

# **WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting**

**April 2024 – March 2025**

The Parish Council has had a busy and productive 2024/2025 and continues to work to meet the needs of the community by listening and responding to local issues. The Parish Council has continued to work closely with the Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, Durham County Council, County Councillors, community groups and local organisations on matters which affect the parish area.

I would like to thank all Members of the Parish Council for their continued support during my year as Chair of the Parish Council. I would also like to thank former County Councillors Lucy Hovvels and Chris Varty for their support during the last year.

J Miller

Chair to Wheatley Hill Parish Council

The Parish Council has had an active and productive year. The annual report gives a small indication of some of the Parish Council's activities over the past year.

## **1. Precept**

The Council's budget for 2024/2025 was set at £133,062.

The Parish Councils budget is financed by a Precept which is part of the Council Tax that is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payment. The Parish Council is also reliant upon Central Government grant support. The grant called the Council Tax Support Scheme is paid direct to Durham County Council who then redistribute the grant to parish and town councils. The County Council is under no obligation to do this and since its introduction the grant the Parish receives has reduced each year. Wherever possible the Parish Council uses reserves to keep the precept as low as possible for residents.

For the financial year 2024/25 Wheatley Hill Parish Council received a Council Tax Support Scheme grant of £6,783. The previous year the grant had been £9,321.

The Parish Council required £133,062 for the 2024/2025 financial year. It used £5,598 of reserves to provide a precept of £120,681 which together with a grant of £6,783 gave a total of £127,464 that was requested from Durham County Council.

## **2. Finance**

The Council remains in a healthy financial position. The main areas of expenditure during 2024/25 included the Cemetery, youth provision, grounds maintenance and floral arrangements.

## **3. Cemetery**

The Cemetery continues to be a significant focus for the Council. The Cemetery is home to the Heritage Centre Building which houses a permanent exhibition of an East Durham Colliery Home as well as many artefacts and photographs which have been donated by local people, and friends and families now living away from the village. The Centre is staffed by a small team of dedicated volunteers and continues to thrive.

The Cemetery is home to the grave of miners' leader, Peter Lee which is the only listed monument in the East Durham area. Also located in the Cemetery is the Thomas Kenny VC memorial stone and "The Last Shift" a miner memorial sculpture by local artist Ray Lonsdale.

## **4. Allotments**

The Council owns and manages 29 allotments at Quilstyle Road, Wheatley Hill.

The Parish Council works closely with tenants, the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens to tackle issues such as fly tipping, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity at the site.

The Parish Council is committed to investing and improving the site and the on-going programme of improvements will continue.

## **5. Planning**

The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications submitted to Durham County Council. This allows the Parish Council the opportunity to comment, object or support any application submitted from within the parish area. During 2024/25 the Parish Council was consulted on 14 planning applications within the parish area.

## **6. Front Street**

The Parish Council continues to work with the Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, and Durham County Council to tackle problems on the Front Street and in the vicinity which includes anti-social behaviour, absentee landlords and empty and boarded up properties, criminal damage and crime.

## **7. Anti-Social Behaviour**

Anti-social behaviour is still an issue particularly around the Front Street area. The Parish Council will continue to work closely with the Police, Durham County Council, and the local Neighbourhood Wardens to tackle the problem.

## **8. The Greenhills Centre**

During the 2024/25 financial year the Parish Council financially assisted the Greenhills centre.

The Parish Council contributed £3,500 towards the summer school holiday activities. The Parish Council also donated a Christmas Tree to the centre.

## **9. Youth Project**

During 2024/25 the Parish Council provided £6,500 funding for Durham City Youth Project to deliver weekly youth sessions in Wheatley Hill. One session is for juniors, aged 8-11 years and an outreach session for seniors, aged 13-19 years.

Youth provision in the Parish area remains a priority for the Parish Council and for the foreseeable future the Parish Council will continue to fund the sessions.

## **10. Section 137 Donations**

During 2024/25 the Parish Council provided grants and donations, amounting to £1,138, to local groups and charitable organisations. Listed below are the groups and organisations who received financial assistance during 2024/25 in line with the budgeted allocation.

East Durham Communities Cancer Support Group	208.00
Wheatley Hill Disabled Club	200.00
Wheatley Hill Heritage Society	300.00
All Saints Church	100.00
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00
Wheatley Hill Banner Appeal	330.00

## **11. Remembrance Sunday**

The Parish Council erected over 100 lamppost poppies between All Saints Church and the Cemetery for the annual Remembrance Sunday service which was held on 10 November 2024 in Wheatley Hill Cemetery.

## **12. Dog Fouling**

As in previous years the Parish Council provided free Poop bags to all residents living in Wheatley Hill. To combat dog fouling and encourage responsible dog ownership it is proposed that the provision of free bags, for residents living in Wheatley Hill, will continue for the foreseeable future. Dog bags are available from the Heritage Centre, Wheatley House and the Greenhills Centre.

## **13. Winter Maintenance**

Since 2012 the Parish Council has had an agreement with Durham County Council to assist them with winter maintenance during severe winter weather.

This arrangement has worked well and during 2024 the Parish Council entered into an updated agreement. The Parish Council will continue to provide limited winter maintenance activity on the footpaths at Cemetery Road, Woodlands Avenue and Front Street and fill the salt bins.

For further details please visit our website [www.wheatleyhillparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.wheatleyhillparishcouncil.gov.uk)

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