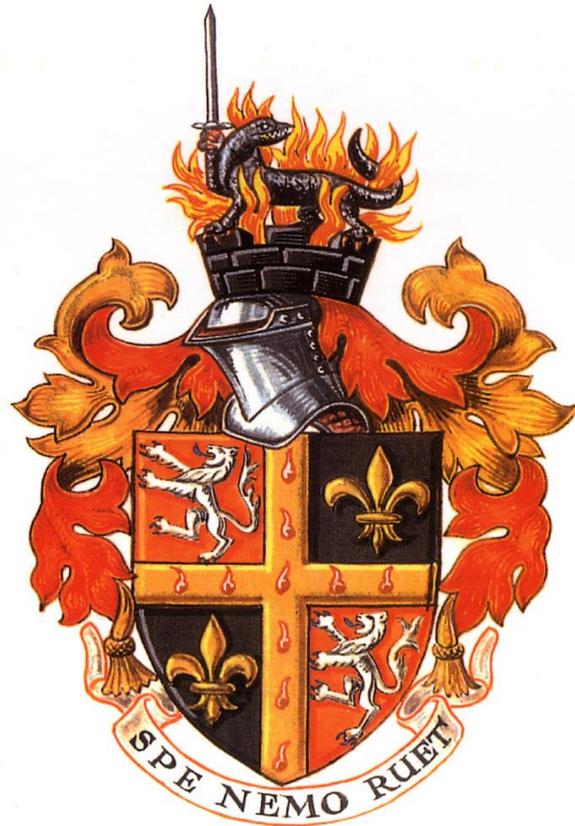


# SPENNYMOOR TOWN COUNCIL



## ANNUAL REPORT

**2021/22**

## Town Mayor, Councillor Neil Foster



The Year 2021/22 was a challenging year for all due to Covid, however, restrictions have lifted and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

I believe that this role is more than just raising monies for great causes. The Mayor's role inside the Council is as the apolitical chairman of Town Council meetings. The Mayor's public responsibility is to champion Spennymoor, Tudhoe, Kirk Merrington, Middlestone Moor and Byers Green, engaging with local people and communities. Following the elections in May 2021, the new administration of the Council committed to working with all groups within it to the benefit of all local communities.

Public events provide the role of Mayor with opportunities to raise funds for charity. I am delighted to confirm that even with Covid restrictions affecting some events, I was able to raise £3,770.17 to assist the Spennymoor Town Band going forward.

## **Priorities**

The Town Council's priorities are contained in the Council's Strategy, a document which is available on the Council's Website, or you can ask for a copy from reception at the Town Hall. This is a medium to long term strategy, covering a 10 year period and each year an annual action plan will be created. I am delighted to be able to advise that the action plan for 2021/22 was fully achieved.

This plan saw new public realm CCTV installed in the Town Centre, as well as the CCTV in and around the Town Hall upgraded.

The Council has applied for, and achieved, the Foundation Level award of the Local Council Award Scheme and in this forthcoming year will be striving towards achieving the Quality level award.

Quarterly reports relating to the Bob Abley Art Gallery income and expenditure is now presented to Council on a quarterly basis. During 2019, the Norman Cornish Centenary Year, the Council saw revenues from commission rise from £7,000 to over £50,000. Sales in the following two years were obviously impacted by Covid due to restrictions on being able to open the Gallery to the public. However, I am pleased to advise that Gallery is open again and as well as hosting works by Norman Cornish and other local and regional artists, it is now housing the 'Coming Home' Exhibition featuring work from the Rocks Brothers, two Spennymoor born artists who are twins who paint on the same picture.

A new Finance Manager has been recruited. Managing budgets professionally and prudently, whilst achieving an unqualified external audit, together allowed the Council to maintain a zero level increase in the precept for 2022/23, in an effort to assist residents during what has been, and will continue to be a difficult time financially.

The Council also continues to offer most services to parishioners at up to 50% less than non-parishioners and this will continue this year.

Play facilities in Jubilee Park such as the crazy golf and tennis are free during the school holidays.

A third flagpole has been installed at the Town Hall to allow the Council Flag and Union Flag to be flown permanently and other flags to be flown to show support for other organisations and events such as Ukraine following the war, team representing England in major competitions, the Merchant Navy for National Merchant Navy Day etc. The latter is of particular significance to me as I was formerly in the Merchant Navy.

Following consultation with residents in Byers Green, a disused building was demolished, and the Council is now seeking funding to extend the small play area near Wear View in Byers Green to provide improved facilities for children and families.

## **Additional Projects**

These have included installing new heating facilities in Byers Green Village Hall, Kirk Merrington Village Hall, Tudhoe Community Centre, Kirk Merrington pre-school and Tudhoe Cricket Club.

Working with Durham County Council, the Town Council has agreed to take over the management of the public car park at Kirk Merrington, following Neighbourhood Funding being used to repair it.

New handwashers/dryers were installed in the toilets at Jubilee Park.

A tree survey was carried out in Jubilee Park and some unsafe and diseased trees were removed.

