

Winston Parish Council

Annual Report 2016/2017

During the past year there has been 12 Ordinary Meetings of the Parish Council plus the Annual General Meeting. In addition to the normal business of the Council, the following are the main issues which we have dealt with during the last year.

In October 2016 we were pleased to welcome Chris Clark who applied to become a Parish Councillor, filling the vacancy which had existed for many months. We now have a full complement of councillors.

On the 11th August 2016 Mr Dennis Coates who is Chair of the National Association of Local Councils Accreditation Panel came to our meeting to present the Council with an award certificate confirming that we had obtained Foundation Level of the Quality Award Scheme. Mr Coates congratulated us and pointed out that we were the smallest Council in County Durham to receive the award. Not all councils who submit an application are successful. The application was a joint effort involving all Councillors, but I must give a special mention to our clerk, Jane Ayre, who worked so hard to ensure all our procedures and documentation met the requirements of the application.

In April 2016 we made an application to Durham County Council for a grant to restore an historic Victorian road sign situated at Westholme corner. The post was in a poor state and the finger plate pointing to Winston had been broken off. County Councillors George Richardson and James Rowlandson agreed to joint fund the scheme from their neighbourhood budgets. This type of work requires a specialist restorer and took until December to complete.

Another project we decided to take on was to provide a defibrillator for Winston Village. Again we approached Durham County Council to provide funding and again we were successful in obtaining the majority of the cost from the Neighbourhood Budget of County Councillor George Richardson with the Parish Council paying the shortfall from our reserve budget. The defibrillator was fitted in March and became active in early April. Our thanks go to the Village Hall Committee for allowing us to fit the cabinet to the external wall of the Hall and also for providing an electric supply. The supply is needed to maintain a minimum temperature within the cabinet to prevent the pads from deteriorating. A familiarisation session by the North East Ambulance Service will take place in May 2017 for any residents who wish to attend.

Following on from an item in last year's report concerning the small area of land next to the field adjacent to the Bridgewater Arms we noted that the fence which had been put up was removed. We then made enquiries at the Land Registry to establish if anybody actually owned the land and found out that it was unregistered. As a result of another issue with the tree on the triangular piece of land between the roads leading down to the Bridgewater we found out that the land is only half owned by Durham County Council. Both of these areas are maintained by the Parish Council under the grass cutting contract and we therefore decided to apply to the Land Registry for ownership of both areas. The application is on-going.

At our November meeting we had a presentation from GSC Grays with regard to a proposal they were preparing on behalf of Lord and Lady Barnard to move the Selaby Lane Junction on the A67 nearer to Gainford. Lord and Lady Barnard had serious concerns about the safety of the existing junction and were prepared to pay for the work to be undertaken. The purpose of the presentation was to make the Parish Council aware of the proposal and to seek their views prior to a formal planning application being made. Following a discussion it was agreed that this was a sensible way of improving road safety.

We received several complaints about the lack of grass cutting on the verge adjacent to the A67. A meeting was held with Durham County Council on 17th November and following a walk along the area DCC agreed to cut the full width of the verge in 2017. It was also pointed out that the footpath was in need of repair and this issue would be reported back to the Highways Department.

The poor state of the white lines at the junction between the A67 and Staindrop Road were also reported and these have now been repainted.

We are pleased to report that there were no real problems with the Travellers during the Appleby Fair period this year. One family did stay beyond the temporary stopover closing date. The Durham County Council Gypsy Roma Traveller Service Officer did attend the site and an Order to Leave Notice was served, following which they did move.

On 2nd April 2017 a working party was organised to tidy up the environmental and wildlife area at the top of the village. It has made a real difference to the area and our thanks go out to all the volunteers who turned up on the day.

Our thanks to Councillor Cook for updating the Welcome to Winston Pack, a copy of which has now been delivered to all residents.

We continue to monitor the construction of the new building and other activities at Hill Top Farm and liaise with Durham County Council over any issues raised by residents.

We reviewed the grass cutting carried out by C A Stamp and were pleased with the work that he had done during the previous year. It was therefore decided to renew his contract as he agreed there would be no cost increase.

The Parish Council website continues to be updated with all documentation relating to the Council.

The Parish Council is always keen to be aware of any issues which may affect the local community and therefore have representatives on the Teesdale Local Councils' Forum, the Smaller Local Councils' Forum and the Teesdale Residents' and Travellers' Forum and attend the Teesdale Action Partnership Meeting when appropriate.

Members of the public are always welcome to attend Parish Council meetings which are held at 7pm on the second Thursday of each month and, with prior written application, raise any issue of particular concern.

Mike Taylor Chair-Winston Parish Council

