

**MAYOR of PONTELAND
ANNUAL
REPORT 2013/14**

**Date April 2014
Mayor Peter Cowey**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth year that Ponteland has been a Town Council and I have much pleasure in presenting the Mayor's Annual Report for 2013/14, my third.

Just to remind those that have not attended the Annual Meeting of Electors; each May all the Town Councillors get together and vote who will be the Mayor for the following year.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Vision and Aim

To continue to provide services and support that will benefit the residents of Ponteland at a price we can afford.

The Council's aim is to deliver services and facilities that will promote Pride in Ponteland. The Council also encourages the residents of Ponteland to take part in making Ponteland a place where all will want to live.

2.2 Partnership Working

For those who read this annual report regularly I make no excuses for leaving this section virtually unchanged again from the previous year.

Much of our work is carried out in conjunction with others. This includes work in the Park (with the Friends of Ponteland Park), Community Cleaning (with the County Council), and Youth Work at the High School, Ponteland Community Partnership (for Pont News and Views), Darras Hall Estate (for speed monitors), the Civic Society and small grants to several local organisations. A major involvement for the Council is the Northumbria in Bloom for Ponteland (Gold Medal in 2013). This latter event was supported by several local businesses.

PTC thanks go to all residents who have helped to improve the quality of life in Ponteland. It is sometimes a number of little, apparently simple things, that when added together make a big difference.

3. WHAT WE DO

3.1 Councillors and Staff

The Town Clerk and Staff carry out many mandatory functions required by law. Added to these functions are the daily running tasks, which make Ponteland a good place to live. e.g: -

- (i) Litter picking/Dog waste bins,
- (ii) Gritting of Merton Way and Broadway and other key paths.
- (iii) Some grass cutting (Coates Green etc),
- (iv) Environmental activities
- (v) Allotments
- (vi) Play areas
- (vii) Maintenance of the Park
- (viii) Christmas Lighting
- (ix) Public Conveniences at Thornhill Road
- (x) Prestwick Cemetery (this is covered later in 5.2)

Plus much more

3.1.1 Ponteland and Activities

Ponteland is a Quality Approved and Accredited Council serving approx 12,000 residents (latest NCC statistics). This places considerable demands on both staff and Councillors. During the year we have over 60 planned meetings; see Appendix B for the Committees and Working Parties. All these meetings require agendas, minutes and working documents as well as the implementation of decisions. In addition there are always a number of ad-hoc meetings. Some Councillors are also on various outside bodies see Appendix C for the full list.

The Town Council holds a full meeting of all Councillors the second Wednesday of every month. Before the meeting starts there is a public question time where written questions are considered and hopefully a satisfactory answer can be provided during that time. The public are also welcome to attend our fortnightly Planning Meetings.

It is worth noting that PTC is not responsible for such things as Highways, Schools, Health, Education and Social Services. These, plus many more are the sole responsibility of the Northumberland County Council (NCC).

3.1.2 Website

The Town Council decided to update their website in 2013 and this was launched in December of last year. To date, it has proved very successful and a number of positive comments have been received from the public. The site includes Councillors details, minutes and agendas, copies of PNV, a list of local organisations, budgetary details and news. There is also a contact page which has been well used to date.

3.2 Government Legislation

This continues (yet again) to be issued at a pace and does not seem to take a break. Releases covering the activities on the Green Belt continue to puzzle everyone.

3.3 Youth work

This excellent work continues in Ponteland with Ashley Brown and Alison Griffiths. Activities range from “Lunch Time Drop In” sessions to various evening events.

3.4 Community Cleaning

This continues much the same as last year.

The main responsibility for maintaining the general cleanliness of the Community (grass cutting, litter removal, graffiti removal, etc) lies with the County. However in order to augment this work we have again spent over £16,000 on supplementary litter and also dog waste collection plus additional grass cuts from NCC.

We have established excellent working relations with the NCC Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team. Litter unfortunately is always with us and we need all the help we can get to reduce its impact. The continued assistance of several residents in picking up litter is greatly appreciated and if this voluntary work could be extended it would make an excellent contribution to improving the quality of life in Ponteland. Thanks go to all those residents who help with the litter picks.

