

## **THE PARISH OF CARHAM**

### **The Annual Parish Assembly**

**St. Cuthbert's Church, Carham on Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 6.30pm**

- 495 The Chair of Carham Parish Council welcomed five members of the public, local county and parish councillors, Lesley Robson, Rural Advocacy and Inclusion Officer and Richard Froggatt, Community Transport Officer, to the Annual Parish Assembly.
- 496 The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly on 9 May 2023 were approved as read and signed.
- 497 Lesley Robson and Richard Froggatt attended the meeting to explain their role in gathering information through conversations with communities to identify local needs. Lesley's post is funded by NCC however she works for the Glendale Gateway Trust in Wooler across the catchment area of Glendale, which includes Carham. Her remit is to engage with communities to help connect them to support they may need and access services they may not be aware of, while identifying needs within rural North Northumberland and advocating these needs back to NCC and other organisations. She does not cover anything that falls within the remit of Parish Councils.

The lack of a transport system on the B6350 which affects people of all ages was discussed. In isolated communities residents who are unable to drive are dependent on good neighbours for lifts. Unfortunately there are not enough passengers for a commercial bus service and being situated on the Scotland/England border caused difficulties because there are two different funding agencies.

Go Fibre is currently working in the parish to install new lines etc. in preparation for moving landline phones to digital technology. Landline phone calls have traditionally been delivered over an old telephone network (Public Switched Telephone Network) but this infrastructure is old and needs to be replaced. BT has taken the decision to retire PSTN by December 2025 and it is expected that other suppliers will follow similar timescales. This means that in future, landline calls will be delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which uses a broadband connection.

Questions were raised about improving mobile coverage in rural areas through the Shared Rural Network which is a programme between the government and the four main mobile network operators. The Airwave Communications Mast at Downham, which provides emergency services network coverage to the surroundings of Mindrum, the B6351 road and other minor roads, was upgraded in 2021. Lesley will enquire if this upgrade has made a significant difference.

**498** The Chair gave his summary of the previous year:

The members of the council have been very active as usual this year and have each taken some of the load in running the council. The chairman thanked them for their hard work. The land around the telephone box at Wark has been cleared. Elizabeth McGregor from Wark has volunteered to organise a group who will plant it and keep it maintained. Twice in the past year all the books and resources from the phone box have been removed by an unknown person. This has also happened at the phone box in Donaldson's Lodge. After consultation with the police it seems there is little that can be done, except to keep a lookout and report any suspicious activity to the police. Many thanks to Janet Chubb for her indefatigable efforts in organising the walking group and thereby helping to keep the footpaths clear. Regrettably, increasing poor health has forced Cllr John Court to resign from the council. Councillors and the community owe a great debt to him for his unstinting work over the years in practical matters, especially his looking after and maintaining the play park. The speed sign at Wark has been repaired and is now functioning well. The speed sign at Carham which was installed last year is also working well. The council has scrutinized all planning applications for the Parish area and has made comments wherever necessary. A large number of these responses have been drafted out by Cllr. Poland for ratification by the whole council. We are very grateful to her. Cllr Poland also produces the twice yearly newsletter and maintains the Carham Community Website. All information about Carham Parish Council and the work done by the Parish Council in the last 12 months has been posted on the website. There has been a proposal to erect a community facility at Wark. This is not a council initiative but the council is monitoring the situation closely. The defibrillator project for Carham parish has been active during the last year with a number of events to raise awareness and generate public support for the project. This is not a specific Parish Council responsibility but the PC is lending their support to it. The elected NCC councillor Mark Mather has again been very supportive of Carham Parish council, including the defibrillator project. Thanks also to the clerk for her thorough and sterling work which goes above and beyond the call of duty.

**499** JohnMcGregor informed those present that the inaugural meeting of the proposed Community Facility in Wark had taken place on 6 April and a committee had been formed. It is hoped that the money held by the Charities Commission relating to the Village Hall Trust will be released and the funds used for the wellbeing of the whole parish.