

Stainton & Thornton Parish Council

The Annual Report of the Chair for 2010/2011

Since last year's Annual meeting of the Council, the Parish Council has held 6 normal business meetings and there was a Parish Assembly in March (shared as usual with the Community Council). The villages achieved the highest ever award of Silver Gilt in the Northumbria in Bloom competition. Also Kell Gate Green and Stainton Quarry maintained a Green Pennant and a Silver Gilt award as in previous years. (There was no Calor Village of the Year competition in 2010/11.) Attendance of Parish Councillors at Council meetings averaged 82% although there was only a bare quorum of three at the December meeting. Major progress was made during the year to achieve 'Quality Parish Council' status thanks to the work of our Clerk supported by P/Cllr Alan Conroy. Although there was a delay because the goalposts changed at one stage, a final assessment for Quality status is soon to be arranged. The Parish Council website continues as an offshoot from the Middlesbrough Council website and is regularly updated by P/Cllr J Holmes.

During the year, there have been a number of changes which affect local residents: - Unfortunately, Stainton Post Office closed due to the retirement of the Sub Postmaster. Attempts by the Post Office and the Parish Council to provide a limited service elsewhere failed because the Post Office would only offer payment for facilities on a per transaction basis. Then, in December, the Parish Council was first notified of a planning application for 110 houses on land at Rose Cottage Farm. This land is outside the villages 'Limit to Development' and designated to remain in agricultural use in the Middlesbrough Local Development Framework. (This prompted unanimous opposition from residents at a well attended Community Council meeting in January.)

Changes for the Parish Council itself during the year included the evolution of the Quarry Management Group into a new independent organisation called 'The Friends of Stainton & Thornton Green Spaces'. This involved transfer of the management/planning responsibility for the public open spaces to the Borough Council's countryside team. The transition has gone smoothly. The Parish Council continues to provide insurance cover for Kell Gate Green, to pay for the water rates in the neighbouring field and pay for meetings of The Friends. However, the independent Friends organisation cannot reclaim any VAT for purchases but it has been successful in getting a large grant. During the year, the Parish Council also confirmed the adoption of revised Standing Orders in August. These were based on a new model from NALC.

Services provided by the Parish Council

In June last year, the Council welcomed Mrs Angela Cooper as the new Editor for the Village Newsletter and Mr & Mrs Eric Ellis as the new distributors to the deliverers. The quarterly issues have a new format. The print run has been reduced as a cost saving and cheaper printing options are now being explored.

As usual, the Council funded the purchase of both winter and summer flowering plants for the various displays around the villages. An excellent 'Portfolio' for the Northumbria in Bloom judging was again produced by Mrs Revett and Mrs Burton.

As in previous years, the Parish Council contributed to the Village Gala by funding the Portaloo.

This year, the Council bought new cables and many new bulbs for the Christmas Lights which were 'Switched On' by P/Cllr Brian Chapman. The Borough Council also charged a fee of £400 for erecting and dismantling the lights. Unfortunately, some of the bulbs had to remain unlit to avoid overloading the transformer. Purchasing LED bulbs is being considered to overcome this problem before Christmas 2011.

More recently, the Council has provided £100 towards the cost of the Royal Wedding Celebration Party and purchased an oak tree planted in the Quarry with a plaque to commemorate the Royal Wedding.

The Council has also funded the repair of the perspex in the Thornton notice board, the oiling etc of the seat in Meldyke Place and continues to provide raffle books to village organisations because it is cheaper to buy these in bulk and reclaim the tax.

On numerous occasions during the year, the Parish Council requested maintenance of the potholes that developed in Thornton Rd, Maltby Rd, Seamer Rd and Strait Lane. The severe winter made these much worse and only patching has been carried out to date. A Borough Council maintenance programme for resurfacing these roads has slipped into this next financial year. Drains have been improved in Thornton Rd and Northumbrian Water stopped a water leak below the churchyard on Thornton Rd. Flooding is much reduced at the corner on Maltby Rd.

Meldyke Lane parking problems and the damage to 'The Green' by wide vehicles has been discussed many times but requests for meetings and suggestions put to Middlesbrough Council for changes to improve the situation have not received any support.

The Parish Council noted that the 'Environment Grant' to the Community Council had paid for two Dog Litter Bins, the refurbishing of the Village Nameplate stone supports and a new Notice Board in High Rifts.

On Planning Applications considered during the year, the Parish Council only made two objections. One was to a change to commercial use for the large agricultural building down the lane behind the Sporting Lodge and this was also rejected by MBC. The second was the application for 110 houses on land at Rose Cottage Farm. Worthy of note were no objections to a new bungalow in the grounds of Victoria House, to the conversion of a barn to a dwelling at Upper Farm nor to a proposed new Police HQ off Stainton Way (once the Helipad was removed). The Parish Council is aware of residents concerns about the construction work about to start for 22 houses on the site of the previous Riversley House.

Middlesbrough Council have not responded to the request to consider adding the cottages in Meldyke lane to the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. The expected consultation period about 'restricted development rights' in the Stainton & Thornton Conservation Area has not happened yet. Also, the expected Masterplan and Development Briefs for mixed development on the Hemlington Grange (hospital) site have not yet been issued.

The Parish Assembly in March, shared with the Community Council, was well attended and the presentation on 'Telecare' was of interest to many.

Parish Council Costs and the Election

Because of the increasing costs of running the Parish Council, the charges for erecting the Christmas Lights with the future need for new LED bulbs and the rising costs of the Newsletter, it was decided to increase the Precept again by another £500.00 to £6,000.00.

The Election this May was uncontested because only six nominations were submitted for the seven places on the Council. This has avoided considerable expense and will help to increase the very depleted Council's financial reserve. At the April meeting, a tribute was paid to retiring P/Cllr Brian Chapman for his long service on the Council and for the work he has done for the Community for many years.

Thanks for Support

I would like to thank the other Council members and the Clerk for their support and hard work during the year. The Parish Council is also grateful to the volunteers who produce, distribute and deliver the Village Newsletters and to all the other volunteers who plant, weed, water and photograph the floral displays, and those who join the Litter Picks. The support of all these volunteers contributes a great deal to the good quality of our lives in the Stainton & Thornton parish community.

B Maelor Williams

Maelor Williams,
Chair of the Parish Council 2010/11