

Shincliffe Parish Council
Annual Report
2016-17

Your Parish Councillors

George Lee (Chairman)	Jonathan Lovell (Vice Chairman)	Nia Cook	Dave Duell
			
Peter Ferries	Angela Lee	Andrzej Olechnowicz	
			

Contact details:

Kate Cuthbert (Clerk to the Council)	Address: 9 Pond Street, High Shincliffe, Durham. DH1 2PS Phone: 07701027450 Email: shincliffeparishcouncil@yahoo.co.uk
George Lee (Chairman)	Address: 17 Pond Street, High Shincliffe, Durham. DH1 2PS Phone: 0191 3841437 Email: george.lee.j@gmail.com
Jonathan Lovell (Vice Chairman)	Address: 28 Church Street, Durham. DH1 3DG Phone: 0191 3844933 Email: churchst26@gmail.com
Nia Cook	Address: 46 Ancroft Garth, High Shincliffe. DH1 2UD Phone: 0191 384 9151 Email: niacook60@gmail.com
David Duell	Address: 1 Heathways, High Shincliffe, Durham. DH1 2PG Phone: 0191 3848281 Email: jdduell@hotmail.com
Peter Ferries	Address: Woodlands, High Street South, Shincliffe Village, Durham. DH1 2NN Phone: 0191 383 2287 Email: pj.ferries@gmail.com
Angela Lee	Address: 8 Hill Meadows, High Shincliffe, Durham. DH1 2PE Phone: 0191 3865188 Email: angela.lee1uk@btinternet.com
Andrzej Olechnowicz	Address: 1 Wood View, Shincliffe Village, Durham, DH1 2NQ Phone: 0191 3865343 Email: a.j.olechnowicz@durham.ac.uk

Chairman Foreword

Welcome to the Shincliffe Parish Council annual report.

As a Parish Council we are committed to working in a professional and transparent manner; supporting the community on important initiatives, and aspiring to continuously improve. The Parish Council have progressed along the 'Local Council Award Scheme' and I'm pleased to announce that we have achieved the first milestone of 'Foundation Level'. A full complement of LCAS accreditations demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice, achieving excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. We are now one step closer to the top award, 'Quality Gold', and creating a framework for excellence whereby your Parish Council can be efficient, effective and transparent, acting on issues that impact our community and achieving the very best for our community. During the next year I would anticipate that we make good progress towards Quality Gold.

In March 2017, recently retired Councillors Pat Hudson and John Lightley were guests of honour at an event to celebrate their work in the community over the years. A mini orchard of apple and plum trees were planted to mark the occasion and it represented a small gesture from the Parish Council and the community for Pat and John's significant dedication to the community over many years.

Funding from County Councillor David Stoker has enabled plans for a traffic-calming gateway on the A177, with associated sustainable planting, due to be installed in May 2017. Further planned developments include: wildflower areas, additional mini orchards and continuing to maximise high impact, sustainable planting in the Parish, and a number of future initiatives detailed in the report. The Parish Council have also introduced community gardening days, completely overhauled the website, replaced all the Notice Boards and much more. It has been a really productive year.

The local council elections are due in April 2017 which represents a fresh opportunity for the community to elect parish councillors to support the community for the next 4 years. On that note, I would like to offer sincere thanks and gratitude to all Parish Councillors and County Councillor David Stoker over the past four years who invested time into the community to help better the community. Our Parish Clerk, Kate Cuthbert, continues to work tirelessly for the community and her support is highly valued. On behalf of the Parish Council I'd like to thank Kate for her continued support. And special thanks to our Parish Gardener, Marc Platts, who works 'come rain or shine' to keep the planting, flower beds and the general appearance of the parish looking fantastic.

1. Local Council Award Scheme

The Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) provides a framework to enable all local councils to meet their full potential. In March 2017, I'm pleased to announce that we have achieved the first milestone of 'Foundation Award' and this award will be presented by the Accreditation Panel Chairman at the June Parish Council meeting. A great deal of work was invested to achieve this award, highlighted by the fact that nationwide only 70 Parish or Town Councils have achieved a higher award status.

As a Parish Council we are committed to working in a professional and transparent manner; supporting the community on important initiatives, and trying to continuously improve. We are now one step closer to the top award, 'Quality Gold', and creating a framework for excellence whereby your Parish Council can be efficient, effective and act on issues that impact our community and achieving the very best for our community. Work has already begun towards this goal and during the next year I would anticipate that we make good progress towards Quality Gold.

