

# Healeyfield Parish Council

## *Serving Castleside and District*



*Striving to keep our community thriving*

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16 December 2024

### **Chairman's Annual Report 2020/2021**

The world has been, and continues to be, gripped by the Coronavirus Pandemic and for that reason alone, 2020/2021 will never be forgotten. We have experience National Lockdowns and other restrictions all in an attempt to protect ourselves and each other. Sadly, many have lost loved ones, family members and friends. Conversely, we are thankful to all of the Key Workers that have kept the country going through such difficult circumstances. Like all other organisations, many of our usual events planned works and activities had be curtailed or cancelled.

The Coronavirus Legislation passed by Central Government meant that the council was able to meet virtually via the internet and telephone and we did this successfully using 'Zoom'. This has been a great resource meaning we were able to continue with essential council business as well as maintaining access for the public at our meetings.

During the course of the year, the council has undertaken a review of public Rights of Way within the parish boundary. Phase one of the review saw the review of all arterial and well used paths being identified and then improvements works scheduled. We are working in partnership with Durham County Council Public Rights of Way Team to have the work completed. Phase Two will commence in the next year. Paths in the Castlehill Wood were also identified and the council is currently liasing with The Woodland Trust as they are submitting the improvements works in a funding bid.

The council reviewed the villages planting arrangements for winter 2020. A new contractor was appointed to supply and plant all of the councils tubs, troughs and fountains. They have been, and continue to be, a wonderful display of colour throughout winter and into spring. The same contractor will be used for summer 2021.

The council also reviewed all parish seating. A replenishment programme is now in place and should be completed by the end of 2021. Some seats have already been completed and are a marked improvement on their previous state.

*Visit our website at [www.healeyfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.healeyfieldparishcouncil.co.uk)*

The parish council had a whole weekend planned to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Europe. Sadly, these events couldn't go ahead as planned. Instead, residents were encouraged to sit in their own gardens with a picnic and also join in singing in the street when Cllr Robson, with the support of her family, toured the village for some wartime favourites!

In November, restrictions allowed for a 'scaled back' remembrance service at cenotaphs across the country. At Healeyfield this meant that representatives of the community were able to attend to lay wreaths. This included a wreath from the council on behalf of all residents being laid at the cenotaph and also at St Johns. Both services were recorded and uploaded to the councils YouTube Channel where residents could reflect and 'join in' virtually. We also welcomed our MP, Mr Richard Holden, for the first time.

The Christmas Tree Light Switch On was another usually well attended event that was unable to go ahead. Instead, the event took place virtually and upload to YouTube.

The parish council agreed to freeze the precept for 2021/2022 recognising and supporting the economical difficulties faced by many due to the Pandemic and resulting in a reduction of income or even loss of their jobs.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021, many took to the polling station or cast their Postal Vote across the County. Whilst there was an elections for County Councillors there was not for Parish Councillors for Healeyfield as there were only 6 candidates resulting in an 'uncontested election'. This was a common picture across the County with a number of parishes actually having zero nomination. The council will be advertising for a councillor to be filled by cooption. Doug Oliver and Mike McGaun were elected as Durham County Councillors whom we look forward to working collaboratively with as necessary. Thanks are due to Jude Considine and Ossie Johnson for their service as county councillors to this ward.

My personal thanks go to each councillor for their work during the year. Each one plays a key role in the council being successful and meeting our objective to 'strive to keep our community thriving' and they have done so showing dedication and commitment. Also, to our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Lisa Standish who had a particularly difficult start having only attended one meeting before the first Lockdown.

As we look to the ensuing year, projects put on hold over the last year, should now be able to be completed especially as restrictions continue to be lifted and normality returns the parish will work hard to meet the needs of the community by listening and responding to local issues and to work with other stakeholders to accomplish these.

Adam Pearson  
*Chairman, Healeyfield Parish Council 2020/2021*