

Gainford and Langton Parish Council Annual Report 2014/15

This year has proved extremely busy with the parish council continuing to face challenges and opportunities.

The council has been involved in a number of initiatives during 2014/15 and I would like to summarise these in this report.

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 and support - we don't always agree but we get there!

This year we welcomed Lisa Johnstone to the council - she has quickly settled in.

Recreation Field/Youth work

We have seen the completion (finally) of the recreation field and the establishment of the village football team who have been quite successful in their first year - A few balls have been lost in the river Tees over the season but we hope to see their passing improve with time!!!

The recreation field was the ideal place for bringing in multi sport sessions led by Durham County Council coaching staff. These sessions proved very successful and continued during the winter months in the village hall. I will return to this a little later.

Whilst on the subject of our young people I would like to thank Cllr Hannan for her tireless work on establishing the parish council's youth project - Gainford at the Hub. The council set aside funding at the start of the year to cover the costs associated with this project - these being the cost of the transport to the Hub at Barnard Castle on Friday evenings.

The council even took the unusual step of, for the first time taking a meeting on the road!! In February we held our meeting in the Hub at Barnard Castle and spoke directly to the youth workers that had been working with us and the young people. It was disappointing to hear the numbers of young people attending did not meet what we would have hoped, but it was still considered a success. It was especially pleasing to hear how the young people who did attend had flourished and were considered a credit to the village.

The council took the decision to stop funding Gainford at the Hub and to concentrate on its work in the village, funding the multi sport sessions so they could continue beyond this month, when Durham's money ran out. The council are now funding the coaching sessions and the associated costs when they move into the village hall in the winter. The young people of the parish remain a priority for this council

Funding/Grants/stuff

The council looks to support, where it can, projects, events and organisations from within the parish. We have established a Small Grant Fund and a Community Event Fund

This year the council has made a further grant of £2,000 to the village hall. As agreed the money is currently ring fenced for building maintenance and efficiency savings. The council is committed to offer support where it can in the future. It is clear that the support of the council 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.

We have supported the Gainford History Project at St Mary's Church with a £2,000 donation towards the interpretation boards now in use - we are very pleased to see this now up and running.

The parish council are also replacing the old floodlights at St Mary's with a new improved set

The council has made small grants available to the football team (for balls) and Gainford Cubs and Scouts for improvements to the heating system in the 'hut'. We are also assisting the group in looking to secure further funding.

A grant of £600 was made towards the cost of the Gainford Big Weekend - an event the village can be proud of

The council continues to support the bonfire event financially - covering the costs of the fireworks, the traffic management required on the night, first aiders and temporary toilet facilities. We also have been working with the bonfire group to improve ways to bring in more donations from the public attending the event - this year the bucket collection was a huge success. Our thanks goes to all those involved in this event year on year. You are a credit to this village.

We purchased a new notice board for Langton as the previous one finally collapsed!! We will also be looking to give the old red phone box a new lease of life shortly

We continue to look at more ways that we can work in partnership with Durham County - projects that would be a low priority for the county with reduced budgets can be brought forward with careful negotiation. This year we were asked to look at the placement of dropped kerbs to assist those with reduced mobility in the village. Agreement was reached to share the costs of installing an additional 5 dropped kerbs.

Parish Paths Partnership

The council continues to be involved in this initiative and despite a 40% drop

in the grant awarded to carry out the works we are still maintaining our network of paths and bridleways. We are lucky enough to be living in an exceptionally attractive area which sees tourists as well as local residents using the rights of way. The council views these as an asset and we want to ensure all residents and visitors can enjoy walking along well maintained paths.

I would like to thank our contractor Paul Ryman for carrying out the strimming and associated work on these paths. Paul also carry's out the unenviable task of picking up dog dirt from our village using our Street Vac machine (aka the Poover). While on the subject of dog fouling lets get this message out: this council supports the policy of being vigilant and identifying those who are practising anti-social behaviour by allowing their dogs to foul our pavements and recreation areas. We will ensure the necessary fines are imposed, as we believe it is unacceptable to all residents that our village is spoiled in this way. The council will also be undertaking an ongoing education and awareness campaign.

And more.....

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. We continue to look at ways to improve our floral displays (tubs/baskets). Disappointingly last summer we had two displays set on fire and some flowers were eaten by horses.....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. The council have secured a slot on the mobile speed matrix rota used by Durham County. We are lucky to have managed this and hopefully it will raise awareness of speed through the village.

We are beginning to see a problem with pavement parking or parking close to junctions, reducing visibility. This is something we will be focusing on this year. We would ask residents who park part on the pavement to leave enough room for pedestrians. For those who park full on the pavement - don't!!

We continue to work with the owners of St Peter's (Kebble Homes and Ruttle Plant) to bring a proposal forward to develop the site in a way that suits this village and its residents.

We realise our local businesses have suffered this past year with the closure of the A67 and it is good to note that the road will reopen shortly.

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 would like to thank all of the residents of our parish. It is an honour to work within such a pleasant, generally supportive 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