Some Residents have taken the time to plant flowers and shrubs at road junctions. This brightens up many a road and corner and our thanks go to those residents who have brightened up the landscape for the Community. Fly Tipping is always a problem, however there is a contact on the NCC website home page - “Fly Tipping”, report any vans etc you see dumping bags or rubble in the countryside to this website.

3.5 Community Halls

There are a number of Community Halls within Ponteland – Memorial and Dalton; we provide essential cash support to these Halls. They provide cohesion to the community and we are pleased to continue this vital support. Merton Hall is now self-financing with a strong set of Trustees led by Mrs Jean Finch - Chairman, Councillor Carl Rawlings - Deputy Chairman, Mrs Christine Greenwell – Treasurer and Mrs Carole Butler – Honorary Secretary. Merton Hall also has a Committee to see to day to day needs.

Just a note - there are other self funding halls in Ponteland, St Mary’s, URC, St Matthews and the Methodist Church.

3.5.1 Memorial Hall and PTC

The majority of PTC Councillors decided not to take up the plans to move the Offices to the Memorial Hall. They felt that the costs of building were not justified. Therefore it was decided to take up extra space in the current premises. Personally this was a disappointment to me.

3.6 Park

The maintenance and improvement of the Park has continued to benefit enormously with the help of the Friends of Ponteland Park (FOPP). The results can be seen by anyone who uses the Park. This is our major asset and requires continual substantial investment if we are to retain and improve this much used facility. The Park continues to need maintenance to keep it in tip top condition.

3.7 Darras Hall Estate

We continue to make a small contribution to the maintenance of the Bridle Path.

3.8 Environment

The Environment Working Party is always very busy with their efforts to improve Ponteland's appearance. Particular efforts have been made regarding floral displays and last year's display was particularly noteworthy. Our thanks must go to Councillor Joyce Butcher who co-ordinates the Council's entry. Our thanks must also go to our contractors, Iain Clough and Mike Champion and last but certainly not at all least our Town Clerk Kath Mavin. If you have a look at Appendix G you will see what has been achieved in 2013-14.

3.9 Ponteland Local Partnership

We have continued to support Pont News and Views (PNV), which is distributed to all residents. We congratulate Chris Jennings (editor) and Christine Greenwell (Honorary Treasurer) who do a super job running the PNV.

3.10 Ponteland Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group

This group is now about to match the NCC's Core Strategy to the Plan that has been developing under a number of sub groups for the last year.

At this moment it is difficult to state when a Plan will be ready for full evaluation by an Independent Planning Inspector that will need to be followed by a Ponteland Referendum on the Plan.

3.11 Grants

Each year PTC allocates a small amount of money to help local organisations in their work in Ponteland. This year we have supported:-

Ponteland Youth Service
Friends of Ponteland Park
Ponteland Memorial Hall
Dalton Village Hall
Community Action Northumberland
Holy Saviour Church, Milbourne
West Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau
North East War Memorials Project
Castle Morpeth Disability Association
Party in the Park
Rotary Duck Race
Diamond Inn (contribution to New Years Eve fireworks display)

3.12 Play Areas

The Council is responsible for Play areas at Callerton Lane, Twizell Place and Guardians Court. At last the Skate Park at Callerton Lane is open for the young, or older if you feel inclined!

3.13 Highways Working Party

The Highways Working Party continues to try to get the NCC to implement various measures to mitigate the impact of traffic congestion. This is not proving to be an easy task as the NCC Highways Department continues to be short of cash and has no serious plans to help Ponteland at this time. See Appendix H for list of achieved items in 2013/14.

3.14 Planning

The PTC Planning Committee meet every two weeks, the least number of applications at a meeting I can recall this year is 3 and the most is probably in the region of 14. So far we have reviewed over 195 applications.

Just to remind everyone Ponteland is only a Planning Consultee and has no powers. We frequently Observe, Comment and sometimes Object. If we Object we can go to the West Area Planning Committee and are allocated just 5 minutes to present our reasoning. If required another 5 minutes is available for a County Councillor to speak. After our and the NCC Councillor have their 5 minutes the applicant has 5 minutes to put their case and then neither parties may speak as the NCC Committee carry out their deliberations. They then vote either to Grant, Deny, Defer or Agree to visit the site.