2. Committee Reports

Horticulture Committee

The community highlighted 'pathways and verges' in the most recent Parish Survey as an area of improvement. In Autumn we had a good turnout for our first community gardening day. Residents and councillors worked together, sporting our new Parish hi-visibility jackets, to clear paths of mud, fallen leaves and overhanging branches. We also planted spring bulbs along the wall at the entrance to High Shincliffe. Thanks to everyone who took part – and to the Avenue pub for providing refreshments at lunchtime. A further summer community gardening is scheduled for June 2017. The Horticulture Committee are grateful to Parish residents for contributing to our local environment, through the gardening days, planting and maintaining beds, litter-picking and reporting horticultural issues and ideas for development.

The Parish Front Garden Competitions continued to showcase some excellent displays deserving of the awards, including a special award to resident Claire Pragnell for her contributions; planting and maintaining flower beds, creating wildlife boxes and helping with community gardening and litter-picking days.

The Beautiful Durham Awards took place in October, with both High Shincliffe and Shincliffe Village receiving awards for Best Village and Best Small Village. Sherburn Hospital was also awarded a Merit in the Best Sheltered Accommodation category. The judges visited the Parish in July and were impressed by the standard of residents' gardens and the flower beds maintained by Marc Platts, our Parish Gardener.

A total of 13 semi-dwarf fruit trees have been planted in 3 mini orchards, including 3 trees donated by a resident. A mini orchard of apples and plums were planted in Hill Meadows attended by recently retired Councillors Pat Hudson and John Lightley, in recognition of their significant contribution to Shincliffe Parish over many years. They were joined by members of the community including children from Shincliffe School.

Funding from County Councillor David Stoker has enabled plans for a traffic-calming gateway on the A177, with associated sustainable planting, due to be installed in May 2017. Further planned developments include: wildflower areas, additional mini orchards and continuing to maximise high impact, sustainable planting in the Parish.

The Horticulture Committee membership is currently Angela Lee (Chair), Cllr Nia Cook, Marc Platts (Parish Gardener) and Pat Matthews (community representative).

Finance Committee

Established in May 2015, the purpose of the committee is to provide financial oversight and ultimately to ensure the stability of parish finances. The Financial Committee membership is currently George Lee (Chair), Angela Lee (Vice Chair) and Andrzej Olechnowicz.

In 2016, the Finance Committee implemented an additional internal audit performed by a Parish Councillor on a quarterly basis. This creates an additional layer of assurance before the official internal auditor's review and represents good practice in line with the Transparency Code.

Financial Summary (unaudited)

The total income of the Parish Council in this period was £19,094.68 and the total expenditure £18,098.42. On 31st March a reserves balance of £11,991.24 has been carried forward into 2017-18. The forecast expenditure for 2017/18 has increased to £18,175.96. In January 2017 it was resolved that the 2017-18 precept should be raised by 7.36 % to £17,500.

It's worth noting that in March 2017, the following initiatives were resolved at Parish Council.

1. Fencing to protect grass verges opposite 'The Rosetree' £2,200 (joint venture between the Parish Council (PC) and the Neighbourhood Budget (NB))
2. Fencing to protect the grass verges at entrance to Farm Lane: £2,197 (NB)
3. A177 High Shincliffe, speed restrictions: £6,655: (joint venture PC and NB)
4. WI Hut: heating, lighting, insulation improvements: £14,394 (NB)
5. St Mary's Church Hall, Phase 2 of modernisation project, and a hearing loop: £10,000 (NB)
6. 7 defibrillators, 3 in the parish and 4 elsewhere in Durham South: £8,811 (joint venture PC and NB)
7. 4 grit bins, one in Shincliffe Village and 3 in High Shincliffe, plus salted grit: £900 (joint venture PC & NB)
8. Defib & Resus training: £890 Members' Initiative Fund (MIF)
9. Shincliffe Community Association Newsletter (SCAN) support: £250 (MIF)
10. Student Community Action: £1,000 (MIF)

The Parish Council resolved to contribute c£900 for grit bins & grit and £1,258.80 for a defibrillator (which would include training). County Councillor David Stoker was integral to facilitating this significant investment for the community.

Requests for Financial Assistance

Created in 2015, the Grant Award policy looks to promote criteria for donations where community organisations can demonstrate a clear requirement for financial support, providing a product or service enhancing quality of life and promoting Shincliffe in a positive way.

In line with this policy, the Parish Council consider making donations in June and December. The following donations were made this financial year:

- Friends of Shincliffe show (FOSS) - £255
- Community Association (Shincliffe show) - £150
- SCAN newsletter - £250
- North Eastern Prison After Care Society (NEPACS) - £245

3. Conduct of the Council

There were 11 monthly meetings of the Council – 7 in Shincliffe Primary School, High Shincliffe, and 4 in St. Mary's Church Hall, Shincliffe Village – as well as the Annual Parish Meeting (May 2016) and regular meetings of the Horticultural Committee and Finance Committee.

