

Winston Parish Council

Annual Report 2017/2018

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.

On 24th May 2017 a defibrillator familiarisation session was held in the Village Hall where a member of the Ambulance Service gave a talk on both standard first aid procedures and use of the defibrillator. It was well attended by both residents and members of the Staindrop & District Young Farmers Club. We continue to check the defibrillator on a weekly basis to ensure that it is in working order.

As reported last year we continued with our application to take ownership of the small area of land next to the field adjacent to the Bridgewater Arms and the triangular piece of land between the roads leading down to the Bridgewater Arms. Despite the fact that we had been maintaining both pieces of land for well over 20 years the Land Registry ruled that we were not able to establish exclusive possession of these pieces of land, but stated that similarly, no other party would be in a position to do so.

Many residents were annoyed by the replacement of the footpath at the top of the Village adjacent to the wooded area, especially as the footpath was in a so much better condition than the footpath running adjacent to the A67. We raised this matter with Durham County Council and were told that the finance for this work was coming from a separate budget for maintenance works. They would however take note of the condition of the other footpath and would include the repairs in future maintenance schedules.

We are pleased to report that there were no real problems with the Travellers during the Appleby Fair period this year. They did arrive earlier and leave later than the specified period, but the Durham County Council Gypsy Roma Traveller Service did monitor the situation on a regular basis and did instruct them to leave after the end of the designated period.

We continue to examine all planning applications applicable to Winston Parish and comment as we feel appropriate. The major application this year has been the proposal to build 16 houses on the land next to the Bridgewater Arms. We had several concerns about this development and submitted an objection based upon the scale of the development, the risk of flooding, the capacity of the existing infrastructure to cope, traffic issues, impact on the environment and the issue of land ownership at the entrance to the site. The application is currently being examined by several departments within Durham County Council and reports will be issued in due course.

One of the main issues which has concerned both us and many other small Councils during this last year is the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations which come into force on 25th May this year. Failure to comply with these regulations can lead to fines the magnitude of which are not yet clear. Our Clerk has worked very hard recently to amend our documentation and to write additional documents which are required. However the main stumbling block is the requirement for every council to have a qualified Data Protection Officer who cannot be a member of the council. We have obtained estimates from firms who can supply this service, but as these estimates exceed the amount of our precept there is a real problem. There is currently a group who are partitioning the Government to exclude the smaller councils from certain elements of the regulations, so we can only wait and see.

Unfortunately we felt it necessary to increase our precept this year. In the past we have looked to deal with any shortfall from our reserves, but this is no longer possible. The workplace pension scheme has meant enrolment of our Clerk in the Local Government Pension Scheme and we needed to allow for some costs in respect of data protection.

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.

At this point I would like to extend our thanks to Chris Clark for supplying the Christmas Tree this year. It was certainly the biggest tree we have ever had and the only one that has required a machine to lift it into place.

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