

Chairman's Annual Report 2021/2022

Healeyfield Parish Council has continued to work to meet the needs of the community by listening and responding to local issues, and has worked with other stakeholders to accomplish this despite the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic along with the ever changing restrictions has directly caused a reduction in council activities that we would have normally facilitated. Now that these are totally lifted, we are now on a path to 'get back to normal'! Zoom meetings of the council served their purpose to continuing but it is far better to be in-person!

The parish council has continued to try and keep Castleside and the surrounding area looking it's very best. Over the past year we have continued to cut the grass throughout Rowley, the verges close to the Cemetery Gates and also opposite Maudville. We have continued to provide flower tubs throughout the parish which have been planted throughout the all seasons.

The parish council has invested significantly in the repair, restoration and replacement of the number of benches situated throughout the parish. Phase one has been completed with phase two having just commenced.

The Parish Wood continues to be a wonderful asset to our local community. A local business uses the wood regularly for children's activities and parties. Over the past year, a number of trees were felled and/or cut into 4m lengths to ensure the health and safety of those visiting the wood. The parish council are currently exploring plans to make further access improvements to some access points in conjunction with Durham County Council.

Our service of remembrance in 2020, was very low key with very few attending due to national restrictions, so it was good to pay 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 organisations, 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 of Healeyfield led the service with a poem being read from a pupil of Castleside Primary School. Representatives from across 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 and was supplemented by Rev Phil Carter. A good crowd gathered on what was an exceptionally cold night.

Cllrs Judith Robson and Kris Spencer once again led the annual 'Big Clean Up' litter pick in conjunction with Durham County Council. Whilst the numbers attending were not as high as in previous years, there as still a lot of litter collected. Mr. Richard Holden MP also participated.

Plans are well underway to celebrate HM the Queens Platinum Jubilee at the beginning of June 2022. The lighting of a beacon, Fireworks display, civic service, 'Jubilee Jive' and a street party are all arranged and are hoped to be well attended by residents. Commemorative mugs are also ordered for each property in the parishes area. The Platinum Jubilee is a once in a lifetime event, the Queen will almost certainly be the last and therefore only British monarch ever to mark a Platinum Jubilee.

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 2021/2022 by 10.46%.

The council are extremely grateful to Ms Lisa Standish who has worked tirelessly throughout the year ensuring that the council achieved its objectives and all of her efforts are truly appreciated. Sadly, Ms Standish has recently tendered her resignation. The parish council are in the process of appointing a new person to the role. This has been advertised widely and a rigorous appointment process followed to ensure that the right person is appointed.

The council still has one vacancy for a parish councillor and continues to advertise this in each newsletter that is published as well as on our website. We had hoped to recruit to this position, but sadly no one has yet come forward.

Healeyfield Parish Council has achieved a great deal over the past year, despite the impact of COVID-19, and there are a number of things already planned for the future. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of such a wonderful team of councillors. Each one has worked hard to ensure they represent the residents and have certainly stepped up to the council's motto of 'striving to keep our community thriving'. I wish to thank all fellow councillors for their hard work and dedication over the past year and for their support in another year as chairman. I must also thank the Parish Clerk and Responsible Officer, Ms Lisa Standish. Lastly, my thanks 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 2021/2022.