

I have just completed my first year as chair of the parish council and am happy to report that I was re-elected at the annual parish council meeting earlier this month.

We said goodbye this year to Clive Dennis and welcomed Cllr's Coomer, Greenland and Bayles.

It has been an interesting year and has seen the parish council tackling some quite unexpected issues.

GDPR affects the work of parish councils and the council is indebted to the work of our clerk who has attended seminars and meetings to ensure that the council are well advanced in working towards compliance. Having attended some GDPR events myself I know it was close to mass hysteria at times but Martin's experience and common sense has helped steer our parish council along a sensible route.

The purchase of land at West View/Balmer Hill has been one of the year's highlights and our celebrations included the hiring of an ice cream van providing free ice creams for children (and some parents and grandparents!). We had a good turnout with Councillor Hannan and me enjoying the sunshine and ice cream on one of Gainford's green spaces.

Balmer Hill Green is safe for all to enjoy as the sale and Land Registry documentation for the land has now been completed and under section 15 of the Commons Act 2006 the PC as the land owner can now move forward to voluntarily register the area as village green. It can also be protected under our NP. Becoming classified as a village green enables the land to enjoy all the protection from development similarly to other village greens.

Throughout the year I have enjoyed working alongside Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan committee, Cllr Britton and members of the Neighbourhood Plan committee. The celebration event hosted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October in the village hall was a great success with attendance much higher than we had anticipated. The afternoon tea, gin and champagne tasting was a master stroke by Cllr Britton and made for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Since the celebration event we have been asked what is happening with the plan. Understandably all those fantastic ideas and opinions readily given in October needed to be assimilated and are helping form the basis of the information gathering platform of the plan.

Work continues. My hopes are that this document is adopted by the parish as a statutory binding plan for the continued sustainability of Gainford. The neighbourhood plan committee are in a unique position to be able to create a statutory document taking account of all of our views in order to protect what we love about our wonderful parish whilst ensuring it continues as a vibrant village with businesses, school, a post office, public transport, organisations, churches, the Parish News magazine, events, our beautiful and historic village hall, shops and a pub.

I feel it is hugely important to support our village infrastructure and the Parish Council is committed to doing so. We are doubly blessed: we live in a most attractive parish; and we benefit from the convenience of a range of local amenities. We are not a sleepy village. We are an active, living community.

Gainford Fun Day takes place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and the parish council are delighted to support this event. We are this year funding the climbing wall in order that children can enjoy this challenging but fun activity. The committee of the Neighbourhood Plan will be attending the Fun Day and we hope that everyone will take the opportunity to visit the stand. Find out more, ask questions, and get involved. In order for the plan to become a legal document it must represent all views.

It has been a pleasure throughout the year to work with some of Gainford and Langton's many other organisations and individuals. The Village Hall committee, Trees for Tees, Scouts, Toddlers our churches and litter picks organised by residents, are just a few we have worked with.

The Parish Council supported the school in their quest to hold a science week. It is an unfortunate fact that school funding does not allow teachers to do everything they would like to do in providing activities and events which often are the things a child remembers about his school life.

Being able to support the school and then being invited to attend a pop up planetarium in the school hall was... a unique experience. Crawling in stockinged feet along an inflatable tunnel in pitch-black darkness behind a similarly clad Mr Martin and class 2 was an absolute highlight. Supporting our school is one of my personal passions and one which the PC is committed to.

Throughout the year our recreation field has been used for organised and less formal sporting activities and this is one area of development the council will be working on. We are working towards increased use of the rec field for multi sports activities. We are researching providers and as of now checking insurance liability for providers. During a recent consultation there was support for the installation of outdoor gym equipment on the rec field and this is another area of development for the PC.

The Christmas light turn on saw a good turnout of residents and this is an event which the PC would like to develop. Providing residents with the opportunity to come together and celebrate is a one of the nicer things about being a member of the PC.

Communications between the PC and residents has seen sustained improvement with a variety of media being employed. An informal report following each meeting has been written and published in the Parish News every month. Our website holds all content: minutes, agendas, audits and so on. Our Facebook feed has been our primary social media platform however an instagram feed has been employed with great effect into the website for the neighbourhood plan using the # #lovegainfordandlangton.

In conclusion I would like to thank: my fellow councillors for their work throughout the year; the help they have given me in my first year as chair; and for caring enough about our village to be parish councillors.

I'd like to thank Martin our clerk who is a wealth of advice and ensures the council runs efficiently; and Paul Ryman who carries out lots of work maintaining our beautiful parish.