

Neasham Parish council
CHAIR'S REPORT FOR 2015-2016

1. Community Governance review.

This year has been largely taken up with preparing and carrying out a Community Governance Review. The outcome of which has seen Neasham Parish almost trebled in size to incorporate the lower half of the former Low Dinsdale parish and all of Sockburn Parish. The end of March saw Neasham Parish Council ceasing to exist. After elections when we were returned unopposed, a new Parish Council has been formed and tonight is the first meeting of that Council. We lost one Councillor, John Day who resigned due to commitments, which meant he could not attend regularly and gained another Councillor, Tina Murray who we welcome tonight. We are now in a position to have an additional member and having put notices out we have one potential name to co-opt.

This year we adopted a system whereby each Councillor has a designated responsibility which spreads the workload amongst us.

We increased the precept again to build funding up in preparation for any further cuts by DBC to services such as grass cutting. However, despite the increase, villagers saw a reduction in their Council Tax as with the new amount of residents, the precept was divided between more households.

We record our thanks to our Ward Councillors, Lorraine and Joe for their assistance during the year with highway and footpath problems.

2. Poppies.

Neasham Parish Council bought two of the ceramic poppies from the Tower of London display along with two display cabinets to house them. After a talk on the history of Neasham during World War I, Cllr. John Weighell gave a brief history of the Roll of Honour memorial in the Reading Rooms and then introduced Sir Mark Wrightson who officially dedicated the poppies and memorial. Former Councillor Mike Townend has done a lot of research into the names on the Roll of Honour and produced some excellent posters and a small booklet. Many thanks to all who were involved.

3. Flood prevention.

During the high river on 5th Dec, our new flood defences were well tested and performed well. The level of water that we had would certainly have overtopped the old bridge. Once again on behalf of residents, our thanks to EA for all work and effort.

4. Police issues.

Due to cutbacks in manpower, we are not receiving as many speed checks as we would like in Neasham. Many of the speeders are residents or local drivers. We appeal to them to observe speed limits before a fatality occurs. We have a very successful Rural Watch, which is manned by volunteers to target night time theft, and issues such as poaching and trespass and our thanks go to the Co-ordinator and volunteers who spend hours in darkness on patrol. Crime continues to be low but we ask everyone to be vigilant and report anything suspicious on 101.

5. Village floral displays.

We did not enter Northumbria in Bloom this year due to the uncertainty of level of grass cutting by DBC. However, roadside tubs and flowerbeds were planted. Thanks to all who donated, planted, watered and tended those displays. One of our volunteers who did great work at this end of the village sadly passed away a couple of weeks ago. We record our thanks to the late Richard Rust.

6. Pumping station.

Work began in November to update the old noisy sewage pumping station and was completed early in the new year. We thank Northumbrian Water and their contractors for the sympathetic way the work was carried out. Despite having site cabins in place, they left the village almost unmarked, silent and as a bonus put our Christmas tree lights in place for us.

7. Bulb planting.

Cllr Pam Dunn and Paul along with help from Benjamin Riddle planted four sacks of daffodils and crocuses along riverside footpath edge. These were bought with the remaining money from donations of villagers and the collecting box in the Fox and Hounds. Kitty now empty so donations next year will be most welcome.

8. Planning.

Unlike our neighbouring villages, we are in a fortunate position as we are bounded by the Tees on one side and designated flood plains on the remainder which largely leaves infill developments the only possibility, we had a few applications during the year but nothing controversial.

We have again welcomed several new families to the village and it is good to see that they are taking an active part in village life with some taking advantage of the facilities provided by the Reading Room and becoming actively involved.

To close I wish to thank all Councillors and Ward Councillors for their help and support during the year and also to our Clerk, Bob for his services.

Thank you all

Cllr John Weighell