

Chairman's Report 2021

Well what a year .. it would be so easy to say that with Covid nothing has happened because we've not been able to do anything ... but that would be a total mis-representation, as this horrible virus has brought much of the very best of this community to the fore.

We were the first community (maybe in the Country) to have a support system up and running ... loads of volunteers came forward and I was able to put that video out to help reassure and ease fears.... The feedback on the videos has been good .. I was even told I have a great face for Radio!

But being able to put out such a message that *'support was available and no one would be on their own'* can only be confidently shared when you live in a community.

Of course it would have also been easy to have just stopped everything else.. but we didn't.. Our Council team moved on line And our stakeholders continued to join us in the ether.. police, fire service, neighbourhood wardens, highways our MP, our County Councillor and even a few Parishioners! Socially distanced site visits became the norm even with Ministers of State as we supported the plans for the re-opening of the Ferryhill Railway Station

Our passion for this community, use of technology and determination to not lie down in the face of this horrible situation has meant that we weren't to be stopped, very much the opposite .. we have mobilised projects over the last year, continuing the momentum in 'Conserving our past and Building our future'.. The wildlife garden project has had to pause due to flooding but is tee'd up nicely... and that is part of the wider vision for the Brightwaters Programme.... the new grounds maintenance contract has built on the hard work put into the last one, the results of which are all around us for all to see. A new Youth Football side has formed in the Parish which we have been able to support and we have also been able to support the wonderful committee and volunteers at the Village Hall who have continued to drive the upgrades to this vital, central community hub as it gets ready to re-open. The Halloween and Christmas trails with a few treats for children across the Parish, VE and VJ Day celebrations to name but a few... Clapping on our doorsteps has been another feature of this year ... to recognise the many front line workers both in our community and around the Country who have given so much and the permanent reminder of our gratitude to them is to be seen in our wonderful NHS pebble bed.

We even had a Guinness book of records attempt at the largest simultaneous Christmas lights turning on! And of course Jazzy B's music. I could, of course, name so many more things.

But, we have also had our fair share of challenge the blight of fly tipping, dog fouling and speeding continue and are regular items we have discussed and all of which we are trying to address, new signs have gone up only this week at the quarry road and the fly tipping cameras are beginning to reap benefits, police visits have been made to known and reported dog fouling culprits with the promise of fines to come if no change in behaviour. The litter picking event was also a great success... who would have thought we have wombles here as well! We even had to shut a road and I fear water levels are going to be an ongoing challenge for us to try and resolve over the years to come.

This virus has of course come with the most terrible cost... there was great poignancy in seeing our community lining the streets to mourn the loss of friends and neighbours and in juxtapose was the joy of another street lining to see a little boy walk the length of his road to ring his all clear of cancer bell.

Our community is wonderful and we will come out so much stronger as we rise together out of this pandemic.

But of course communities don't happen by accident, they happen because of people. Its people who turn a group of houses into a community.

So I would like to recognise the work over the last year (and many years) of this team.. thank you everyone and particular thanks to our Vice Chairs Nicola and to Geoff for supporting me in this role as chair.. and ever suffering John our Clerk who has to put up with me more than most! Your support is much appreciated ... We also have benefitted from superb support from our outgoing County Councillor Pauline Crathorne who has always stepped up to support both financially for our projects and in person at our events, a big thank you to Pauline. We also congratulate and welcome our new County Councillor Elaine, not only to her County role but also joining us on our Parish Council team and look forward to continuing working together to the good of our community. We have also had regular attendance at our meetings and support in person / regular contact with our MP Paul Howell and we appreciate the time he has invested to understand our community so he can more effectively represent us. But as ever, the biggest thanks goes to all those across our community who volunteer their time and talent to organise and support events and initiatives, or, more importantly than ever before over the last year, just being good neighbours and friends... it is this which helps create our thriving, caring, ambitious community and which will enable us to realise many of the goals we set ourselves over the coming years.

Harvey Neve

Chair