

Annual Parish Meeting 2026



Annual Report

Councillor Dr Kate Hill
Chair, Harewood Parish Council

Overview

Harewood Parish Council covers a diverse geographical area and spans two city council wards: Harewood and Alwoodley. The majority of our Parish constituents reside in the Wigton Moor Ward of Harewood Parish Council which means we also serve a diverse population. The amenities that Harewood Parish Council maintains, the recreation area, memorial garden and cemetery, are located in Harewood village. Although they are available to all Parish residents, we have a far less visible presence in the Wigton Moor ward.

Parish Councillors are volunteers and deserve recognition for the time and commitment they bring to their role. The annual report is a good opportunity to reiterate my personal thanks to our Councillors for their ongoing support and our Council officers and staff, who play a key role in delivering the Council's services: Mr Kevin Sedman, Clerk to the Council, who has supported Harewood Parish Council's operation and management for nineteen years, and Cemetery Clerk (Phil Stephenson) and Caroline Dale (Recreation Area Caretaker) who ensure our amenities in Harewood run efficiently and effectively.

Parish councils are often overlooked or sidelined, particularly in the move towards larger strategic governance structures but there remains a demand for neighbourhood-level representation and control. The future for Harewood Parish Council will depend on whether we can demonstrate practical value not just tokenistic localism. There are three vacant seats on the Parish Council for the Wigton Ward and we need people with a commitment to the community to join us. If you are interested in applying to become a Parish Councillor, please email: contact@harewoodparishcouncil.gov.uk. In person meetings take place every 6-weeks alternating between Harewood and Wigton Moor. Basic IT skills including access to email and the internet are essential. Councillors joining now will be co-opted members until the next elections, due in May 2027.

Review of Strategic Aims 2025 - 2026

1. Engagement and Outreach

Parish Councillors have attended local events and meetings whenever possible and upheld our commitment to increasing our own outreach activities but unfortunately, the Band in the Park concert, planned for Summer 2025, was cancelled by Leeds City Council. A steel band concert is now planned to take place on 26 July 2026 at Wigton Moor Primary School and we are also holding a Jive session in Harewood.

Our e-newsletter is published at intervals during the year with information about Council and other community activities. The newsletter is sent via email and we urge more Parish residents, particularly in the Wigton Moor Ward, to sign up to our distribution list. You can do this on the Parish Council website: www.harewoodparishcouncil.gov.uk

Printed copies are available if required. Please send a stamped addressed envelope to the Parish Clerk: 36 High Ash Mount, Leeds LS17 8RW.

2. Infrastructure

a. Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)

Relocation of the SIDs was requested last year but has still not been carried out. We will continue to pursue this matter with Leeds City Council's Highways Department because the SIDS are currently ineffective as speed deterrents.

b. Harewood Village Welcome Gates

We had several meetings with city council officers and our local collaborator to discuss the style and positioning of the gates and the permissions and licences required to install roadside structures. Regrettably, the costs associated rose considerably and the Parish Council had to take the decision not to proceed with the project.

c. Christmas Lights

We had a better display for Christmas 2025 but still a few issues with failed motifs both in Harewood village and the two sites in Wigton Moor. We plan to order the lights installation earlier this year in the hope that we get a better selection and more reliable illuminations for Christmas 2026.

d. Memorial Garden

In October last year a party of volunteers from the Parish Council planted a new bed in the Memorial Garden to fill the gap created by removing the laurel hedging. Thank you to Councillor Angela Lawton for leading the party and designing a planting scheme that will form a colourful addition to the Memorial Garden when it becomes fully established.

The plans to resurface Sleights Lane and create a new Garden of Remembrance and visitors' shelter in the Cemetery remain on our agenda, and we will work towards fulfilling them in due course.

3. Financial Management

We monitored our finances carefully throughout 2025 and spent wisely to ensure we achieved best value for our Parish residents. We will continue to plan effectively in the coming year and have set a negative budget for 2026-27. We did not increase cemetery fees for our Parish residents and have kept our Parish precept low to avoid additional financial burden on our constituents in a period of spiralling costs,

Council meetings are held in public, and anyone may attend to observe and scrutinise our activities, and our spending. The public can also raise matters with the Council by contacting the Clerk, who will consider adding them to the next meeting agenda. Minutes of meetings are published on our four noticeboards and on our website and an archive of minutes from previous meetings can be found on our website: www.harewoodparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Key achievements 2025 – 2026

- We provide a free Fitness Group that has grown in popularity and now regularly has 12 to 14 attendees at the weekly sessions. In addition we support a weekly, chair-based exercise session at Wigton Moor United Reformed Church. In Summer 2025 we funded a free, 6-week tennis coaching programme for primary school children in collaboration with Shadwell Tennis Club, and supported the Leeds Rhinos Summer Scheme for young people in Alwoodley.

- We support the work of several Parish voluntary organisations with grants including Slaid Hill in Bloom; Wigton Moor URC and Harewood PTA.
- Parish Councillors raise awareness of our Parish residents' concerns and priorities at the Police and Community Together meetings in Wetherby and Alwoodley, and work closely with the Neighbourhood Police team.
- We maintained our Parish amenities to a high standard and enhanced the Memorial Garden with new planting.
- We collaborated with the Harewood Village Hall committee to provide a Summer Jive session in July 2025.
- We have delivered our services and maintained our community assets in a cost effective and efficient way, minimally increasing the Parish precept and keeping it one of the lowest in Leeds.

Strategic Aims 2026 – 2027

Our previous aims of widening engagement and outreach in our Parish, fostering our connections with neighbouring Parish Councils, maintaining the Parish infrastructure to a high standard and upholding our commitment to transparency and financial probity are now embedded in our organisational culture. We have strengthened our links to Leeds City Councillors and worked collaboratively with them to address local concerns and ensure local funding is fairly and equitably dispersed. Councillors regularly represent our Parish residents at meetings with City Council Highways, public transport providers and the Police. For the coming year, 2026 -2027, we will focus on:

1. Succession Planning and Recruitment

Since I joined the Parish Council in 2014, we have had two or more vacant seats for the Wigton Moor Ward. We have made efforts over the years to fill these vacancies, and we will renew these efforts during 2026 – 2027. We are mindful that our Parish Councillors are all over 70 years of age. This means that we need to implement a positive succession plan to ensure that Harewood Parish Council remains viable in years to come. The Parish Council would benefit from new members, in particular representation from younger people. This

would bring a fresh perspective and ensure we maintain the energy required to fulfil our aspirations and obligations over the coming years.

2. Modernisation

Parish Council procedures are often characterised as bureaucratic and archaic. Clearly we are bound by our Standing Orders and certain constitutional requirements that cannot be changed but there are simple and visible measures we can consider to make the Parish Council more relevant to our residents. For example, aiming for quicker responses online, organising more events outside formal meetings and creating direct channels for our constituents to influence Parish Council priorities. Our plan to modernise our website remains a priority and we will aim to build a more accessible website with online forms and easier navigation.

We will find opportunities for more targeted outreach to younger people through schools, clubs, and local youth services to raise the profile of the Parish Council in this sector of our population.

We are not aiming for grand constitutional reforms but small, credible changes that will make Harewood Parish Council easier to see, easier to contact, and more worth caring about.

Our mission statement

Harewood Parish Council will strive to represent the views of all residents, community groups and organisations in our Parish to enhance local services and our environment. We will engage with residents to develop an inclusive, caring and cohesive community spirit to create a sustainable and attractive environment for our Parish residents to enjoy.