

Healeyfield Parish Council

Serving Castleside and District



Striving to keep our community thriving

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Chairman's Annual Report 2018/2019

Healeyfield Parish Council has continued to work to meet the needs of the community by listening and responding to local issues. The council has also worked with other stakeholders to accomplish this, particularly over the past year which has been especially busy and productive.

The parish council has continued to try and keep Castleside and the surrounding area looking it's very best. Over the past year we have continued to cut the grass throughout Rowley, the verges close to the Cemetery Gates and also opposite Maudville. We have continued to provide flower tubs throughout the parish which have been well cared for by Cllr Jo Foster. County Councillors Ossie Johnson and Jude Considine, kindly provided funds to aid our replenishment programme. The old wooden half-barrels have been replaced with plastic, self-watering versions as well as two fountains and several stone effect troughs. They will continue to be planted twice per year.

Cllrs Judith Robson and Jo Foster once again led the annual 'Big Clean Up' litter pick in conjunction with Durham County Council. As in previous years, the event was well attended and a lot of litter collected.

The Parish Wood has been host to both children's activities and woodland management training. A resident of the parish has started to use the woodland to provide activities for children and also run nature themed parties for both birthdays and seasonal events. This also teaches the children respect for the woodland environment. Volunteer training sessions have been a regular feature will continue to be held throughout the ensuing year. It is good to see the woodland being used in such varied ways.

The autumn Festival was once again held in September. The event was well attended by residents and the performance from Castleside Primary School Choir was exceptional. I look forward to the planning of this coming year's event to make it even better than previous years.

Consent was granted by The Chancellor of the Diocese of Durham to carry out works surrounding the War Memorial in Castleside Church Yard. New surfacing, almost matching what was originally around the memorial, as well as improved access gates, were completed in October 2018.

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2018 saw the 100th anniversary since the end of the First World War. The parish council started plans to commemorate this significant event almost a year ago and the efforts certainly paid off. On Saturday 4th November a 20ft high display of poppies was unveiled in the garden at St Johns Church. Each poppy was hand-knitted by members of the community as well as further afield. Each Poppy was unique just like the lives that were represented. It was a 'thank you' to the First World War generation who have all left long lasting legacies. This was all enhanced by the playing of bagpipes by members of Bishop Auckland Pipe Band. This unveiling was followed by a tea dance held in Castleside Village Hall. The hall was full and a wonderful afternoon was had by all.

The service of remembrance on Sunday 11th November, to pay tribute to the fallen in The Great War, World War 2 and subsequent battles, was organised by the parish council and was exceptionally well attended by villagers. For the first time in a number of years; clergy, uniformed organisations and resident paraded from outside of St Johns Church to the War Memorial. The parade was led by Mr John Stafford and a colleague of 102 Battalion REME, playing the bagpipes and Miss Heather Nelson of 1st Castleside BP Scout Group played for the Last Post. As usual, clergy from all churches which serve the parish of Healeyfield led the service. Representatives from The Royal British along with representatives from across organisations that serve the parish laid wreaths. Councillors and residents then attended an interdenominational service at St Johns Church.

On the evening of 11th November, Healeyfield became 1 of over 100 beacons to be lit commemorating the end of the First world War. The event began with the pipers playing 'The Battles o'er', this was followed by an address and then two minutes silence as the beacon was lit. A very moving event which was attended by over 300 people. The Beacon was made in Rowley and donated to the parish by Mr and Cllr Foster and thanks are owed to them as well as Cllr David Dixon for hosting the event on his land.

At the end of November, the Parish Council once again held the Christmas Light 'switch on' in conjunction with St Johns, bringing pre-Christmas cheer to the centre of Castleside. The well attended event hosted Castleside Primary School Choir and Consett Brass. Shortly after lighting, the lights were damaged by high winds but they were soon replaced by stronger and brighter lights.

The Heritage Lottery Fund approved our application for funding to commemorate World War 1. The knitted poppy display and tea dance all formed part of this. In addition, a WW1 Heritage Trail will be created. This will include the names of the all those who went to war from Healeyfield alongside other related information.

The Parish Council regularly reviews its budget and always ensures best value for any work that it undertakes. It has been necessary to increase our precept for the financial year 2019/2020 by around 11.96% or £2.35 per year (based on band 'D' property).

Following the resignation of Cllr Phillip Marshall in October 2018. The council followed the usual procedure and advertised the vacancy. One resident expressed an interest to join the council. Following a successful interview, Mr Alan Wallace attended his first meeting in January 2019. The council are thankful to Mr Marshall for his input whilst on the council and look forward to Mr Wallace's contribution.

The resignation was also received from Mrs Ruth Wright our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, the council advertised twice to fill the position. The council are extremely grateful to Mrs Wright

who has worked tirelessly ensuring that the council achieved its objectives and all of her efforts are truly appreciated. Following interview, Mr Jonathan Coates was appointed and attended his first meeting in February 2019. Mr Coates' background in banking and School Business Management will no doubt be an asset to the council.

Healeyfield Parish Council has achieved a great deal over the past year and there are a number of things already planned for the future. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of such a wonderful team of councillors. Each one has worked hard to ensure they represent the residents and have certainly stepped up to the councils motto of 'striving to keep our community thriving'. I wish to thank all fellow councillors for their hard work and dedication over the past year and for their support in another year as chairman. I must also thank the Parish Clerk and Responsible Officer, Mr Jonathan Coates. Lastly, my thanks to Ossie Johnson and Jude Considine our County Councillors for their advice, support with local issues and for keeping us up to date with the decisions and events at Durham County Council.

Adam Pearson

Chairman, Healeyfield Parish Council 2018/2019.