

Chair's summary May 2019- May 2021

This summary covers the period May 2019 to April 2021, the usual one-year council duration being extended to two by covid legislation. Covid gave this council additional problems to deal with precluding co-option when one councillor resigned, no face-to-face meetings through 2020 and 2021, holding virtual Zoom meetings and the difficulties that brought as well as transactional problems to safely get cheques signed and dealing with correspondence.

There has also been change within the council. One councillor resigned and our long-standing clerk suffered deteriorating health, eventually going sick necessitating the quick recruitment of a temporary clerk and then recruitment of a substantive clerk with virtual Zoom interviewing.

Despite these challenges, the overall intent of this council followed on from the previous councils' successful strategy to maintain and improve the infrastructure of the village for the benefit of residents.

Safety of our residents remained our highest priority, road safety for pedestrians specifically. This council supported the Speed Awareness group as a visible and active deterrent and have been working towards signage improvements on Wolsingham Road to reduce speeding in both directions. Maintaining the visibility of the white gates on the A690 was a key part of the strategy.

This two-year period, despite difficulties and challenges have been successful in gradually improving the aesthetics of the village, these included;

Supporting the BCA through financial donation and allotment activities by replacing defective fencing.

Completion of the Defibrillator installation in collaboration with the BCA at the Village Hall and ongoing maintenance requirements.

Primarily to ensure a signal next to the defibrillator, in collaboration with the BCA a mobile phone signal booster has been installed in the Village Hall giving better coverage in and around the area.

Revitalising the neglected flower tubs and adding new ones. Support and thanks to residents who were maintaining tubs and grassed areas around their houses.

Support to village activities during lockdown;

- Initiation of the Brancepeth Bugle,
- Contact listing of support for shielding residents,
- The council supported young people's summer activities in Brancepeth Alive.

The first ever village Christmas tree was erected by the council in 2020.

Survey of trees in the allotments and field completed with some minor trimming recommended.

Grass cutting and village maintenance contract renewed.

Installation of a new village notice board to avoid unsightly notices detrimentally pinned to trees etc.

Parish Council web site updated and remodelled making it more accessible to all.

This council continued the previous councils' strategy of having a say in the future of the field by holding a lease and being compliant tenants. This subject occupied a large part of our attention eventually uncovering why the landlord was not cashing our rental payments and determining the

route to reinstate a lease. Continuous vociferous comment by some outside of the council on this subject and a threat of legal action were not helpful.

Works are in progress for the new council to continue, summaries have been written to advise them of the status and contacts for each.

A number of key people have stepped up during the covid pandemic devoting many hours voluntarily to support residents of all ages. I wish to offer grateful thanks to those Parish Councillors, BCA management team, St. Brandon's and those residents who have through their positive and practical actions put themselves at the forefront during this pandemic.

I wish the new council success in following all the many and various issues that the Parish Council must deal with.

Dave Armstrong (chair May 2019 – April 2021)