The PTC Planning Chairman, Councillor Elizabeth Thompson and the rest of the Committee are to be congratulated on their dedication, integrity and sound common sense reviewing all the applications received.

Last year the PTC and NCC objected to the building of 280 houses on Birney Hill. We are waiting to see if the developer is going to Appeal the decision.

3.15 Redevelopment

Merton Way Regeneration; very sad to say yet again no progress since last year.

3.16 Crime

We are fortunate to live in an area where recorded crime is amongst the lowest in England. However the yobbish behaviour of a small group of youngsters and the inconsiderate parking by the public remain as particular concerns. The police continue to provide greater contact by regular youth drop-ins at the Library and Broadway. There is also a regular meeting of the "Local Multi Agency Partnership Solving" Group (LMAPS), which has provided a useful venue for solving particular problems. This year we continue to monitor traffic movement via the CCTV system, which is used regularly by the police in their investigations.

Also we have speed indicator signs that remind motorists that there is a speed limit on most roads.

3.17 Meritorious Service Award

As recorded above the efforts required to make Ponteland the success it is cannot be achieved by the efforts of the Council alone. PTC thanks go to all of those residents who devote their energies either as individuals or through organisations to enrich the quality of life in Ponteland.

3.17.1 Mr David Cobb

This year the Council's Meritorious Award goes to Mr David Cobb the Treasurer of the Memorial Hall. David has been the Treasurer of the hall forever or it seems that way. When I was on the Trustees Committee (some years ago now) I saw at first hand his contribution to the upkeep and running of the hall. His tireless and dedicated work has kept the Memorial Hall in operation via applying for grants to umpteen bodies and he has been able to raise thousands of pounds. David is not just a committee member sitting in an office but is also a dab hand with a paint brush and general maintenance manager. It is people like David who contribute their time and effort for no pay that makes Ponteland the desirable place to live and so it therefore gives the Town Council great pleasure in presenting this small token of appreciation to David.

3.18 Bus Users Group Working Party

This group continues to try and improve services to Ponteland.

4. The Budget

The budget precept for 2013/14 was £349,631. For 2014/15 there is a slight increase to £358,815. Fuller details of the precept breakdown are included in Appendix D.

5. The Future

Each year Ponteland Town Councillors discuss what improvements can be made within our budget for the following year. Some costs are standard such as Office Rent, Staff Salaries, heating, lighting, telephone and stationery etc. Separately each Councillor makes a list of a particular thing or things that they would like to see carried out in the following year prior to discussions, known internally as a "Wish List". A number of meetings then take place where all ideas are discussed and priced. From these meetings a Final set of items from the various "Wish Lists" are agreed and included with the everyday running costs, therefore setting a Budget. A wish list for this year has been discussed but needs full Council approval. There will be a full Town Council meeting after this event where such decisions will be made.

5.1 Other Projects for 2014/15

A full Town Council Land Survey is still in progress.

5.2 Prestwick Cemetery

As from 1 April 2013 the running of Prestwick Cemetery has become PTC's responsibility. The Council has agreed that the NCC will run the Cemetery as in previous years, but, PTC will monitor very closely what and how it is run. However, certain activities such as hedge cutting and minor improvements are now being carried out by PTC. It is pleasing to note that since PTC has taken over responsibility we have been getting good reports from residents.

6 Conclusion

What we have achieved so far has been the result of hard work by my fellow Councillors and very enthusiastic and dedicated Office staff, namely, Kath Mavin our Town Clerk who works very hard behind the scenes and deserves much credit for all she does for the people of Ponteland.

Jeanette Dodd, our Deputy Town Clerk again who works hard and is a credit to her role.

Christine Holleyman - who prepares all the planning meetings and provides much background information and guidance so that the Councillors can make the appropriate decisions,

Caroline Thompson who works part time has joined the team and is performing and living up to expectations.

Lastly but certainly not least are our two Contractors, Iain Clough and Mike Champion who perform to the highest standards and whose work is appreciated by everyone in Ponteland. I have often been approached by residents to say how nice some of the displays look.

