

Stocksfield Parish Council
Chair's Annual Report May 2023 – April 2024

The year began with John Harrison being re-elected as Chair and me to the Vice Chair's position. The Council has prepared an exciting development coming soon to the Branch End Play Area (thanks to Chris Liddle and Anne Dale for pulling this together), continued its focus on securing a safe and pleasant environment for residents, maintained and improved local facilities, and made every effort to deal with any problems that have arisen, often by working in partnership with local, neighbouring and County-wide organisations such as Stocksfield Community Association, Town and Parish Councils, Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Police.

A big issue for the village this last year has been the submission of a planning application for the Highfield Energy Park project. A group of residents attended the Council meeting on 3 July to present their concerns about the project. At a special meeting on 17 July the Council agreed to object to the application on the grounds of it being an inappropriate development in the green belt. Further, the Council requested appropriate conditions be attached to any planning consent which might be granted for the development, for the benefit of the residents of Stocksfield.

Another issue facing the village is Northern Rail's consultation on introducing parking charges at the station car park. Several councillors plus the clerk attended a public meeting organised by our County Councillor (Anne Dale) at which representatives from Northern Rail outlined the rationale for the scheme and answered questions from residents. Following this the Council agreed that I should write to Northern Rail objecting to the proposal. At the time of writing, Northern Rail have yet to announce the outcome of the consultation.

A tree that has been causing problems at the sports fields was, at long last, felled, and work is ongoing to remove the shoots that have been disturbing the playing surfaces.

Local and County-wide groups and organisations such as Broomley First School, Sport Tynedale, and The Royal British Legion, have also benefitted from grants and donations from the Parish Council's regular budget. We once again made a financial contribution to the Parochial Church Council's Burial Board to support the upkeep of Hindley St Margaret's cemetery.

In October, John Harrison stepped down from his role as Chair. At the November meeting I was nominated and elected to take on that role. At the December meeting Tim Hills was then elected to fill my recently-vacated Vice Chair position. In October, one vacancy was filled by the co-option of Kevin Graham who was warmly welcomed. Sadly, in May Kath Pollock left the Council. I extend my thanks to her for her contributions over the years to the work of the Council and I wish her well for the future.

Although I have only been in the Chair's seat since November, I would like to give sincere thanks to my fellow Councillors who have supported me in the role.

Paul Vickers, April 2024