



Haswell Parish Council

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: 2017/18**

As the first 12 months of our office comes to a close, as Chairman I believe that we as a council can be proud of what we have achieved for our parishioners since being elected as their representatives.

Many changes have occurred throughout our parish in the past year. Losing our parish clerk and relocating our office brought their own unique challenges. This would be difficult for even the most established councils, but to do it successfully within our first three months and ensure we fulfilled our legal and moral obligations as a council, are things that I feel this council should be proud of.

We have a huge gratitude of debt to three organisations within the villages. Haswell Parish Council has now established a strong relationship with St Paul's Church, Giant Steps Nursery and Haswell & District Mencap to create a partnership group that works closely to both set up events and programmes for the villages, share resources as well as evaluate where we can improve. This has seen free activities and food given to children & people from The Haswells throughout the school holidays in July, October and December 2017, and February and April 2018. There has been over 2400 engagements with these programmes and has seen our programmes become a real draw for people across East Durham and beyond – we even had a day trip from Weardale!

In July 2017, we organised what has been stated as the first Banner Parade throughout the Haswells, with a free bus taking those who wished to attend the Miners Gala too. It was a truly moving spectacle watching the parade pass through Haswell, onto the Pit and then through Haswell Plough. I'd like to extend my thanks once again John Pearson and the South Hetton Banner Group, Billy Middleton and the Wheatley Hill Banner Group, the Shotton Colliery Church Girls & Church Lads Brigade and the Haswell History Group for their supporting in making this a success.

In August, the inaugural The Haswells Carnival was held with over 900 people attending the event. The day was packed with events, competitions and games as well as inflatables and stalls from community groups from throughout the villages and beyond. The day was a huge success, and this year's event promises to be bigger and better with our 2018 Leek & Vegetable Open Show and our evening event adding to the carnival.

Christmas time 2017 was truly magical with the Christmas Giving Event at St Paul's Church so well attended. All the children who came along received free gifts and the grownups enjoyed mulled wine and mince pies. This was followed by our Christmas tree lights switch on in both Haswell & Haswell Plough, which saw so many people attending. The children

singing songs, meeting Father Christmas and seeing their faces when the lights went on were as equally moving as the comments from residents to the parish council who were genuinely moved to have their own Christmas tree for the first time.

The 'Locals who Lunch' scheme is now into its second month, and is linking people together to provide social opportunities but also create public interaction which is so vital in combating mental health problems for people who feel isolated. This project links nicely with our attempt to make The Haswells a 'Dementia Friendly Community' with local people and councillors trained to be 'dementia friends'. It is hoped that 'Locals who Lunch' will continue to go from strength to strength, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank St Paul's Church Parochial Church Council and Haswell Catering Services for their support through this programme but I'd like to make a special thank you to Elsie Cook for volunteering at each session to help transport and serve the group.

However, as well as all the fun and laughs, we have and will continue to fight against the issues causing problems for our parishioners. Issues such as dog fouling, fly tipping and speeding are real problems, just as much as the proposals at Tuthill Quarry and the removal of street lights on the C60 road from Haswell Plough to Haswell. We made a commitment in our election campaign to listen to the people of The Haswells and I reaffirm to the public that we will continue to do so in the best interests of the parish.

Under our first precept, we have made bold statements which we have committed to. We understand what is needed in our parish but it also shows that it is also possible to ensure money is truly invested into our communities. We have reduced the public's contribution to our part of their council tax by nearly 7%, whilst maintaining the budget for things like sewage, street lighting and maintenance. We have increased the number of community engagement activities and invested more money in things such as public seating and floral displays. Finally, we are putting money into new things such as notice boards, events such as our scarecrow festival and fruit and vegetable show as well as our plan to employ an apprentice in September 2018 – these are all things we committed to before we were elected and I believe show that we understand what we are doing and have listened to what people want.

There have been lots of successes for Haswell Parish Council; however, a huge thank you must go to two people. Firstly, to our grounds man, Paul Levitt, who has continued with his exemplary high standards during what could have been a difficult transitional period for him when the council members changed. We continue to receive many compliments from parishioners and I'm sure I speak for all the council when I say he is a real asset to the villages and the people of The Haswells. Thank you, Paul.

Secondly, I would like to thank our parish clerk Kay Tweddle for her hard work and focus over the past 5 months. Kay joined us when the lay of the land was not as green as we would all have liked. However, she has steadied the ship and not only allowed the council to breathe easier but also allowed me as a chair to focus on the tasks that I needed to. We are very fortunate to have someone as professional and as caring as Kay and we as a parish are very lucky. Thank you, Kay.

I would also like to thank each of the eight members of Haswell Parish Council for giving me the opportunity to be chair for the past twelve months. To Councillors Joanne Cook, Billy Ramsay, George Dunstone, Hayley Milburn, Elaine Major, Kerry Welch and Sandra Hartley – You are all people who care deeply about your community and the people within it, and I am lucky to be part of such a group. Thank you.

I would also like to say a special thank you to our vice chair Cllr Olwen Gray who has been, and I know will continue to be, the same as she always has been – dedicated and determined to see the job through and to stand up for the people of The Haswells. Thank you as always, Olwen.

Thank you also must go to PC Dean Wilson, PCSO Dave Edison, our County Councillors Ivan Cochrane & Eunice Huntington, as well as Cllr Peter Brookes for his attendance in the first few months following the elections.

To summarise, our first full year of office has had many trials and tribulations but we have grown stronger as a council. I believe Haswell Parish Council is about to begin it's most exciting time in recent history with a forward thinking, outgoing and responsive group of members. But this comes because of the spirit of The Haswells, which in turn comes from you, the people who make it what it is. I implore you all to keep fighting for your community, to be part of the place that you all love and to keep feeding us as your parish council with the energy to make the place you call home the best it can be. To everyone in The Haswells, on behalf of the staff and the members of Haswell Parish Council, I thank you all for your support.

**CHRIS HOOD**

CHAIRMAN

HASWELL PARISH COUNCIL