

Healeyfield Parish Council

Serving Castleside and District



Striving to keep our community thriving

16 December 2024

Chairman's Annual Report 2022/2023

The past year has seen significant changes for our country with the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II and the ascension of Prince Charles as King.

The Parish Council has continued to work to meet the needs of the community by listening and responding to local issues and has worked with others such as Durham County Council, Mid-Durham AAP, Police and Village groups to achieve this.

The composition of the council has changed somewhat during the year. We were able to co-opt into a long-carried vacancy with Cllr Bill Todd. Cllr Todd brings a wealth of transferable knowledge and skills to the council from his working life which will undoubtedly be a great asset to the council. In April 2023, Cllr. David Dixon resigned as a councillor after more than 30 years' service to this community, I thank him for his dedicated and diligent service and for his valuable contribution to countless council activities and developments across the years.

Underpinning everything the council does is the work of our parish clerk. Mr. Ian Robson was appointed in May 2022, replacing Ms. Lisa Standish, whom I also thank for her service to the council. Ian's resourcefulness, resilience and keenness for Continuous Professional Development has an asset to the council. I am most grateful to him for the commitment he demonstrates to the council and to the those in the community which we serve.

The Parish Wood continues to be a well-used asset to our local community. The parish council are currently exploring plans to make further access improvements to some paths and stiles utilizing the Durham County Council's Parish Paths Scheme.

The council has continued to cut the grass throughout Rowley, the verges close to the Cemetery Gates and also opposite Maudville. We have also continued to provide flower tubs throughout the parish which have been planted twice in the year. We have also continued our programme of repair, restoration and replacement of the number of benches situated throughout the parish.

A number of events were delivered by the parish council to celebrate our late Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. The extended celebratory weekend commenced on the Thursday evening with the lighting

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of a beacon by Richard Holden MP followed by a firework display. Over 300 people attended, with many more watching from their homes or the roadside. We are most grateful all who made this event so successful. Friday morning saw a Civic Service take place in St. Johns Church where each church that covers this parish took part, over 60 people gathered together to give thanks for Her Late Majesties reign. Saturdays 'Jubilee Jive' with pie and peas at Castleside Club was a sell out; entertainment was provide by 'Second Wind' with music from across the decades. The weekend culminated in a Community Picnic which was jointly held between the council and Castleside Village Hall. Childrens activities, fancy dress, carnival games and musical items from Castleside Primary School Choir filled the afternoon. Commemorative mugs were also purchased for every home in the parish.

Sadly, in September, the country learned of the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Late Queen was sure in her faith and steadfast in her duty, bringing constancy through 70 years of change. We will remember her with great affection and gratitude. The parish council put into action our protocol for this occasion including participating the National Moment of Reflection where a number of residents gather at St. Johns Church Garden for words of reflection, silence and the proclamation of HM Prince Charles as King.

Our Autumn Festival was a good day, with a good number of attendees and a reasonable number of entries into the categories and the scarecrow competition, and it was well worth the effort that was put into it.

As usual, residents of the parish paid tribute to our fallen in our usual way this year. The parade and service was exceptionally well attended by villagers. Clergy, parish and county councillors, uniformed organisations, village groups, local schools and residents paraded from outside of St Johns Church to the War Memorial. The parade was led by Mr. John Stafford of 102 Battalion REME, playing the bagpipes. As usual, clergy from all churches which serve the parish led the service with a poem being read from a pupil of Castleside Primary School. Representatives from organisations that serve the parish laid wreaths.

At the end of November, the Parish Council once again held the Annual Christmas Light 'switch on' in conjunction with St Johns Church, bringing Christmas cheer to the centre of Castleside. The well attended event hosted Castleside Primary School Choir and Consett Brass.

The Coronation of HM King Charles III and HM Queen Camilla was celebrated with an event at Castleside Club. 'Second Wind' once again brought us entertainment following popular demand. A pie and pea supper was also provided.

In addition to the events that the council has run/facilitated over the past year, we have spent significant time compiling a Civil Contingency plan which could be swiftly put into action should there be a local emergency. Cllr. Alan Wallace has led on this project along with other stakeholders. The plan is now finalized. Part of this process and the exponential increase in energy prices led the council to partnering with Castleside Village Hall to host a 'warm hub' facility each week where consistent number of people attended each week throughout the winter months. The Parish Council was successful in bidding for a grant from Northern Power Grid to support these projects.

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 2022/2023 by 5% meaning that each homes annual precept is £25.95 (based on band 'D' property).

It has been an enormous privilege to represent my community, and I am proud of what the Council has achieved over the past year. In general, whatever our political beliefs or personal preferences, councillors put aside their differences, and focus their efforts on achieving the best outcome for residents, treating one another with respect and courtesy. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to my fellow councillors for their contributions and commitment over the past year. My thanks are also extended to Douglas Oliver and Mike McGaun 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 2022/2023.