

WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting

Message from the Chairman

The Council has continued to work to meet the needs of the community by listening and responding to local issues. The Council works closely with the Police, Street Wardens, Durham County Council, community groups and local organisations on matters which affect the parish area.

I would like to thank the Members of the Parish Council for their continued support during the previous year.

M Nicholls
Chair to Wheatley Hill Parish Council

List of Members

Councillor E Carr, 19 Gable Terrace, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 821349

Councillor E Goyns, 28 East View, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 820615

Councillor M Goyns, 28 East View, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 820615

Councillor B Maddison, 2 Bevan Crescent, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 820159

Councillor J Miller, 7 East View, Wheatley Hill – Tel 01429 824397

Councillor M Nicholls, 87 Johnson Estate, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 820003

Councillor M Nicholls, 87 Johnson Estate, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 820003

Councillor L Stewart, 1 Miners Villas, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 821220

Councillor C Stogdale, 17 Gable Terrace, Wheatley Hill - Tel 01429 820633

Clerk to the Council and Responsible Finance Officer

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2015/2016

The Council has had another active and productive year. The annual report gives an indication of the Parish Council's activities over the past year.

1. Precept

The Council's budget for 2015/16 was set at £127,137. This is the third budget to be approved under a new financial regime for parish councils.

The introduction by Central Government of a new Council Tax Support Scheme to replace the Council Tax Benefit Scheme significantly changes the calculation of the tax-base upon which Council Tax is calculated. Parish councils are no longer financially independent and are reliant upon Central Government grant support to compensate for the loss of tax-base. The grant support is paid to Durham County Council who then redistributes the grant to parishes but the County Council is under no obligation to do this.

For the financial year 2015/16 Wheatley Hill Parish Council received Council Tax Support Scheme grant of £29,299.00 a reduction of £3,280 on last year, which is deducted from the Council's budget to produce a precept requirement of £98,018.00. This results in a Band A and Band D Council Tax for 2015/16 of £110.00 and £165.01 respectively.

2. Finance

The Council remains in a healthy financial position. The main areas of expenditure during 2015/16 included the Cemetery, grass cutting, floral arrangements, Section 137 donations and allotments.

3. Cemetery

The Cemetery will continue to be a significant focus for the Council. Plans are underway for the further development of the Memorial Garden to provide additional plots.

4. Allotments

The Council owns and manages 23 allotments and stable blocks at Quilstyle Road. The Council works closely with the Police and Street Wardens to tackle any criminal activity or anti-social behaviour at the site. Due to the isolated location of the allotments fly tipping at the site is a persistent problem. The Council works closely with the Street Wardens to tackle the problem and try to identify those responsible.

5. Dog Fouling

During 2015/16 the Council provided free Poop bags to all residents living in Wheatley Hill. In an effort to combat dog fouling and encourage responsible dog ownership it is proposed that the provision of free bags, for residents living in Wheatley Hill, will continue for the foreseeable future.

6. Planning Applications

The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications submitted to Durham County Council. This means that the Council has the opportunity to support or object on any application submitted from within the village. During 2015/16 the Parish Council was consulted on 9 planning applications within the Wheatley Hill area.

7. Wheatley Hill Community Association – Meals on Wheels

During 2015/16 the Council assisted Wheatley Hill Community Association to provide their Meals on Wheels service. The service operates Monday to Friday delivering hot meals with fresh chilled meals available for weekends and bank holidays. The service enables elderly people to remain in their own homes and retain their independence. The Council is proud to be able to assist with the service and provide essential financial support, particularly the delivery of meals to the residents of Wheatley Hill.

Annual costs related to the provision of the Meals on Wheels, which the Parish Council paid for, include the following and amounted to £4,866.00.

- Paid Staff – Meals on Wheels Delivery - £2,535
- Trade Refuse Collection – Meals on Wheels, Luncheon Club and General Running - £1,217
- Lift maintenance – Essential for all users with limited mobility - £1,114

8. Section 137 Donations

The Council provided many grants and donations to local groups and charitable organisations throughout the year. All requests for assistance must be in writing to the Council. Listed below are the groups and organisations who received financial assistance in 2015/16 in line with the budgeted allocation.

Wheatley Hill Community Association	4,866.00
All Saints Parish Church	300.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Disabled Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Women's Section – RBL	390.00
Wheatley Hill Children's Centre	300.00
Wheatley Hill History Club	300.00
East Durham Community Transport Ltd	100.00
Wheatley Hill Working Men's Football Team	300.00
Wheatley Hill Scouts	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Nursery	300.00
Wheatley Hill Heritage Society	300.00
All Saints Church – "Over 20's"	300.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
Christmas Tree	90.00
Wheatley House	200.00
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00

Durham Cathedral	50.00
Wheatley Hill Working Men's Social Club & Institute	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Nursery	300.00
Durham Miners Gala Brochure	45.00
TOTAL	9,741.00

9. Winter Maintenance

The Parish Council has entered into a Service Level Agreement with Durham County Council to provide winter maintenance in Wheatley Hill. The basis of the agreement is that Durham County Council will provide the Parish Council with salt to undertake winter maintenance on footways. The Parish Council undertakes the filling of salt bins located throughout the village. Footways identified in the agreement include Cemetery Road, Johnson Estate, Woodlands Avenue and Front Street.

10. Front Street Improvements

Durham County Council has undertaken a number of improvements on and around the Front Street. The work was done in consultation with the owners of the industrial estate on the Front Street and the Parish Council.

The work formed part of a programme of improvements on the Front Street and included new seating, planters and litter bins. In addition trees and shrubs in the vicinity had been pruned, new grit bins installed and new speed restriction and vehicle reversing signs erected.

As part of the works the Parish Council had agreed to take on the future maintenance of the new tubs.

Signage to the Community Centre would be renewed and the footpath from the main road to the Community Centre would be improved. Improvements at the junction with Woodlands Avenue included the painting of railings and repairs to paving in specified areas.