

MAYOR of PONTELAND
ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

5th April 2023
Christine Greenwell

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1. INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present the Mayor's report for 2022-23. The last Annual Town Meeting was held on 13 April 2022.

The annual report to the electors provides the opportunity to summarise the work over the last year. The report will be on the website and printed copies are available.

Ponteland Town Council (PTC) has 12 Councillors, 3 for each Ward of North, South, East and West.

I was re-elected Mayor by my fellow Councillors in May 2022. It is a great honour to be elected to this position. I enjoy the role very much. It is wonderful to meet people both in the community and outside of it.

Town Councillors are unpaid volunteers, and they all have the interests of Ponteland at heart. Councillors ensure that decisions are taken democratically by consensus or by vote.

Council decisions are implemented by paid staff and Ponteland benefits from having excellent and loyal Town Council staff. There are currently two staff after two employees left in September 2022. A temporary member of staff has been engaged to assist with the workload. The staff action a range of tasks within an overall financial responsibility of more than £500,000.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Vision and Aim

To provide support and value for money services for the residents of Ponteland. The Council promotes pride in Ponteland and encourages the residents of Ponteland to take part in making Ponteland a place where we all want to live.

3. WHAT WE DO

3.1 Councillors and Staff

The Town Clerk and staff carry out mandatory functions required by law such as the production of agenda, minutes, audits and public accounts. Added to these functions are the daily tasks which make Ponteland a good place to live. A few examples are:

- (i) Maintenance of Ponteland Park
- (ii) Public Conveniences at Thornhill Road
- (iii) Prestwick Cemetery
- (iv) Allotments
- (v) Gritting of Merton Way, Broadway and other key paths.
- (vi) Play areas
- (vii) Some grass cutting (on Coates Green and other key areas),
- (viii) Christmas Lighting
- (ix) Environmental activities (such as removal of graffiti and repair of damage)
- (x) Litter picking/Dog waste bins,

3.1.1 Ponteland Town Council Status and Role

Northumberland has 148 Parish and Town Councils. Ponteland is one of the bigger Councils serving approximately 12,000 residents. During the year we have over 60 meetings through our Committees, Working Parties and Council Meetings which all require agendas, minutes and reports as well as the implementation of decisions. There are also several ad-hoc meetings. In addition, the Council tries to send a representative to outside bodies that influence life in Ponteland. The organisations are listed in Appendix C.

The Town Council holds the full Council meeting on the second Wednesday of every month. Before the meeting starts there is a public question time where written questions are answered. The public are welcome to attend meetings of the full Council, our Planning Committee and Cemetery Committee.

Quite often, residents ask for clarification on what is a Town Council responsibility and what is dealt with by the County Council. PTC is not the decision maker on Planning, Licensing, Highways, Parking, Schools, Health, and Social Services although we do receive queries about all these issues. These services plus many others are the responsibility of Northumberland County Council (NCC).

3.1.2 Website

The PTC duties are listed on our website and the address is: www.ponteland-tc.gov.uk The site includes Councillors details, minutes and agendas, copies of Pont News and Views, budgetary details and news.

3.2 Youth Work

In 2019 the Council took a decision to engage the services of NE Youth to deliver youth services in Ponteland. We meet the cost of two youth workers working in Ponteland on two nights a week. One of the nights is held in Merton Hall where the young people meet up indoors to take part in a range of activities with the youth workers.

3.3 Community Cleaning

The main responsibility for the general cleanliness of the Community (grass cutting, collection of litter, graffiti removal, etc) lies with the County Council. However, in order to augment this work PTC spends a substantial amount annually on litter collection, provision of bins, dog waste collection and additional grass cuts from NCC.

We have a good working relationship with the NCC Neighbourhood Services Team, but litter is a recurring problem, and we need help to reduce its impact. The assistance of several residents in picking up litter is greatly appreciated. There is one more recent addition to the voluntary litter pickers who is organising her own litter collection events which we provide the equipment for. This is a great help to the Council and the community. Ponteland Rotary Club also have regular litter picks along Rotary Way and beyond using PTC equipment. We are grateful to the club for organising these events.

The Town Council also meets the cost of an Environmental Enforcement officer for Ponteland (employed by NCC) under a service level agreement for two days a week. This officer deals with various issues such as fly tipping, dog fouling, overgrown trees

and hedges, graffiti etc – he also has enforcement powers which means he can issue fixed penalty notices to offenders.

