

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 Parish 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 support during my first year as Chair of the Parish Council.

I would like to pay tribute to the late Councillor Morris Nicholls for his many years of dedicated service on the Parish Council and to the community. I would also like to thank Councillor Mrs Mary Nicholls, who has recently resigned from the Parish Council, for her many years of service and wish her all the very best for the future.

J Miller

Chair to Wheatley Hill Parish Council

Parish Council Members

Councillor E Carr, 19 Gable Terrace, Wheatley Hill

Councillor E Goyns, 28 East View, Wheatley Hill

Councillor M Goyns, 28 East View, Wheatley Hill

Councillor B Miller, 1 Shakespeare Street, Wheatley Hill

Councillor J Miller, 7 East View, Wheatley Hill

Councillor L Stewart, 1 Miners Villas, Wheatley Hill

Councillor C Stogdale, 17 Gable Terrace, Wheatley Hill

Clerk to the Council and Responsible Finance Officer

Joanne Thompson

Telephone:- 0191 5279027

Email:- clerk.whpc@btinternet.com

2017/2018

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 2017/18 was set at £121,261.

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 2017/18 Wheatley Hill Parish Council received Council Tax Support Scheme grant of £21,345.00 a reduction of £7,045.00 on last year, which is deducted from the Council's budget to produce a precept requirement of £99,916.00. This results in a Band D Council Tax for 2017/18 of £152.71.

2. Finance

The Council remains in a healthy financial position. The main areas of expenditure during 2017/18 include the Cemetery, grounds maintenance and floral arrangements, Section 137 donations and allotments.

3. Cemetery

The Cemetery continues to be a significant focus for the Council. The Cemetery is home to the Heritage Centre which provides an insight into life in a mining village around 1919. The Cemetery is also home to the grave of miners' leader, Peter Lee which is the only listed monument in the East Durham area. The Thomas Kenny VC memorial stone and recently "The Last Shift" a miner memorial sculpture by local artist Ray Lonsdale.

4. Allotments

The Council owns and manages 23 allotments and stable blocks at Quilstyle Road. The Council works closely with the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens to tackle criminal activity and anti-social behaviour at the site and identify those responsible.

Due to the isolated location of the allotments fly tipping at the site is a persistent problem. Over the previous year fly tipping has escalated to such a level that measures to prevent vehicular access to the site is being investigated.

5. Dog Fouling

During 2017/18 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. Dog bags are available from the Heritage Centre, Wheatley House and the Community Centre.

6. Planning

The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications submitted to Durham County Council. This allows the Parish Council the opportunity to comment on any application submitted from within the village. During 2017/18 the Parish Council was consulted on 11 planning applications within the Wheatley Hill area.

7. Wheatley Hill Community Association – Meals on Wheels

During 2017/18 the Parish Council provided a contribution of £7,870.00 to assist 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 working in partnership with the Association to assist with this valuable service.

8. Section 137 Donations

The Council provided many grants and donations to local groups and charitable organisations throughout the year. All requests for assistance are made in writing to the Council. Listed below are the groups and organisations who received financial assistance during the 2017/18 financial year and in line with the budgeted allocation.

Wheatley Hill Community Association	7,870.00
Citizens Advice County Durham	100.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Workmen's Social Club and Institute	300.00
All Saints Church	300.00
Wheatley Hill Football Club	300.00
Haswell and District Mencap Society	50.00
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00
All Saints Church	300.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Nursery	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Association	500.00
Village Christmas Tree	66.67
2nd Wheatley Hill Scout Group	300.00
Durham Miners Association	100.00
County of Durham School Benevolent Fund	50.00
Durham Miners Gala Brochure	45.00
TOTAL	11,281.67

9. Winter Maintenance

The Parish Council has 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 Improvement Scheme

The Parish Council, in partnership with the 3 County Councillors has agreed to help fund a comprehensive scheme of improvement works to the Front Street. The scheme is a £20,000.00 project which will see the 3 County Councillors and the Parish Council each contributing £5,000.00 to the overall cost.

Durham County Council will be undertaking the work and meetings between all partners involved, including a walkabout were held to identify the scale of the problem and determine the extent of works required.

Durham County Council is in the process of contacting owners and landlords to obtain their permission for the works. It is anticipated that work will commence in May 2018 and will include the painting of roller shutters and shop fronts, minor building repairs, photographic decorative doors and windows and new gas box covers. All street furniture along the Front Street will be painted black and a colour scheme of heritage green and cream has been agreed.

The scheme is free and owners and landlords will not be expected to contribute to the cost. It is hoped that by initiating the works it will instill a sense of pride in the village.

11. The Last Shift

The Parish Council has taken ownership of "The Last Shift" following the official unveiling ceremony on 3 May 2018.

The Parish Council is now responsible for its security, all future maintenance and insurance.

The statue is based on a photograph of local miner Tom Davies in his pit clothes and is the culmination of four years of hard work by the "Last Shift" committee to raise the £24,000.00 for the statue.

The statue commemorates 50 years since Wheatley Hill pit closed and was first suggested by a local resident who wanted to commemorate the closure of the mine with a statue.

The official unveiling of the statue was held on 3 May 2018, exactly 50 years to the day of the pit closing ending 99 years of coal mining in the village with the loss of 500 jobs.