

Make-up of the Council

There were no elections during the year and no resignations and consequently the following served on the Council for a full year. Hartley Ward – Barbara Burt, Karen Collier and Susan Dungworth. Seghill with Seaton Delaval Ward – Simon Hartland, Daniel Nesbitt and Stephen Stanners. Holywell Ward – Les Bowman, Eva Coulson and Ann Stanners.

Neighbourhood Partnership with Northumberland County Council

The work of the partnership is now firmly embedded within the workings of the Council. Working relationships between NCC and Seaton Valley are very good, and the standard of work provided is well regarded by most residents. Grass cutting is seen as particularly good and a major programme of edge cutting took place in the winter months.

The Council entered into a new five year Neighbourhood Partnership with the County Council at the end of March – the new contract will therefore run until March 2024.

Floral Bedding

2018/19 was the third year of the current floral planting contract which Northumberland County Council delivers on behalf of the Council. The Council is pleased with the County Council's performance in this area of the Council's work was particularly pleased with the quality of spring bedding came into bloom in February/March after a particularly dry winter. The Floral planting contract is now in its final year and work has already started to update the contract documents for a new tender exercise later in the year.



Residents will have noticed an increased number of Railing Planters in use throughout the Valley in 2018/19. The planters were purchased via funding allocated in the Council's 2018/19 budget process and have proved to be a popular addition to our floral planting displays.

Promoting Seaton Valley

The Council's quarterly magazine, Futures, goes from strength to strength and continues to be well received by residents and is proving to be an excellent way of communicating with the Valley's community.

The Council continues to attend community events throughout the year and actively promotes the Seaton Valley brand, wherever possible and appropriate. Additionally, we held our third Photography Competition in April last year to encourage residents to take 'shots' of the Valley. This year's competition (April 2019) saw the numbers of entries go down slightly, however we hope to increase participation again when we hold next year's competition.

Our user friendly and modern website continues to receive positive feedback as efforts are made to keep it both current and relevant. The Council's Engagement and Development Officer has made giant strides in improving the Council's social media engagement with Facebook posts and Twitter feeds being made on a regular basis where possible.

Play Parks

The Council's play parks were inspected and maintained on a regular basis with repairs being carried out as and when required. Underused equipment at our New Harley Junior Play Area was removed and replaced with some new equipment (large climbing cubes and multi spinner carousel) which has found a great deal of favour with New Hartley youngsters.

Northumbria in Bloom

The Council continued to work with the Valley's community groups to support the Northumbria in Bloom initiative. Although it only has a small budget to help with purchasing bulbs, plants, tubs etc. it coordinates the activities of the various village groups and helps to share best practice. Once again there were a number of notable achievements last year and the groups are working hard again in the current year to improve the appearance of our villages.

Gardening Competition

The Council held its fourth annual gardening competition at the end of last summer and was once again delighted with the number of entries received. We expect the competition to get tougher each year as it becomes more well-known, and anticipate the number of entries to increase year on year too.

Christmas Events

One of the highlights of the Council's year is the Christmas events held in each of its villages at the end of November. The events are always well attended and really do seem to signal the introduction of the Christmas period. We continue to run our Christmas Lights Design competition at each of our first schools and provide entertainment and refreshments at the switch on events. Due to circumstances out of our control we had to move the location of two of our Christmas Trees last year (Seghill and New Hartley), however the new locations appeared to enhance the events and add to the enjoyment of residents.

Allotments

The Council ring fences the income it collects from allotment rents to spend on allotment repairs and improvements. During 2018/19 we again carried out quite a bit of perimeter fencing work at a number of sites and installed new gates at our Seaton Terrace sites. We also improved paths and roads in a number of sites.

We have successfully re-let a number of vacant plots at our new Seaton Terrace sites and although we still have a dozen or so plots available in the Valley we are pleased with how occupancy rates have increased in recent years.

Bus Shelters

We identified two sites (Tillmouth Avenue and New Hartley shops) for new bus shelters to be installed in 2018/19; however the installation of these shelters was delayed and are now likely to be installed in the first part of the current year. All of our shelters are now classed as fair or good and we are now looking to install one or two additional shelters in new locations during 2019.

Disappointingly; acts of vandalism targeted at our bus shelters increased in 2018/19 with ten shelters having to be repaired as a result of such acts.

2019/20 Budget

The Council began work on drawing up its 2019/20 Budget in October 2019 by re-establishing its Budget Review Working Group. The working group reviewed the performance of Councils 2017/18 estimates and critically analysed the outputs achieved from each budget head. The result of this exercise was used as the starting point for the 2019/20 budget; following which additional savings and new areas of expenditure were considered. The process proved to be successful and helped the Council to restrict the increase in Seaton Valley's element of the Council Tax to 2.0%.

Dog Fouling

Dog fouling issues continue to be the biggest area of concern identified by residents, and whilst realising that we can't

eradicate the problem completely, we have taken steps to actively address the matter.

In addition to the many anti dog fouling posters displayed throughout the Valley we continue to use our own employees to supplement the work of the County Council Environmental Enforcement Team. Additionally; in partnership with the County Council we funded a part time Enforcement Officer post to increase the resources we dedicate to reducing dog fouling within Seaton Valley. This post came into operation on 1 October 2018 and has already proved successful.