I am sure that I speak for all the Councillors when I say a very big **THANK YOU** to everyone for all your hard work and dedication.

Last year we had a number of Councillors retire at the May elections; one was Chairman of the Highways Working Party. This role was taken on by Councillor Robin Ramsay when no-one else came forward. He is also the current Chairman of the Environment Working Party. It cannot be under estimated the contribution Councillor Ramsay makes to the PTC.

Currently we have two honours boards in the Office. One is for those Pontelander's that have been honoured by the Queen and a list of those residents who have been awarded the Ponteland Meritorious award. We now have a third board stating the winners of the New Year's Day

Wheel Barrow Race.

6.1 Changes

After the elections held in May 2013 we welcomed a number of new Councillors to the Town Council, Christine Greenwell, Sue Johnson, Lesley Noble, Adam Shanley and Richard Dodd (Richard will be known to everyone as the County Councillor for the North Division).

Councillor Rob Punton decided to resign in the latter part of 2013 and his replacement was Sarah Lewis. Alas she could not continue due to work commitments. A by-election for the Ponteland West Ward is being held on Thursday 10 April.

**APPENDIX A PONTELAND TOWN COUNCILLORS, STAFF
and
COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

South Ward

Councillor Peter Cowey (Mayor)
Councillor Robin Ramsay
Councillor Carl Rawlings (Deputy Mayor)

North Ward

Councillor Richard Dodd
Councillor Christine Greenwell
Councillor Adam Shanley

East Ward

Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Christine Caisley
Councillor Lesley Noble

West Ward

Councillor Liz Thompson
Councillor Joyce Butcher
1 vacancy

STAFF

Clerk to the Council

Kathleen Mavin

Deputy Clerk

Jeanette Dodd

Assistant Clerk

Christine Holleyman

Admin Assistant

Caroline Thompson

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Richard Dodd
Councillor Veronica Jones
Councillor Eileen Armstrong
Councillor Peter Jackson

APPENDIX B PTC COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY (Monthly)

Councillor R Ramsay (Chair)
Councillor J Butcher
Councillor C Greenwell
Councillor C Caisley
Councillor S Johnson

HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE (Monthly)

Councillor R G Ramsay (Chair)
Councillor R Dodd
Councillor C Greenwell
Councillor L Noble
Councillor P Cowey (Mayor, 1st Reserve)

PLANNING COMMITTEE (Every two weeks)

Councillor E Thompson (Chair)
Councillor P Cowey (Mayor and Vice Chairman)
Councillor L Noble
Councillor S Johnson
Councillor C Rawlings (Deputy Mayor)

ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (Ad-hoc)

Councillor P Cowey (Mayor and Chair)
Councillor C Rawlings (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor J Butcher
Councillor C Caisley
Councillor R Dodd
Councillor C Greenwell
Councillor S Johnson
Councillor R Ramsay
Councillor E Thompson

MUSIC IN THE PARK WORKING PARTY (Some ad-hoc)

Councillor R Ramsay
Councillor Mrs J Butcher
Councillor P Cowey (Mayor)
Town Clerk K Mavin
Members of Rotary and Lions

PRESTWICK CEMETERY COMMITTEE (Ad-hoc)

Councillor P Cowey (Mayor and Chairman)
Councillor C Rawlings (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor R Ramsay (Vice Chairman)
Councillor C Greenwell
Councillor C Caisley

Footpath Users Group

Councillor R G Ramsay (Chair)
Mr Alan Mitcham
Mr Christopher Winks
Mr Alan Varley
Mrs Katherine Guellard
Mrs Julie Tuck

Mr Malcolm McKenzie
Mrs Sue Johnson
Mr Peter Simpson
Mr Derek Deans
Mrs Fiona Price
Mr John Colin Braithwaite
Mr Peter Bailey
Ms Juliet Phipps
Mr David Gambles DHEC
Mr Tim Fish

Bus Users Group

Mr David Gambles Ponteland resident and bus user
Mr Ian Coe Transport Support Manager NCC
Mr Robin Knight Commercial Director (Stagecoach Buses)
Mr Malcolm Bell (Stagecoach Buses)
Councillor Robin Ramsay

Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Mrs Alma Dunigan (Chair)
Councillor Peter Cowey (Mayor)
Councillor Carl Rawlings (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Robin Ramsay
Ms Sheenah Coyne
Mr Will Moses
Mr Chris Winks
Mr John Purvis
Mr Chris Brummitt
Mr David Hobson
Mr Andrew Tucker
Mrs Veronica Jones
Mr Peter Jackson

APPENDIX C PTC REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Library Consultative Committee

Councillor Mrs C Greenwell

Merton Hall Recreation Centre Trustees

Councillor Carl Rawlings (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Mrs. E Thompson,

Ponteland Memorial Hall Committee

Councillor Mrs. J Butcher

Richard Coates Education Foundation

Councillor Mrs C Greenwell

Newcastle Airport Consultative Committee

Councillor Mrs. J Butcher

Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC)

Also

NALC Larger Parish/Town Councils,

NALC and NCC Executive,

NALC Charter Implementation Group

All Mayor P Cowey

Ponteland Community Partnership

Mayor P Cowey and Councillor R G Ramsay

Pont News and Views Editorial Group

Mayor P Cowey and Councillor R G Ramsay

Friends of Ponteland Park

Councillor Mrs J Butcher

Local Multi Agency Problem Solving

Councillor Mrs L Noble

Note - Any Councillor may attend (LMAPS)

Fly Tipping Committee (run by NCC)

Councillor Peter Cowey (Mayor)

Councillor A Shanley (reserve)

Fairtrade Working Party

Councillor Mrs L Noble

Leisure Centre Users Group

Councillor Mrs C Caisley

Councillor R Dodd

Councillor Mrs S Johnson

Ponteland Youth Strategy Group

Councillor P Cowey

Councillor Mrs S Johnson

Ageing Well Group

Councillor Mrs C Greenwell

ACTIVITY	2013/14 Budget £s	2014-15 Budget £s
Highways	29,200	33,141
Environment	47,650	70,480
Park	27,800	13,040
Play Areas	9,800	13,499
Cemetery	35,000	26,000
Village Halls	10,200	10,567
Grants	51,100	61,250
Public Offices	17,500	21,042
General Administration	115,500	117,617
Other Expenditure (see note 1)	61,000	54,217
Total	404,750	420,853
Precept	349,631	358,815 (An increase of 2.62% or 2.8% on a band d property)
Precept Increase	1,284	9184

Note 1 – For the years 2013-14 and 2014-15 other expenditure includes items such as Remembrance Day Service, Music in the Park, the Skate Park, projects and a sum for capital asset replacement.

General

The budget and precept was unanimously agreed by all Councillors in January 2014.

Appendix E Ponteland Draft Calendar of Events for 2014/15

Month	What's On
March	Rotary Musical evening
April	Rotary St George's day Golf and Dinner
June	Party in the Park Ponteland Lawn Tennis Club Open Tournament for Juniors Music in the Park
August	Rotary Annual Duck Race in Ponteland Park
September	Parish Flower Show in the Memorial Hall
October	Rotary Opera Gala Concert
November	Remembrance Sunday Parade Rotary Domino Drive
December	Rotary Christmas Toy Collection Rotary Carol Concert St Mary's/URC/Catholic/Methodist Christmas Carols Services
January	New Years Day Wheel Barrow Race

APPENDIX F Mayor's Official Attendances

21 st	May	2013	Open Dipping Platform
2 nd	June	2013	Queen's Church Service
4 th	June	2013	Air Ambulance Concert Memorial Hall
8 th	June	2013	Party in the Park
20 th	July	2013	Cut the ribbon for seats at the United Reform Church
19 th	October	2013	Rotary Gala Concert Britannia Hotel, Airport
23 rd	October	2013	It's Your Neighbourhood Awards - Introduction
26 th	October	2013	Children's Charity
10 th	November	2013	Remembrance Sunday Give a talk on the Ponteland Community Trust to the
3 rd	December	2013	Ponteland Rotary Club
7 th	December	2013	Draw raffle tickets at the Methodist Church Hall
27 th	March	2014	Attend High School Debate