

## **PARISH ANNUAL MEETING - 8th May 2019**

Present at the meeting were: Cllr Carlisle, Cllr Tipping, Cllr Hughes, Cllr Wake, Mr C Redfern and Clerk Mrs Overfield.

Apologies –

- 1 Minutes of the meeting on 13th June 2018 were approved by Cllr Hughes, seconded by Cllr Redfern.

### **BOWES PARISH COUNCIL. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019**

#### **Armistice Commemoration.**

In November last year Cllr Hughes organised a splendid event in the village hall to mark the Armistice at the end of the First World War in 1918. Mugs were presented to parishioners and Silhouettes representing the fallen from the village were displayed, together with general memorabilia and photographs.

#### **Cemetery and village.**

Our efforts to employ a part-time contract gardener to tend the Annums flowerbed, the tubs, and the stillborn area in the cemetery at £10 per hour for about 2 hours per week this summer have so far been unsuccessful.

Last year Grasscrete was laid outside the cemetery gates and west of the bus shelter and now looks well.

Rabbits have mined under the West wall in the lower cemetery resulting in the collapse of about 3m. of wall. This will have to be repaired after filling the rabbit holes with stone to create a proper foundation and will not be cheap, so the proposed re-surfacing of the path between the Yews will probably have to wait, at least until 2020.

As the hut is no longer needed for storage, it has been sold with the proviso that the site is left tidy.

#### **Parish paths.**

Grants are much reduced for path maintenance but fortunately no major problems were reported save for one stile which was repaired by Cllr White and Redfearn.

#### **Allotments**

We have been under some pressure for many years to formalise our tenure of Clint Fields with the Lords in Trust for Bowes Moor who own the land which was occupied as allotments over 100 years ago. Following my first meeting with their Chairman, it was agreed that their Agent would prepare an Agreement rather than a formal lease. This will not require the employment of Solicitors and thus save considerable expense. After some exchanges, a document has now been received for our consideration.

#### **Finance and General.**

We increased the Precept this year which caused some adverse comments despite the facts that it has not been raised for four years and is still less than £7 per year for Band D. Cllr Hughes wrote an excellent rebuttal on Facebook, describing what the PC actually does for the village, so I will restrict my comments to financial aspects.

When we were paid to tend the Castle grounds, we built up a substantial financial reserve to

extend the cemetery and, in fact, came under pressure from the Auditors to reduce it. One of the ways we did this was to keep the precept down, together with allotment rents.

This year's budget certain income including allotment and West Clint field rent plus VAT refund (which some PCs don't claim) amounts to £6172. Income from burials cannot be relied on.

Against this our certain expenditure on Clerk's salary, insurances, grass cutting, PAYE, playground inspections and VAT totals £4550. Add the cost of the cemetery wall to end up with about £5500, leaving only £612 to spend as we wish this year but we will still have a deficit of £328.00 To eliminate this we can only spend £284 on what we like! It could be argued that we should have raised the Precept previously.

After all this, it is a pleasure to welcome Chris Tipping onto the Council and to thank all Councillors for their hard, unpaid work throughout the year. Thanks also go to Helen, our redoubtable Parish Clerk and Financial Officer, who, by the way, used to be Financial Controller of a Barnard Castle Company.

J.D. Carlisle 5-5-'19