

# **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.

I would also like to welcome Councillor Brian Miller to the Parish Council.

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 Miller, 1 Shakespeare Street, Wheatley Hill

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**

Joanne Thompson

Telephone:- 0191 5279027

Email:- [joanne.thompson21@btinternet.com](mailto:joanne.thompson21@btinternet.com)

## **2016/2017**

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 2016/17 was set at £127,317.

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 2016/17 Wheatley Hill Parish Council received Council Tax Support Scheme grant of £28,390.00 a reduction of £909.00 on last year, which is deducted from the Council's budget to produce a precept requirement of £98,927.00. This results in a Band A and Band D Council Tax for 2016/17 of £106.26 and £159.43 respectively.

### **2. Finance**

The Council remains in a healthy financial position. The main areas of expenditure during 2016/17 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 Neighbourhood 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 Neighbourhood Wardens to tackle the problem and try to identify those responsible.

### **5. Dog Fouling**

During 2016/17 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 2016/17 the Parish Council was consulted on 15 planning applications within the Wheatley Hill area.

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

During 2016/17 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.

## **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 2016/17 in line with the budgeted allocation.

Wheatley Hill Community Association	7,500.00
Citizens Advice County Durham	100.00
County of Durham School Benevolent Fund	50.00
Tower Mint	128.40
Wheatley Hill History Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
All Saints Church	300.00
Learning Library	50.00
Wheatley Hill Working Men's Football Team	300.00
Haswell and District Mencap Society	100.00
Emblematic Limited	814.00
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00
Wheatley Hill Community Nursery	300.00
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club	300.00
Over 20's Club	300.00
Wheatley Hill Community Association	2,500.00
Village Christmas Tree	100.00
North Eastern Prison After Care Society	100.00
Wheatley Hill Workmen's Social Club and Institute	300.00
Durham Cathedral	50.00
St Godric's RC Primary School	500.00
Durham Miners Gala	45.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,537.40</b>

## **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. Community Action Scheme**

The Community Action Scheme brings together residents and a range of organisations to tackle housing and environmental issues in a specific area by identifying local priorities and making best use of resources.

The Community Action Scheme is led by a Community Action Team (CAT), which includes officers from Durham County Councils environment, health, consumer protection and planning sections, Neighbourhood Wardens and housing teams. They work alongside the Police, community support officers and fire and rescue teams.

The CAT provides resources to target particular areas and problems. They are also able to use enforcement powers to encourage owners, occupiers and landlords to take responsibility for their neighbourhood and properties.

The scheme is normally delivered as an 8 to 10 week programme which breaks down into:

- 2 weeks identifying issues and planning priorities
- 4 to 6 weeks of action
- 2 weeks of review

The CAT deals with a range of issues which includes:

- improving housing standards and the management of privately rented property
- dealing with empty properties
- removing rubbish dumped in gardens, on streets and on waste ground
- assisting with improvements to buildings and abandoned land
- investigating noise issues
- challenging under-age sales of alcohol and tobacco
- implementing energy efficiency schemes
- advising on consumer rights and dealing with cold callers

Information from the community informs the main priorities chosen by residents during a residents' engagement event at the start of the CAT programme. They then focus on these during the 4 to 6 weeks of action.

Each location is evaluated against a set of criteria to prioritise areas with the greatest need within County Durham and identify areas suitable for the scheme. This is calculated using data on empty homes, health deprivation, the percentage of tenants of privately rented accommodation in receipt of housing benefit, anti-social behaviour and crime.