

Stainton & Thornton Parish Council

The Annual Report of the Chair for 2009/2010

Since the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2009, the Parish Council has held 6 normal meetings not including the Parish Assembly (shared with the Community Council in March 2010). Highlights were maintaining the Green Pennant for Kell Gate Green and Stainton Quarry, getting a Silver Gilt Award for Kell Gate Green & Stainton Quarry and a Silver Award for the two villages for a second year in the Northumbria in Bloom competition and winning 3 x £100 in three of the four categories in the Calor Village of the Year competition. Attendance of Parish Councillors at Council meetings remained high at 77%. During the year, steady progress was made to achieve 'Quality Parish Council' status eventually and the Parish Council adopted a Complaints Procedure and a Grants Policy from models. A significant saving was made when the Council changed its insurance company to Came & Co which is part of Aviva. The Parish Council website continues as an offshoot from the Middlesbrough Council website and is regularly updated by P/Cllr J Holmes.

The recession has further delayed a major change expected to the village when development occurs on the Riversley House site. A planning application for an extra dwelling may be causing further delay. During the year, Middlesbrough Council's new Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest includes the Methodist Chapel, the Board School building and a cottage on Hemlington Road. 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.

Because of the increasing costs of running the Parish Council and a proposal to purchase new Christmas Lights for 2010, it was decided in December to increase the Precept to £5500.00 for the next financial year.

Expenditure by the Parish Council

Apart from administration expenses, there were the usual 'regular annual expenses' such as paying for printing the quarterly Village Newsletters which are delivered free to every household, purchasing plants for the winter and summer floral displays in the beds, troughs and planters all around the villages and paying for erecting and dismantling the Christmas Lights. In November, the immediate past President of the Women's Institute was asked to 'Switch On' the Christmas Lights.) Last year, there was also the cost of creating a feature at the bollards between Meldyke Lane and Quarry Drive where, instead of grass that never got cut, a membrane covered with chippings was installed and daffodil bulbs and other plants planted to grow through the membrane. Despite offering a larger contribution towards the Village Gala, the Parish Council was only called upon to pay for the hire of the Portaloo. A second urn was provided by the seat in Meldyke Place. The Parish Council also continued to provide raffle books for all the village organisations because it is cheaper to buy these in bulk and reclaim the tax. The Litter pickers purchased the previous year were well used on the Saturdays before the Spring and the Summer judging of the Northumbria in Bloom competition. During the year, the Parish Council adopted the new Memorial seat at the entrance to High Rifts from Strait Lane.

Identifying Community Needs

The Parish Council helps to identify priorities for road and pavement repairs. Middlesbrough Council did not refurbish or resurface any roads or pavements last year but the large number of potholes that appeared after the cold winter weather were reported and prioritised for repair. Double Yellow lines were painted on part of Hemlington Road stretching both ways from the church gate. There is still no decision yet to reduce the speed limit to 50 mph on Low Lane.

The Parish Council also continues to express community objections to planning applications. During the year, objections were made to an application for a balcony and a bay window on an agricultural store behind Cedar Drive and for a 'Change of Use' of a so-called agricultural building to a Commercial Landscape Business down the lane to Stainsby Hall Farm. The latter application is currently the subject of an appeal.

The guest speakers at the Parish Assembly in March, shared with the Community Council, were the new Chief Executive of Middlesbrough Council and a speaker from the Stroke Association.

The Future

- a) Middlesbrough Council has explained that providing street lighting down the bottom section of Strait Lane would be difficult because of the narrowness of the pavement and lighting columns would have to be installed in the hedge which is privately owned.
- b) Long discussion has also taken place about the Quarry Management Group being dissolved with responsibility for management being transferred to Middlesbrough Council's countryside team. An organisation called The Friends of Stainton & Thornton Open Spaces will be set up for local volunteers, *and will* be responsible for work in Kell Gate Green.
- c) The Parish Council has been kept informed of the closure of the village Post Office at the end of June and is hopeful that many of the Post Office services will be relocated later in the Newsagents.

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 joins me in thanking the Newsletter editor, Mr Peter Byers and the distributors, P/Cllr & Mrs B Chapman for those contributions in recent years. It is also a pleasure to welcome Mrs Angela Cooper as the new editor of the Newsletter and Mr & Mrs Eric Ellis as the new distributors. Thanks too to all the volunteer deliverers of the Newsletter. The Parish Council is also grateful 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 life as residents of the Stainton & Thornton parish community.

Maelor Williams,
Chair of the parish Council 2009/10