

## **Gainford and Langton Parish Council Annual Report 2017**

This year as chair has proved busy with the parish continuing to face a number of challenges and opportunities. We have stated for many years now that we wish to be a progressive and dynamic council and I like to think we are still achieving that aim. I would like to thank all Parish Councillors for their drive and enthusiasm throughout the year; it has been a pleasure working with this committed group of people who work hard for the people of Gainford and Langton.

The council has been involved in a number of initiatives during 2016/17. As it has been a busy year, with many projects and achievements, it is not reasonable to cover everything that has been undertaken, so I shall summarise some of the highlights.

### **Staying in touch**

Our Website continues to be a rich source of information for residents and visitors to both Gainford and Langton. This is in addition to the website the Parish Council has and the Facebook and Twitter accounts we run too.

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

We have also regularly kept everyone informed of events, developments and initiatives via our excellent parish magazine, hopefully providing more depth to our monthly meetings. My thanks go to Lisa Johnstone for never failing to miss a tight deadline in turning the contents of a busy meeting into a very readable account each month.

### **Village Hall**

Having been asked by parishioners for our views on what the actual relationship is and should be, between the PC and MVHRC, the PC realised it did not have that knowledge within its membership. This was of concern to us as we knew there was a Trust Deed that mapped it all out, but we did not have line of sight of it, or any detailed knowledge about it. This clearly had to be rectified so to that end we engaged the services of a firm of solicitors to locate all the appropriate documents, understand them and inform the PC of its role and responsibilities.

The Council has been and continues to work closely with the Village Hall committee to map all this out and consider any pragmatic adjustments, in light of modern times being quite different to 1964, when the Trust Deed was enacted. The PC is committed to continuing to offer support where it can, and, combined with the enthusiasm and substantial commitment the Village Hall team make, contribute towards providing excellent facilities for all age groups within our community.

## **Neighbourhood Plan**

This year has seen the PC really get to grips with developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the village. This key piece of work will guide development while adding strength to the protection of the village, long into the future. I am delighted that members of our PC have formed a NP Subcommittee and that under the stewardship of Linda Britton, substantial progress has been made namely the selection and appointment of a Planning consultant to support us with information gathering and legal aspects, as well as other activities planned and in the pipeline such as a detailed traffic survey. The coming year is going to be a busy year for the Neighbourhood Plan and the involvement and active support of the wider community is key to its success.

## **Local Maintenance**

It is with great frustration that it must again be reported that some of our village dog owners continue to use the village as a toilet for their dogs, with little or no thought for others, particularly our children and grandchildren. This continues to be of great concern to the PC, and we have maintained a level of activity of the Poover to try and limit the negative impact dog fouling has on our community, as well as using poster campaigns. I am pleased to be able to report a very recent development in the form of the Public Space Protection Order is about to be enacted, which our clerk Martin has worked on with DCC to include areas within our village within the new by-laws. Within this, the GAP playground is to have all dogs excluded and other areas like the Recreation field and Village Green will have the benefit of new legislation that will mean on-the-spot fines from local Authorised Persons (acting on behalf of DCC) can be issued for dog fouling.

We continue to work closely with DCC and their Parish Paths team. Despite tight funding, Martin has worked hard to maintain good relationships and continues to make sure our network of paths and bridleways are maintained. We have been encouraged by the positive feedback we have received for the work completed this year in providing a level, stable surface to the footpath around the Doctor's Surgery, to make the footpath safer for all and easier to clean up after dogs. This year has also seen us complete the work to have our illuminated village Christmas tree on the Lord Nelson roundabout, for which we held a switching on service and ceremony. This was hugely facilitated by the help of George Richardson and James Rawlinson in providing funding for the power supply and also with Martin's patience in dealing with the power supply company! I think everyone will agree this has been a very welcome addition to Gainford.

We have recently confirmed the village style of park bench we will use as our standard for all non-commemorative benches and have used this to have a bespoke bench made that has been commemorated and paid for by the

relatives. We are subsequently developing a maintenance programme for all our benches, which may also see one or two move to better locations. I would also like to thank Paul Ryman for all his hard work, enthusiasm and dedication in maintaining the village on behalf of the PC. We are very proud of our floral efforts again last year but I have to express dismay at the fact that one of our displays was stolen not once, but twice, at which point the decision was taken not to replant again to provide someone with a third free garden at the village's expense.

## **Sport in the Village**

The use of the recreation field continues with the football team going from strength to strength. It has been reported that many regard our football pitch as the best in the area, which really is some accolade indeed. I am also delighted to say that we continue to support the provision of a sport instructor which has been a resounding success with many of the village's young people, with the summer activities outdoors on the field and the winter activities transferring to the Village Hall. We hope we can continue to fund this in the coming year.

## **General Matters**

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

We continue to press 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 and concerns. The installation of the Speed Advisory Matrix to the eastern approach has encouraged some drivers to think about their speed, making the village a safer place, but we fully recognise more work is needed and continue to explore different ways of having a positive impact on the thoughtless drivers that put our residents at risk.

I am pleased to report that the hard work of the Fireworks committee once again resulted in a safe event providing a great evenings traditional celebration. The weather was on our side and the fireworks even managed to top the previous year's display. My thanks go to all those volunteers who worked hard (and in most cases, gave up their evening too) and made the event a great success. Special mention goes to Mark Charge and Anne Pratt who, year on year, work so hard to deliver a great display for the many people who attend the event.

## **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 again this year. We are fortunate to have such a highly qualified, experienced and hardworking clerk and we owe him many thanks.

I would also like to thank all of the councillors for the past year. We have had to deal with both usual and not so usual challenges and the support and “can do” attitude of all those present has again had a positive impact on the village and I have appreciated everyone’s help, support and dedication. As it has been an election year, it’s a time Councillors often opt for a change and this year has seen two long-standing Councillors step down from their duties. Both Clive Dennis and Andie MacKay have put in many years’ worth of service to our PC, and both have had significant spells as Chair. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to both Clive and Andie and wish them well for their respective futures.

Subsequently there are currently four vacancies on the PC and I would invite anyone who would like 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.

It is also important for me to recognise the support from people who are prepared to give the PC feedback – whether positive or negative – as it is all good information for us to use to help us improve the services and standards within the parish for us all to enjoy. I would like to encourage even more people to engage with us, as all feedback is welcomed, is treated with equal respect and is greatly valued.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the unsung heroes of our parish. It is truly gratifying to know there is a body of people within our community that is prepared to take time and effort to run all the organisations and groups our community greatly benefits from. At times, some of these people will find the going gets tough, or there is competition for their time, but they still soldier on. As a parish, we should value the lifeblood these people provide and do all we can to support them and even maybe join them and help make a greater contribution to village life. Part of the role of the PC Chair is the ability to be able to recognise individuals (which the PC as a whole is unable to) and from the many that make life in Gainford and Langton what it is, I would like to highlight two people that I think have given a lot, namely Anne Pratt for countless years support for the fireworks each year and Alistair Logan for all his work with the young people in the village, such as the football team and Scouting movement.

Simon Platten  
Chairman