hear your views & want you to feel welcome and able to participate in all things Skeeby !

We need your ongoing engagement, support & challenges to ensure that we remain focussed on the matters that are most important to you and to the village.

So please don't be shy – come along to the regular meetings, they are public meetings open to everyone.

We are committed to continuing to work on local issues, supporting projects, and encouraging community cooperation.

Did I mention that we are here for you ?

Help us to help you !

I look forward to a positive and productive year ahead for the village – with your help.
Parish life depends heavily on community spirit, and thrives when people are willing to get involved.

Thank you all again for your attendance and clearly demonstrating that community spirit is very much alive and well, and residing in Skeeby.

Cllr John Frankland
Skeeby Parish Council Chair
20.05.2026