We think our efforts are having some affect, as the issue is becoming much more recognised and generally seen as being an anti-social act. We continue to highlight the problem and push for more penalty notices for offenders.

Leisure Activities

The Council continued to fund services from Active Northumberland to help provide leisure activities within our villages for residents throughout the Valley. Activities provided include; just jhoom; dancercise; young @ heart; street funk dance, tot shots, football and soft archery.



This funding also helps to finance Active Northumberland's support to village events held in the Valley.

Youth Service

The Council's contribution to this service enables the County Council's Youth Service to deliver youth clubs for Seaton Delaval and Seghill and provides staffing to other youth initiatives in Seaton Valley. In addition to youth club provision it enables a Healthy Youth Engagement Worker to be employed to help develop and run ad hoc projects for young people across the Valley.

Public Toilets

As part of the County Council's budget cuts in 2015/16 it announced that it was going to close West Terrace toilets completely and close Seaton Delaval toilets over the winter months. In the face of strong public pressure to keep the

toilets open, Seaton Valley Council was able to provide some funding to avoid these eventualities. The Council has now embedded this support into its base budget and has agreed to provide funds to NCC to enable it to keep both of these public toilets open all year round.

New Hartley Post Office

In mid-June 2016 the Council was made aware that the Postmaster at New Hartley Post Office was considering whether or not to resign his position with Post Office Plc. The Council arranged meetings with the Postmaster, the Post Office Plc and residents to discuss the future of the Post Office in New Hartley and agreed a way forward whereby the Postmaster would continue to run the Post Office until such time as the Council and residents could put together a plan to run the Post Office under a community ownership model.

A new company, New Hartley Community Services Limited has now been established to take over the running of the Post Office and to run a community café from the same premises. We are in the process of completing the acquisition process and have secured grants to fund necessary improvement works. We expect all of the contractual arrangements to be completed by early June 2019 and hope that the venture is welcomed and supported by New Hartley residents.

Food Parcel Distribution Centre

The Council is particularly pleased with this new initiative agreed as part of its 2018/19 budget proposals. In essence the Council, in partnership with Blyth Food Bank, is providing a Food Parcel Distribution Centre in Seaton Delaval so that qualifying Seaton Valley residents can collect their food parcels from a more convenient location. Previously such residents would have had to travel to Blyth or Cramlington to collect their parcels. In addition the Council is partnering up with local businesses and community organisations to provide Food Bank donation points and is arranging to deliver donations to the Blyth Food Bank on a weekly basis.

In the first year of the service we were able to help facilitate the delivery/collection of one hundred and twenty food parcels which undoubtedly helped to support some of the more disadvantaged families in the Valley.

Additional Vehicle Activated Speed Signs

Given the popularity and success of last years' initiative the Council provided additional funding in 2018/19 to acquire a further five Vehicle Activated Speed Signs. The additional signs were delivered in the early summer of 2018 and have helped to further reduce instances of speeding in the Valley and as a result make our roads safer for residents. We now have a total of nine portable vehicle activated signs for use in the Valley.

Beacon of Light

Over three hundred residents and visitors joined us on the headland in Seaton Sluice on Remembrance Sunday night for the lighting of the 'Beacon of Light'. We were also joined by Local MP Mr Ronnie Campbell and Cllr. Ian Hutchinson the Deputy Civic Head of Northumberland County Council.



The beacon was commissioned and installed by Seaton Valley Council as part of the Battle's Over commemoration. The Beacons of Light were lit in tribute to signify the light of peace that emerged from the darkness of four years of war.

The Beacon has already become a distinguishing feature of the Seaton Sluice headland.

And something to look out for in 2019/20

The Council expects a new play park to be installed at Hastings Gardens, New Hartley by the middle of June and has already completed work to clear the area. As well as new play equipment the area will benefit from the installation of raised flower beds to make it a more pleasant environment for parents as well as children.

And finally, as mentioned above The Council hopes to be able to install one or two bus shelters at new locations during the current year. The new shelters will be located at sites where it is clear that the bus stops are well used so that the shelters benefit as many bus users as possible.



Seaton Valley Council
A Community Council

Where Does Our Money Come From?

Approximately 92% of the Council's total income of £592,930 in 2018/19 came from its annual precept which it served on Northumberland County Council. The Council's precept was £548,260 which is collected via residents Council Tax bills. Seaton Valley Community Councils Band D equivalent Council Tax for 2018/19 was £116.40, which equated to approximately £2.24 per week.

The Council received external support of £4,700 towards the cost of the play park improvements at the New Hartley Junior Play Area via Cllr Dungworth's Northumberland

County Council's Members Small Scheme budget.

Additionally, the Council collects rent on both the two flats it owns above its offices and on the ten allotment sites it manages throughout the 'Valley'. In total this income amounted to £27,434 in 2018/19.

Miscellaneous income amounted to £4,521 and the Council processed internal recharges to services of £8,018 giving total income for the year of £592,933.

Where Do We Spend Our Money?

THE FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2018/19 the Council spent £556,458 on a range of services, salaries and running costs. These costs are summarised in the Pie Chart shown below.



Total Expenditure: £556,458

Should you require any further information relating to the Income and Expenditure of the Council then please contact the Clerk, Simon Potts via telephone on 0191 2379870 or via email at clerk@seatonvalleycommunitycouncil.gov.uk