

# **WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting**

### **Message from the Chairman**

The Parish Council has had a busy and productive 2018/19 and continues 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 year as Chair of the Parish Council.

J Miller  
Chair to Wheatley Hill Parish Council

### **Parish Council Members**

Councillor E Carr (Vice-Chair), 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 (Chair), 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  
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## **2018/2019**

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 2018/19 was set at £121,058.

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 2018/19 Wheatley Hill Parish Council received Council Tax Support Scheme grant of £20,143.00 which is deducted from the Council's budget to produce a precept requirement of £100,915.00. This results in a Band D Council Tax for 2018/19 of £148.29.

### **2. Finance**

The Council remains in a healthy financial position. The main areas of expenditure during 2018/19 included the Cemetery, grounds maintenance and floral arrangements, Section 137 donations, allotments and financially supporting the Meals on Wheels service provided by the Greenhills Centre.

### **3. Cemetery**

The Cemetery continues to be a significant focus for the Council. The Cemetery is home to the Heritage Centre Building which houses a permanent exhibition of an East Durham Colliery Home as well as many artefacts and photographs which have been donated by local people, and friends and families now living away from the village. The Centre is staffed by dedicated volunteers and continues to thrive.

The Cemetery is home to the grave of miners' leader, Peter Lee which is the only listed monument in the East Durham area. Also located in the Cemetery is the Thomas Kenny VC memorial stone and "The Last Shift" a miner memorial sculpture by local artist Ray Lonsdale.

Due to limited space remaining in the Cemetery the Parish Council has designated land either side of the memorial wall to be developed to provide additional burial and cremation plots. The Parish Council is also in the early stages of investigating the possibility of purchasing additional land to extend the Cemetery.

A programme of works to improve, repair and/or re-surface the paths in the Cemetery is also being considered.

#### **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 is a persistent problem. Over the previous year fly tipping escalated to such a level that measures to prevent vehicular access to the site had to be taken. Gates and boulders have been installed on site in an attempt to prevent unauthorised fly tipping.

#### **5. 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, object or support any application submitted from within the village. During 2018/19 the Parish Council was consulted on 12 planning applications within the Wheatley Hill area.

#### **6. Front Street Improvement Scheme**

The Parish Council, in partnership with the 3 County Councillors for the area agreed to fund a comprehensive scheme of improvement works to the Front Street. The scheme was a £20,000.00 plus project which entailed each County Councillor and the Parish Council contributing £5,000.00 to the overall cost. The Parish Council also agreed to fund any shortfall once the scheme started.

Work commenced in May 2018 and included the painting of roller shutters and shop fronts, minor building repairs, photographic decorative doors and windows and new gas box covers. All street furniture on the Front Street was painted black and a colour scheme of heritage green and cream was used. Following completion of the works a “deep clean” of the pavements was undertaken.

Feedback on the scheme has been positive and it is hoped that by initiating the works it would instill a sense of pride in the village.

#### **7. Wheatley Hill Community Association – Meals on Wheels**

During 2018/19 the Parish Council provided a contribution of £8,500.00 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 and will continue to financially support this most valuable service to residents in our community.

#### **8. Wheatley Hill Community Association – School Activities**

The Parish Council has previously assisted Wheatley Hill Community Association on an ad hoc basis with grants and donations from the Section 137 Budget. As the centre relies heavily on grant funding it is difficult for them to plan activities as they can only be booked once the outcome of grant applications is known.

The Parish Council was keen to provide activities and events for children in the village but with no staff to deliver on this scale it was agreed that the Parish Council would work in partnership with the Community Association. The Parish Council therefore provides the necessary funding for the activities and events which are delivered by the Community Association.

The Greenhills Centre already provides a full programme of activities during all the school holidays and where possible many of the activities are offered free or incur a small charge. Like many others, they are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain and develop services for the community in the current economic climate and increasingly difficult to attract funding and grants which makes it difficult to plan ahead.

The projected annual costs to provide a full programme of activities during the school holiday was in the region of £15,000.00.

The Parish Council therefore gave a commitment to provide £15,000.00 for the provision of school holiday activities to be delivered at the Greenhills Centre. All funding provided by the Parish Council is allocated directly to the provision of school holiday activities.

## **9. 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 2018/19 financial year and in line with the budgeted allocation.

Wheatley Hill Disabled Club	300.00
Wheatley House Senior Citizen's Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Association – Meals on Wheels	8,500.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
All Saints Parish Church	300.00
Wheatley Hill Banner Appeal	300.00
Wheatley Hill Working Men's' Football Club	300.00
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00
"Over 20's " Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
Village Christmas Trees	185.49
Wheatley Hill Community Nursery	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Association	2,000.00
St Godric's School	300.00

2nd Wheatley Hill Scout Group	300.00
Wheatley Hill History Club	300.00
Wheatley House Moving Forward	300.00
North East War Memorials Project	50.00
Durham Miners Gala Brochure	45.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,780.49</b>

## **10. Quad/Off Road Bikes**

During 2018/19 Wheatley Hill suffered on-going problems related to off-road and quad bikes, particularly the damage they caused to the grassed areas and the nuisance and danger they posed to residents.

The Parish Council works closely with the Police and to assist in the prevention of this type of activity the Parish Council has funded the purchase of a product called SelectaDNA. SelectaDNA is a single use spray with a 'DNA' in it which can be used by Police to mark illegal riders and bikes. The sprays purchased by the Parish Council would remain with the local policing teams and carried and deployed by them. The neighbouring parishes of Thornley and Wingate have also agreed to purchase the sprays.

It is hoped the sprays will be a substantial deterrent. They could also be used to link 'unknown' offenders to specific crimes and bikes which would hopefully lead to arrests and the seizure of bikes.

## **11. Parking – Wheatley Hill Primary School**

Following concerns from residents the Parish Council were approached in relation to issues related to parking and traffic congestion outside the school. There was also problems related to off-road bikes riding at speed outside the school.

Meetings have been held which involve all interested parties and it has been suggested that an area of waste land, formerly Peterlee Cottages, could be used to create additional parking for the school. The land belonged to Believe Housing and they have been requested to consider gifting a small area of the land for use as a car park.

As an immediate response to the situation the Parish Council has funded the purchase of 4 A frame signs and 2 banners that are erected outside the school to prevent cars parking illegally.

## **12. Dog Fouling**

As in previous years 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.

### **13. 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.

For further details please visit our website [wheatleyhill.parish.durham.gov.uk](http://wheatleyhill.parish.durham.gov.uk)  
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