

Chairman's Report 2016

Once again, as Chairman of the Parish Council, it is my pleasure to record the work done by the Council and its Clerk over the past year.

The Council has now prepared its first Community Plan for the Parish. This is based primarily on the very high response from the household survey conducted last year. Included within it are the measures that the Parish Council intends to take together with recommendations for actions by local authorities and other spending bodies. The Council will use its influence to maintain and to try to increase public resources in the Parish.

As demonstrated by local opinion, the quality of the environment in which we live remains very important. The Parish Lengthsman continues to be employed to tidy and to improve roadside verges and footpaths. Pressure is regularly exerted on both Highways England (for the A590) and the County Highways Department to maintain and repair roads and drains in the Parish. Less successfully, a planting scheme for the Newby Bridge roundabout is proving to be problematic because of the safety and visibility criteria of Highways England. The Council will continue to work with the Lakeside Hotel and its consultant Richard Lucas to try to get this implemented.

Planning applications submitted to the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) remain a large part of the Council's work each year. The Council has a duty to scrutinise and comment on all applications within the Parish and to try to strike a balance between the interests of the applicant and the wider community view. As in previous years, a couple of particularly contentious applications have appeared before the Council this year, one of the most notable being that concerning redevelopment of Fell Foot Park. Following extensive public consultation, and on behalf of neighbouring residents most affected, the Council decided to object to the proposals. The LDNPA rejected the Council's opinion and granted the National Trust's application. The Council will be working as closely as it can with the Trust in order to mitigate the effect of the redevelopment on local people. Another proposal follows a Planning Inspector's refusal of Predator Experience's appeal in respect of enforcement action against its unauthorised cheetah enclosure in Ayside. The company has now put in an application for a live/work unit on site. The Council held a special public meeting to which the applicants and Parishioners were invited in order to inform the Council's view. As a result, the Council decided to object to the proposals, principally on their adverse effect on the landscape. The LDNPA is due to take its decision in the very near future.

In order to fund the costs of preparing and printing the Community Plan, the 2016/17 precept has had to be increased. There are also extra costs associated with the statutory requirement for the Council to set up and operate a website from April. The Council is very conscious of the need to spend public money responsibly and tries to keep its costs to a minimum. This then allows for small awards and donations, known as s.137 grants, to be made to local charities and other organisations.

The Council continues to send a representative to the Local Area Partnership meetings to put its case for the Parish and to receive reports of the work of neighbouring parish councils.

The two local Church magazines receive regular reports of Council business. County and District Councillor Sue Sanderson and reports from the police inform Council meetings, for which I offer them my thanks.

The vicar, a local resident, two Councillors and the Clerk continue to administer the business of the Staveley United Charities Trust. Set up originally for the provision of small grants to Parishioners in financial hardship and to support apprenticeships, Trustees recently widened the scope of awards to include educational requests. Three Christmas gifts and three grants to students have been made this year.

I thank my fellow Parish Councillors, Dot Crabtree, John Addison, Margaret Lealman-Howden and Arnold Gorse for their support and hard work. Finally, I offer a special thanks to Clerk Sarah Shires for her organised management of Council business and for her major role in producing the Community Plan.