



Delivering Quality Services to  
Coxhoe & Quarrington Hill

# Coxhoe Parish Council Annual Report 2012/2013

## Introduction

2012-13 has been another eventful year for everyone in local and national government with us facing a more challenging economic environment than we have faced in many years. With many residents, local businesses and community groups struggling financially, we are more conscious than ever of the need to have value for money and partnership working at the forefront of our minds when we strive to meet the evolving needs of the community. Our focus once again has been to deliver your priorities by working on actions outlined in the new Parish Plan adopted by the Parish Council during the year. The new Parish Plan is a five year plan and will therefore influence the work of the Parish Council over the coming years.

My last Annual Report underlined the importance of partnership working and with this in mind we continue to develop our working relationship with Durham County Council and continue to work well with all of our other key community partners to improve Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill. We know that we cannot work in isolation and that to get things done we must work with our partners and the wider community. In the following paragraphs I would like to let you know what the Parish Council has achieved in the last year.

## Sport, Leisure and Culture

The Parish Council continues to support the Active Life Centre @ Coxhoe which is now into its second year under the management of Future Leisure in Coxhoe (FLiC), the members of which are community volunteers who give up their time to ensure the centre continues to thrive. The last year has seen significant improvements in the usage of the centre and huge investment in new facilities. The Parish Council continues to support FLiC financially and is now working with FLiC to develop improved facilities and activities for children and young people. The theme of improved facilities and activities for children and young people continues in Quarrington Hill where a youth club has now been established at the Community Centre and a play strategy for the village is being developed.

The allotments in Coxhoe continue to be operated by a self-management group, with the allotments in Quarrington Hill being directly managed by the Parish Council. Allotment holders in Quarrington Hill have now started to meet to discuss the future management and needs of the allotments and three new allotment holders have just taken on vacant allotments. Significant progress has also been made in identifying potential sites for additional allotments in Quarrington Hill.

## **Community Facilities**

Coxhoe Village Hall is a true community facility and was gifted to the community last century. After being operated by a management committee for many years that had done a magnificent job keeping the hall open, it was recognised that the ageing management Committee needed some help to sustain the future of this important community facility. The Parish Council therefore facilitated the formation of the Coxhoe Village Hall Working Group, comprising of members of the village hall management committee, Coxhoe Parish Council, Coxhoe Community Partnership, Durham Rural Community Council, the Area Action Partnership along with local volunteers. A new management committee was formed following this year's AGM and has now taken over and is developing further the overall plan to secure the village halls future including vital refurbishment works. . Improvements with the financial support of County Councillors M Plews and D Morgan have been made to the car park adjacent to Coxhoe Village Hall; these together with increased lighting in the area have had a huge impact.

The management committee of Quarrington Hill Community Centre are actively working with Durham County Council on the business plan and lease which will see the community centre moving from Durham County Council control. This will secure the future of the community centre following Durham County Councils review of community facilities.

## **Highways and Transport**

The Parish Council is now working with Durham County Council to discuss highways and transport issues including traffic issues linked to primary schools in both Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill, general speed and parking issues and specific safety issues linked to parking in the area surrounding Coxhoe Doctors Surgery. Site visits to both schools have now been completed and action plans are being developed

## **Community Safety**

By working with Durham County Council there have been improvements in the timely repair of street lighting and the feasibility of a voluntary winter footpaths clearance scheme has been explored, however this proved not to be feasible as no volunteers were forthcoming for this particular initiative and given that the Parish Council does not have a workforce. Changes to bus timetables throughout the county saw the loss of the Sunday service, however joint funding from Coxhoe Parish Council, neighbouring Parish Councils and County Councillors saw the Sunday service reintroduced.

The Police attend all main Parish Council meetings and provide a report on crime on a monthly basis, these crime statistics allow targeting of police resources. Reporting incidents is crucially important to the police and we urged residents to let the Police know wherever and whenever issues arise. By understanding what is happening they can target activity, identify perpetrators, and take action to resolve problems. The Parish Council actively encourages residents to call the Police each and every time an incident occurs. The PACT meetings "police and community together" continue to be held in both Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill providing an opportunity for residents to raise issues of concern.

