

2016 / 2017

ANNUAL REPORT

A summary of our year is outlined below:

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 whilst some problems with weed control were experienced during the summer months of 2016.

The number of new litter bins and the need for replacement bins continues to be reviewed and is informed by residents and partners views. A number of requests were received for bins in new locations, and these were accommodated wherever possible within the resources available.

Floral Bedding

2016/17 was the first year of a new three year contract won by the County Council to provide the Council's Floral Planting arrangements. The Council was pleased with the County Council's performance in this area of the Council's work and is particularly pleased with the quality of spring bedding that has come into bloom in recent weeks.

Promoting Seaton Valley

The Council continues to actively promote the Valley. A variety of posters and notice boards are now in place at many of our bus stops in each of our five villages, highlighting aspects of Seaton Valley life and some of its locations. The new Gateway signs are also now in situ and have received favourable comments from both residents and neighbouring authorities.

We held our first Photography Competition in April last year to encourage residents to take 'shots' of the Valley to promote 'sense of place' which had the added bonus of increasing our library of images of Seaton Valley.

Play Parks

After completing a major consultation exercise with Seghill residents at the beginning of 2016 the Council put a plan in place to upgrade play facilities in the village. The first part of the plan involved upgrading the existing Crescent play area and this was completed in July 2016 with the help of a grant from Awards for All. The second element of the plan is to install a new park at Deneside to replace the existing park that isn't well used and is in poor condition. These plans are well advanced and a successful S106 Housing Developer Fund Grant Application will help to fund the

project which the Council hopes to deliver by the end of July 2017. The third and final element of the Seghill Play Park Plan is to install play facilities at the Welfare Site. Designs are currently being drawn up for this project and an autumn installation date has been targeted.



In addition the Council also completed a major upgrade of its Mitford Road play park in Seaton Delaval. The old equipment was completely removed and replaced with brand new facilities and a separate football compound was also installed.

Northumbria in Bloom

The Council continues to work with the Valley's resident groups to support the Northumbria in Bloom initiative. There were a number of notable achievements last year and the groups are now working hard to improve on last years' performance.

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.

Allotments

The Council ring fences the income it collects from allotment rents to spend on allotment repairs and improvements. During 2016/17 we carried out quite a bit of perimeter fencing work at a number of sites and installed new gates at Seaton Terrace to help separate that large site into three smaller self-contained sites.

We have successfully re let a number of vacant plots at our new Victoria Road site (formerly part of Seaton Terrace) and are now nearing 100% occupancy.

Bus Shelters

We continued to press ahead with our replacement programme and successfully replaced three shelters in 2016/17 which means

that we now only have a further three shelters left that that we have classed as in need of early replacement.

Dog Fouling

Dog fouling issues continue to be single most popular 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.

We think our efforts are starting to have some affect as the issue is becoming much more recognised and generally seen as being an anti-social act. We will continue to highlight the problem and push for more penalty notices for repeat 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; zumba gold; multi- sport; street funk dance, Tot Shots and soft archery.

Youth Service

The Council's contribution to this service enables the County Council's Youth Service to deliver a youth club for Seghill and provides staffing to other youth clubs 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.

Art Stop

Seaton Valley Community Partnership was successful in securing £15,000 towards the costs of an 'Art Stop' project from Arts Council England. This project was collaboration between the partnership, Seaton Valley Community Council and Northumberland Youth Service.



The project was designed to be a reflection of Seaton Valley's story and history, and sought to allow people from the area an opportunity to work with professional arts practitioners to create sound and visual art to be enjoyed by the whole community.

Indoor Bowling

In response to our Village Planning exercise the Council agreed to

fund some indoor bowling equipment and large mats to be located at New Hartley Memorial Hall. The equipment was installed in May 2016 and has proved to be quite popular with the bowling fraternity.

Support for Retail Outlets

Again in response to concerns raised in the Village Planning exercise the Council commissioned some work to help improve the appearance of the retail offer on Seaton Delaval 'high street'. We funded a number of 'shop improvement works' which we hope have made a positive impact on the high street. Further works are expected to be completed in the current financial year.

