

Gainford and Langton Parish Council Annual Report 2013/14

This year has been my first as chair and it has proved extremely busy with the parish continuing to face number of challenges and opportunities.

I would like to thank Linda Britton for her drive and enthusiasm during her time as Chair. As some of you will be aware, Linda had to move from the village as a result of work commitments and she is a big loss to the PC and we would like to wish her well.

The council has been involved in a number of initiatives during 2013/14 and I would like to summarise these below. As it has been an extremely busy year, with many major projects and achievements, it is not possible to cover everything we have undertaken.

Visitgainford.com <http://www.visitgainford.com/>

I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to those who have made this fantastic site possible. To Linda Britton would developed the idea and to our County Councillors George Richardson and James Rawlinson who have contributed funds to finance the set up costs of the Website.

I think the final results make the effort worthwhile and this is something the PC will grow over coming years and hopefully it will encourage visitors into the village and help local businesses grow.

Village Hall

The council has made a further grant of £2,000 to the village hall. As agreed the money is ring fenced for building maintenance and efficiency savings which we believe will help support the many activities that take place in the hall. During this time of rising costs and financial constraints the council values the work of the village hall and all those who make use of the facilities. The PC is committed to offer support where it can in the future. It is clear that the support of the PC is having an effect and this combined with the enthusiasm and commitment of the Village Hall team is paying off in improved facilities and higher levels of usage by all age groups within the community.

Local Maintenance

It is with great regret I must continue to report that some of our village dog owners continue to use the village as a toilet for their dogs without thought to others. This is of great concern to me and the PC and we have increased the activity of the Poover to try and limit the negative impact dog fouling has on our community. It is worthy of note that as a result of the community involvement the first fixed penalty has been issued for dog fouling. We ask that people take responsibility for their animals so they can avoid a significant cost of the fixed penalty in the future. We continue to work closely with DCC and their Parish Paths team. Although funding for this team has been reduced Martin has worked hard to build good relationships and continues to ensure or network of paths and bridleways are maintained.

Recreation Field Project

This project is almost complete with the first year's maintenance well underway. The PC has committed funds to purchase the necessary equipment and my thanks go to the PC Members who have put significant time and effort into delivering this project. I would also like to mention all the project sponsors who have contributed funds to make sure we deliver a quality sports field for use by the village. Particular thanks go to Alistair Logan who has supported the council with his expert knowledge and valuable time.

Gainford Conservation Area

Over the last 12 months the PC has worked extensively with the Community and Durham County Council on matters that potentially have significant impact on the village. As a direct result of Public opinion the PC expressed the community frustration to DCC, at the potential housing development to the north of the village. As a result this has been removed from the final County Plan and the area will remain as it is.

The PC has also facilitated discussions with DCC as to the future of the Conservation area. Community members expressed opinions and concerns and reassurance was given by DCC Officers at meetings held in the village. As a result the conservation area now incorporates the St Peters site and will now work to develop possibilities for the site which seek to retain the front façade.

Grants Awarded

The PC continues to provide small grants to local groups and projects in the village. We continue to support the "Big Weekend" which has been a great success, and the toddler group and 50/60 group.

General Matters

The council is committed to keeping the villages of Gainford and Langton looking their best. We employ a grass cutting contractor and a litter picker and both do a good job. Floral displays (tubs/baskets) continue to be improved. We believe it is vital that we maintain a pleasant and quality living environment for all residents and visitors to our village.

We continue to work with the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens to monitor and enforce those constant problems of speeding through Gainford and will continue communicating with them and expressing residents' views.

I would also like to thank Cllr Hannan for her tireless work in developing a pilot scheme of activities for our younger parish members. She has worked with Barnard Castle Hub to develop Friday night activities with transport from the village.

Thank You to...

Finally, I would like to thank our clerk Martin Clark, whose excellent work and dedication to the village and its residents has been outstanding this year. We are very lucky to have such a highly qualified, experienced and hardworking clerk and we owe him many thanks. I also want to thank Paul Ryman, whose constant hard work and enthusiasm has transformed the village.

I would also like to thank all of the councillors for the past year. We have had to deal with many challenges and some of these have occurred with tight deadlines and have meant a lot of additional work. The support and initiative and "can do" attitude of all those present has had a real impact on the village this year and I appreciate everyone's help, support and dedication. There are currently two vacancies on the PC and I would personally invite anyone who wants to get involved, to write to Martin or attend the next PC meeting. We need to make sure that we continue to fulfil the wishes of the community and the best way to do this is to have a full complement of Councillors to help deliver the best outcomes for the villages of Gainford and Langton.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the residents of our parish. It is truly an honour to work within such a lovely community and many people have taken the time and trouble to give us positive feedback on the initiatives we have undertaken which means a great deal to us all.

Thank You

Andie Mackay