## **Consultation**

As stated above, the Town Council carried out a consultation with residents in Byers Green, and also held a face to face consultation in the Town Hall in Spennymoor to finalise the Council's Strategic Plan. Residents were also given the opportunity of contacting the Town Hall via email, post and telephone to respond to the consultation, following the contents of it appearing in the Spennymoor News.

There will also be an information stall at the Armed Forces Day event this year, and a consultation at the Town Show. Both to be held in Jubilee Park. The dates of all of the Council events are published on the Council's website and Facebook page, and have been advertised in the Spennymoor News.

Residents also have the opportunity to ask questions at Council Meetings and attend the Annual Meeting of Electors, which is usually held in March each year.

## **Community Grants**

The Council has a Community Grants Policy and application process. In 2021/22 it allocated the following:

£500 - One Step at a Time, a not for profit Community Interest Company, which provides support services for people with mental health problems.

£500 – Byers Green Community Arts Group.

£200 – Lauren Stokoe – a young darts prodigy who has represented her country in competitions, as well as promoting Spennymoor.

£200 – Lucy Aston – a young gymnast who has represented Great Britain and who was given funding to assist her to travel to Azerbaijan to compete.

£500 - Spennymoor Army Cadets Detachment – to provide tablets so that cadets can access their training and information online.

£2,374.50 – to provide Easter treats for children.

£9,500 was allocated to Spennymoor Town Gala to help it get back on it's feet post Covid, and over £14,500 has been allocated for the Gala in July 2022.

Other organisations which the Council now funds every year include:

A £1000 grant each to community organisations in Middlestone Moor, Kirk Merrington and Byers Green to provide events for residents in those areas, and £2000 to an organization which puts on a bus trip for older citizens from Spennymoor and Tudhoe.

Also grants to assist people to attend the Durham Big Meeting, Spennymoor Town Band, along with up to £5,000 of free room hire for charities and organisations such as the Armed Forces Outreach Service, the Poppy Collection count etc.

Last year there was no charge for the use of football pitches and other sporting facilities on Town Council land to give people a boost following the impact of Covid.

### **External Funding**

The Council has secured over £100,000 in funding to re-build the Spennymoor Cricket Club pavilion following an arson attack which destroyed the original building in 2019.

The construction of the new facility will commence in June 2022 and be completed by the end of the year.

The Ministry of Defence have committed £3,000 towards Armed Forces Day.

We have also secured funding for the planting of trees, and in particular towards the planting of cherry blossom trees in Jubilee Park as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations this year. As well as monies to improve Parish Paths on behalf of Durham County Council and to create additional steps in the Cow Plantation Nature Reserve.

The Council also allowed Tudhoe Community Centre, Byers Green Village Hall and Kirk Merrington Village Hall to apply for Covid Recovery funding directly to allow the management committees to boost the finances of the facilities.

### **Events**

The events programme was restricted somewhat, however, the Council still organized the annual Party in the Park concert which saw some 5000 people in attendance, with a similar number of attendees at the annual Fireworks display. The Town Show went ahead with free rides for children and entertainment for all, along with the Horticultural Show. Santa was back in his grotto , but due to Storm Arwen we had to cancel the Christmas Tree light switch-on and events.

The Mayor hosted the Mayor at Home, Civic Dinner, Civic Church Service, Civic Carol Service and Town Quiz, all of which raised vital funds for the Town Band, and brought local people and Civic dignitaries together.

Armistice Day and Remembrance Day events were as well attended as ever, with the local townsfolk and organisations, along with veterans and the military doing the town proud once again in its remembrance of the fallen.

Please look on the Council Website and Facebook page for this year's calendar of events.

## **Governance**

As mentioned earlier the Council has achieved Foundation Status via the Local Council Award Scheme.

The Council's overall audit rating has been raised from Moderate to Substantial.

We achieved an unqualified external audit which demonstrates the Council is managing its finances correctly.

Staff now have access to an Employee Support Programme to improve health and wellbeing.

## **Looking Forward**

The Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency and has formally recognized its duties in relation to Bio Diversity and Crime and Disorder.

This coming year will see it stepping up its efforts to tackle climate change and improving bio-diversity and it has signed up to Investors in the Environment to develop an appropriate Carbon Reduction plan. A number of Councillors will be forming an Environment Working Group to drive this forward with Officers.

The new Council Action Plan for 2022/23 is available on the Council's website, or via reception at the Town Hall. This follows Officers and some Members forming a Strategic Working Group to drive it forward and get it completed.

I am now delighted to be handing over the chains of office to a new Mayor and Chairman of the Council for 2022/23, in the knowledge that they are inheriting a strong platform on which to drive the Council forward with their colleagues across the political groups.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

The Town Council, through the Town Clerk, are always pleased to receive your views and ideas together with your suggestions on any matter to benefit the community. You may contact us at the following postal address:

Spennymoor Town Council  
Town Hall  
Spennymoor  
County Durham  
DL16 6DG

Telephone (01388) 815276 (answering machine after office hours)

Email: [info@spennymoor-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@spennymoor-tc.gov.uk)

Website: <http://www.spennymoor-tc.gov.uk/>