Neighbourhood Plan

Following receipt of its designation in September 2015 the Council took steps to hold a number of consultation events to publicise the plans development in the early months of 2016. Whilst the events themselves were fairly well attended we struggled to sign volunteers up from each village to take the plan forward and eventually we took the decision to move ahead with developing the New Hartley chapter on its own, in the hope that this would act as a catalyst for other villages in the Valley to get more actively involved too.

No sooner had we started on this activity when we discovered that Barratt Homes had submitted an appeal against the County Council's decision to refuse its planning application and that the Secretary of State had determined that a Public Enquiry should be held to hear the appeal .

On hearing this news the Council took the decision to suspend the development of its Neighbourhood Plan pending the outcome of the Public Enquiry. The Council and residents from New Hartley are now working together to submit written evidence to the Public Enquiry which is scheduled to begin on 13th June 2017.

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.

The Council is grateful to the Postmaster for bearing with us in this matter and is hopeful of successfully resolving the future of New Hartley Post Office during the current financial year.

WHERE DOES OUR MONEY COME FROM?

Approximately 83% of the Council's total income of £615,415 in 2016/17 came from its annual precept which it served on Northumberland County Council. The Council's precept was £509,080 which is collected via residents Council Tax bills. Seaton Valley Community Councils Band D equivalent Council Tax for 2016/17 was £112.43, which equated to approximately £2.16 per week.

The Council also received the following amounts from external sources during 2016/17:

> Mitford Road, Play Park - S106 Contribution - £33,642

>The Crescent, Play Park – Awards for All Contribution - £9,460

> Bellway Homes – Commuted Sum - £11,000

> NCC Members Support – Litter Bins - £8,907

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 £25,634 in 2016/17.

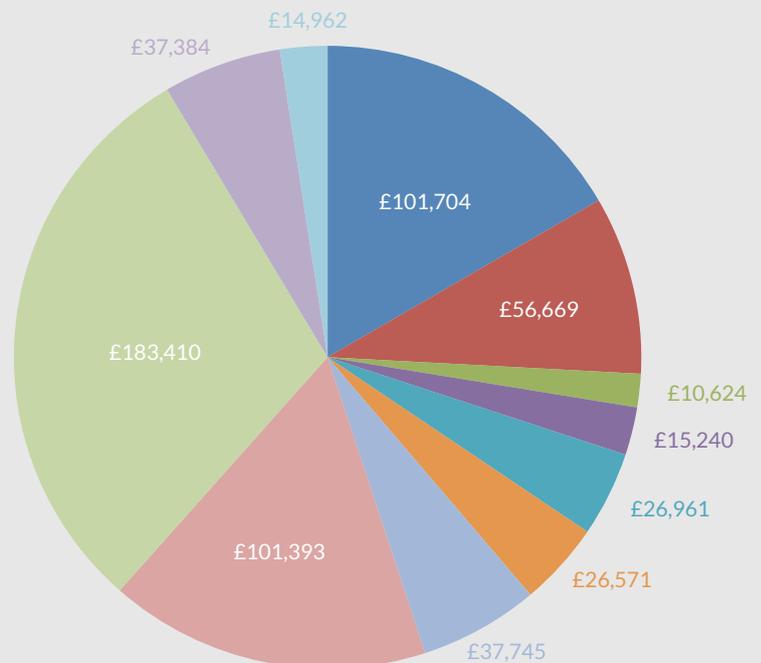
Miscellaneous income amounted to £5,737 and the Council utilised a sum of £11,955 from its retained Neighbourhood Partnership Surpluses.

WHERE DO WE SPEND OUR MONEY?

THE FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2016/17 the Council spent £585,829 on a range of services, salaries and running costs. These costs are summarised in the Pie Chart below.

Staffing	£101,704
Office and Administration Costs	£56,669
Allotments	£10,624
Christmas Lighting	£15,240
Bus Shelters	£26,961
Floral Planting	£26,571
Youth Services	£37,745
Playgrounds	£101,393
Neighbourhood Partnership	£183,410
Community Engagement	£37,384
Other Services	£14,962



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