The Parish Council continues to promote community engagement. The item 'Issues Raised by Members of the Public' maintains its position at the start of the agenda (previously at the end). Public attendance has been minimal, but I would welcome more attendance to discuss important issues and aspirations, and possibly commend good work within the community.

I'd like to thank County Councillor David Stoker for his continued support throughout the year. Ever present at Parish Council meetings his knowledge and work ethic has helped us to achieve more for the community.

4. Planning Applications

The Parish Council tend to receive one or two planning applications each month, and in most cases there are no objections.

5. Crime and Police Responsibilities

In some months, no crimes were recorded; in others, reported crimes included theft and minor damage.

6. High Shincliffe School – Driving behaviour

The volume of traffic and actions of some drivers at High Shincliffe School 'drop off' and 'pick up' times continues to present safety concerns. Reports of dangerous driving, speeding and inconsiderate parking continue to be raised to the Parish Council who are increasingly concerned that residents or children will suffer injury as a result of driver actions. Near misses have been reported.

The Parish Council are at the early stages of considering road calming options and are continuing to work with the Police and the school and have requested more regular Police presence during busy times. Please could residents contact the Parish Council if you witness any of the traffic related issues above.

7. Speeding along the A177

I'm pleased to report that road markings were placed on the A177 at the southern entrance to High Shincliffe and in advance of the 40mph sign in 2016. After much discussion with Durham County Council, in May 2017, gates will be placed at the side of the A177 at the southern entrance to High Shincliffe to give the impression of the road narrowing. In conjunction with the horticulture committee, planting by the signs will help to improve the look of the village and ensure the gates are sympathetic to the parish.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor the speed along the A177 and consider further initiatives.

8. Parish Council Website

As a Parish Council we are committed to improving our communication and making Parish Council information readily available. In the summer of 2016 it was clear that the website at the time was showing its age and required an overhaul; technology had moved on. By November 2016 a new Parish Council website was up and running. Special thanks goes to our Clerk, Kate Cuthbert, and to Cllr Nia Cook for their dedication and professionalism on the website initiative – creating a brand new website from concept to implementation in a few months is extremely impressive.

The website was an investment in the future; helping to support better communication and transparency. As such, the Parish Council applied for a Transparency Fund grant and were successful. We received a sum of £1,434.90 which covered the cost of the website implementation.

We are proud of the website but there is a feedback section, so I'd encourage you to visit the new website and let us know what you think.

9. Notice Boards

As a Parish Council we are committed to improving our communication and maintaining high standards. We identified that the notice board in Shincliffe Village was dilapidated to a point that it was unsafe. On the grounds of health and safety, the Parish Council removed the notice board from St Mary's Church Hall which prompted a review of all Parish Notice boards.

The High Shincliffe notice board was also in need of major repair; leaking water and blowing open in high winds. Repeated attempts to repair the notice board were unsuccessful so the decision was taken to replace this notice board, too. The third notice board situated in Sherburn Hospital had similar issues and also required replacing.

We engaged in a tender process in July 2016 and within a few weeks both notice boards were replaced and back in use. Special thanks goes to Cllr Angela Lee who took ownership of this initiative - conducting the market research and also arranging delivery and fitting.

10. Cyclists on the black path

Some cyclists are using this path (behind Hillcrest) and riding at speed. One instance involved a motorbike. We are considering options to mitigate the issue, but please could I ask you to report any further instances to the Parish Council. Any further information in relation to the timings of such incidents and also the names of the groups of cyclists would be useful.

11. Broadband

Representative in the Parish Survey, Broadband issues have existed throughout the year, in particular, Shincliffe Village where the 'Fibre Optic' broadband (i.e fast broadband in excess of circa 10Mb) was not available. I'm pleased to say that Fibre Optic broadband is now available in Shincliffe Village. Residents may need to 'sign-up' to this service which may come at a cost, but I'm sure this availability comes as a great relief to those within the village. Thanks extended to County Councillor David Stoker who has been a driving force behind this.

Reports of intermittent Broadband speed have been reported to the Parish Council and also highlighted within the Survey. Residents have the best chance of 'good' broadband speeds when on 'Fibre Optic'.

12. Litter picks

The Parish Council continues to organise two litter picks per year in Spring and Autumn. Both continue to be well attended with over 20 residents and Councillors donating an hour of their time on a Saturday morning to help keep Shincliffe clean and tidy. Both the Autumn and Spring litter picks were productive with over 25 bags of rubbish collected on each occasion, so thanks to everyone who attended the litter pick for sparing your valuable time. Thanks also to Alan and Nicola (The Avenue Pub) who always invite those in attendance to enjoy some bacon sandwiches and refreshments.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Clerk, all fellow Councillors, Committee Chairs, our Parish Gardener Marc Platts, County Councillor Stoker and especially the Shincliffe Community for their contributions throughout the year.

Councillor George Lee
Chair

April 2017