He carries out regular patrols in Ponteland park and the wider area.

There is usually a quick response to any issues that are raised with this officer which has been very useful to the Town Council.

3.4 Community Halls

Village Halls provide cohesion to the community and there are some Community Halls such as Dalton and the Memorial Hall which are supported financially by PTC. There is a new team of Trustees at the Memorial Hall who are making changes to how the hall and the car park operates.

Merton Hall is self-financing and it became a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) on 1st April 2022.

Ponteland also benefits from three self-funding Church halls - St Mary's, St Matthews and the Methodist Church.

3.5 Ponteland Park

Maintenance of the Park has continued to benefit from the help of the Friends of Ponteland Park (FOPP) with the wildflower meadow and the displays of daffodils and other bulbs giving a lot of pleasure to people.

Ponteland Park is our major asset and continual investment is required to maintain this much-loved facility.

3.6 Environment Working Party (EWP)

The Environment Working Party improves Ponteland's appearance. Great efforts are made with floral displays, planting and general upkeep of the environment. The Town Council is grateful to their outside contractors, our staff and the Chair and members of the Working Party.

3.7 Pont News & Views

Pont News and Views (PNV) is a popular publication. It is largely self-financing and distributed to all residents wherever possible. We are grateful to Chris Jennings, the Editor who runs PNV. A new editorial group was set up in 2021 which includes membership from the public and the Town Council.

3.8 Grants

Each year PTC allocates a small amount of money to help local organisations in their work in Ponteland. Recipients of the grants in 2022-23 include:

Sport Tynedale
Rialto towards cost of firework display
Ponteland 41 Club
Ponteland Rotary Club
Ponteland Memorial Hall
Ponteland Beer Festival
Party in the Park

3.9 Play Areas

PTC is responsible for Play areas at Callerton Lane, Twizell Place and Guardians Court. They are checked on a daily basis for any issues. Unfortunately, there have been some incidents of anti-social behaviour at the play areas during the last year.

3.10 Highways Working Party (HWP)

The Working Party works hard to implement several measures in Ponteland.

The HWP has increased the focus on speeding in Ponteland through the installation of additional Speed Indicator Display Signs (SIDS).

The Swan neck lighting extension was carried out in late 2022 which goes up as far as the golf course. It is hoped that the Council will extend them further in the future.

The HWP is an active group, and it benefits from the attendance of an NCC officer at meetings.

3.11 Planning Committee

The PTC Planning Committee is chaired by Councillor Sue Johnson and meets every two weeks. The number of planning applications that the Town Council is consulted on is increasing as the amount of development in Ponteland grows. Ponteland has a high number of planning applications. The Planning Committee considered 190 applications in 2022-23. They objected to 13 and commented on 20.

Residents are reminded that Ponteland Town Council is a Planning **Consultee** and it is not the Planning Authority. Planning is the responsibility of Northumberland County Council. The Planning Committee reviews all applications for the parish area carefully. They comment on some and submit an objection where they feel it is necessary.

3.12 CCTV

The Town Council renewed and extended the CCTV coverage in Ponteland last year. There is more coverage at areas such as Merton Way where unfortunately there are issues with anti-social behaviour.

3.13 Meritorious Service Award

The effort required to make Ponteland a success cannot be achieved by the Council alone. PTC thanks all those residents who put in time as individuals or through organisations to enrich the quality of life in Ponteland. Each year a meritorious service award is made. In the Council office, there is a board that lists the recipients of the Council's Meritorious Service Award, and it is time to add a new name for this year.

3.13.1 David Usher

David Usher has been a member of the RoundTable/41 club for a number of years. He is the 'Race Liaison' officer of the wheelbarrow race and has improved the race event by involving children with a Fancy Dress Parade.

This is one of the most popular events in Ponteland and raises a lot of money for various charities.

We have received glowing testimonials from Matthew Crowe the Fundraising and Events Office at Tynedale Hospice at Home, and Danielle Harvey the Community Fundraising Manager at St Oswald's Hospice. They speak so highly of David and appreciate all he has achieved and the help and advice he gives them regarding other functions and fund raising events.