## **Environment**

Negotiations to transfer the ownership of the lower and upper village green areas in Coxhoe adjacent to the Village Hall to the Parish Council are well underway, with plans to develop these areas as community space. A display of initial suggestions for the re development of these areas as community space of was carried out, reflecting the work of a working group established and supported by the Parish Council including representatives from the Parish Council, Coxhoe Banner Group, Coxhoe History Group and Coxhoe Community Partnership. The first stage of works has now been completed with the planting of an avenue of trees and following an unsuccessful funding application the group are now looking into how to take the project forward.

The Parish Council has continued to provide grass cutting services within parts of the Parish, including some footpaths and Coxhoe War Memorial Garden, and provided hanging baskets during the summer months. Later in the year Christmas lights were again installed in Coxhoe and a replacement living Christmas tree with lights introduced at Quarrington Hill.

## **Improving the right to be heard – Consultations with Durham County Council**

During the year we have contributed to a number of consultations carried out by Durham County Council, to ensure that any impact on the residents the Parish Council represents are taken in to account. We have made our views known on a significant number of planning applications during the year, as well as hearing the views of residents on certain applications before deciding on our representations. You can find out what applications we have commented on and the County Council's decisions on our website. To assist the planning process and try to get the best out of proposals we have also engaged in pre-application discussions with developers.

## **Improving Parish Council Administration and Meetings**

We have continued to build on the work of past years in what has been an extremely busy year for the Parish Council and for the Clerk, supported by Ian Foster in maintaining the Parish Council web site. We have held a Finance Committee to discuss and agree our budget for next year, together with completing further work on developing a medium term financial plan for the Parish Council.

Most of our meetings have been attended by the public with residents having the opportunity to come along and raise issues at the beginning of each Council meeting. The meeting agenda is placed on the Parish notice boards in both villages and on our web site in advance of the meeting, as are the minutes of meetings once they have been approved.

We continue to be fully committed to achieving 'Quality Council' Status for the Parish Council. The Parish Clerk has undertaken training which is a key part of achieving the standards required.

## **Financial performance 2012/13**

At the time of completing this report completed accounts are not available and will be published under separate cover. Public inspection of the accounts and records by local electors and interested parties will run from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013 with the notice advising of this being published on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

## **Conclusion**

We feel that we have prudently managed our budgets this year to leave us in a position to address future projects whilst making clear progress on the priorities in the Parish Plan. Partnership working will continue to bring about real changes within the community and the work of the two village partnerships, the directors of FLiC, the management committees of Coxhoe Village Hall and Quarrington Hill Community Centre are all to be commended. They continue to work tirelessly in a volunteer capacity to drive and achieve improvement. I thank them very much for the work they do and reassure them that the Parish Council fully supports them and what they are trying to do.

Dennis Morgan and Maria Plews, our County Councillors, continued support of the Parish Council in our endeavours for which we are truly grateful.

I would sincerely like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors, all of whom give up their time freely and energetically. Special thanks go to Councillors G Shotton, J Taylor and C Parkes who resigned from the Parish Council during the last year, we also welcomed Ron Carr as a new Quarrington Hill Parish Councillor who was co-opted to the Parish Council.

It is always worth remembering that none of the Councillors receive payment for their efforts.

Finally on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank our Parish Clerk David Vasey who continues to diligently respond and manage the many and varied matters with which we are involved.

**Paul Dodsworth Chair of Coxhoe Parish Council 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

### **Parish Councillors and Parish Clerk (David Vasey):**

**Councillor Paul Dodsworth (Chair)**  
**Councillor Stuart Dunn (Vice-Chair)**  
**Councillor Ron Mayo**  
**Councillor Barbara Hepplewhite**  
**Councillor Tony Rowe**  
**Councillor Colin Thirlaway**  
**Councillor Dennis Smith**  
**Councillor Keith Pounder**  
**Councillor Ron Carr**