They are grateful for the donations they receive every year from the 41 Club.

David has had a long career in banking and is married with 3 children and 6 grandchildren. Yet he still finds the time to be a volunteer.

I would like to thank Andy Anderson for nominating David Usher.

It now gives me great pleasure in presenting the Ponteland Town Council meritorious award to David Usher in appreciation for all his hard work and dedication which gives so much pleasure to so many residents and visitors.

4. The Budget

PTC works hard to minimise the increase in local precept.

In 2022 -23 the PTC part of the precept for a band D household was £73.87 which was unchanged from the previous year. The Council also agreed to leave the sum the same for the forthcoming year 2023-24.

The budget precept for 2022-23 was £445,180 and for 2023-24 will be £448,715. Details of the budget breakdown are included in Appendix D.

5. PRESTWICK CEMETERY

The running of Prestwick Cemetery became PTC's responsibility in 2013. PTC pays NCC to provide some services under a service level agreement but in addition, certain activities such as hedge cutting, and minor improvements are carried out by PTC. Since PTC took over responsibility, we have had mainly good reports from residents, and we monitor the service and pricing offered by other authorities.

The cemetery is self-financing, and it is run at no extra cost to Ponteland precept payers.

6. EVENTS

6.1 Events working party.

This working party handles all events carried out by the Town Council. They did a lot of work in relation to the Platinum Jubilee in June of 2022.

The Town Council is grateful to the Chair and members of the working party for working tirelessly in progressing this event and others.

6.1.2 Events in 2022-23 and forthcoming events

Events returned to some normality in 2022 with an Easter Treasure hunt, Party in the Park and the popular Ponteland Beer Festival were held on the weekend of the Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. The weekend of the Jubilee also included the lighting of the beacon on top of St Mary's Church on 2 June and groups and organisation held

street parties to celebrate over the weekend. The Town Council offered grants to help with the costs of these events.

The Rotary Club held their annual duck race on 4 September, the Ponteland Flower show was held in person again and the Wheelbarrow Race took place on 1 January 2023.

The entire nation went into a period of national mourning following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September. This lasted until 19 September, the day after Her Majesty's state funeral. The Town Council has planted a tree to commemorate the life of the late Queen just inside the main park entrance. A tree to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III will be planted close by later this year.

The Remembrance Sunday service and parade was held on 13 November which was very well attended. We were grateful to the Memorial Hall trustees who provided refreshments for all attendees. The Council put up the giant poppy displays again in 2022 and there are plans to put a new display at the Pele tower this year. The Council have asked for people to knit poppies again and we are providing wool if required. We are very grateful to all those who are providing poppies for our new display.

The popular fireworks event was also held on 31 December 2022.

The Easter Treasure trail has been organised for Easter Saturday, 8 April at the park entrance.

Whilst the Council is not organising any events themselves for the Coronation, they are having a coronation themed poster competition with the primary schools and also holding the popular shop window displays competition. There will be a crown trail with ten businesses being asked to place a gold crown in their window for people to find. Grants will be offered to groups, organisations and care homes for street parties, afternoon teas and other celebrations. People are also being encouraged to get involved in the big help out day on Monday 8 May which is a bank holiday.

The Ponteland Beer festival takes place on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd June.

On Sunday 11 June, Party in the Park is being held with an exciting range of activities and events for people to enjoy. The Rotary Duck Race is scheduled for Sunday 3 September.

7. COMMUNITY

During my time as Mayor, I have appreciated how much the community of Ponteland pulls together to help other people. This was apparent during the Pandemic, the storms, helping the people of Ukraine and latterly the cost-of-living crisis which is proving difficult for so many people.

The Warm Spaces initiative has proved very popular and there are various venues in Ponteland where people can go and have something warm to eat and drink. It is apparent that many residents donate to food banks, and I am sure their generosity is much appreciated.

CONCLUSION

8.1 Thanks

In summary, what we achieve is the result of work by all Councillors, particularly those who chair a committee or working party and I would like to thank all our unpaid, volunteer Councillors who continued to carry out their responsibilities without complaint.

A big acknowledgement must go to our dedicated office staff who work hard to support Councillors and the community.

Last but not least are our outside Contractors whose work is appreciated by everyone in Ponteland.

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

Christine Greenwell
5th April 2023

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