

WEST BEDLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL



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TOWN COUNCIL

# RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2017 Issue



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Gateway Features



Bedlington's Quiet Man



2017 - 18 Budget



## Foreword by the Mayor

Writing this forward for the last time is sad for me personally because I have felt very honoured to be your Mayor for the last two years but also sad because of some of the projects and improvements we wanted to achieve for the Town have yet to be finalised. I hope in the months and years to come they will be!

Over the last couple of years, with the help of some prescient fellow councillors, we have seen the Town Council transformed from a dysfunctional body into one which works and delivers for residents. We have seen huge infrastructural changes, as far as our responsibility goes that is, with quite sizable investments in new play areas and equipment, bus shelters, as well as our street furniture and systematic change in the way we function. Our support for our residents and especially our young people has been uncompromising. Coupled with the changes going on in the Town at present the future is starting to look slightly rosé if not quite rosy just yet!

I have tried through the council to bring a brand image to the Town using things which we inherently own. That's why the heritage gateway features have gone up, some old seats have been replaced with new Terrier ones and we now have our street furniture painted in our own Town colours. We have stamped our footprint onto the map of not just Northumberland but nationally and internationally too with these changes. One thing is for sure, everyone knows when they arrive at Bedlington these days! Now we need our partners to give us the internal development needed to inspire and keep people here!

I hope to see the transformation of Bedlington from ugly duckling to glamorous swan in the very near future, after decades of neglect and being ignored I think it's the least we can expect!

*Malcolm Robinson*

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## St Bedes - Road Safety Campaign

St Bedes RCVA Primary School wanted to raise concerns about the dangers of traffic around their school. They believe parking and the volumes of traffic are putting lives at risk.

A competition was held to design posters for a road safety exhibition in the school hall. The Mayor Councillor Malcolm Robinson and Deputy Major Councillor Christine Taylor were invited to the event where pupils were able to relay their concerns directly.

The children judged the competition and winners received twenty house points each. The pupils really enjoyed being part of the campaign and are set to plan further events in the near future.





## Trustees urgently required

**Bedlington Community Centre are looking to recruit new Trustees who will work with current Trustees to assist in building on the work that has already been ongoing for the past 5 years.**

They will bring with them good communication and interpersonal skills, commitment to the Trust and a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to the smooth running of the centre. We are also looking for Trustees who have the ability to work effectively as a member of a team and the ability to think creatively.

The board will also be looking for someone who can assist the current Treasurer to manage and operate the Centre's single account system. This will require good organisation skills, common sense and good book keeping knowledge.

The position of Trustee is a voluntary one although reasonable travel expenses will be available.

**Time Commitment.** Board meetings are held four times a year as a minimum although special meetings may be held as required. Trustees share the duties of opening and locking the building as required. The board is supported by a small but dedicated group of volunteers

We are a registered charity 1151177 and training will be available for new Trustees.

For more information please contact the centre on 824141 or [bedlingtoncommunitycentre@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bedlingtoncommunitycentre@hotmail.co.uk)

## Allotments

**Since the creation of the Town Council allotments have been something various administrations have tried to wrestle with for a better deal all round. None had been successful.**

This was something the current Town Council was determined to work through and reach a solution to because the time and oversight needed to work to their current lease arrangements was something we felt could be better spent elsewhere on Town business.

With that in mind several meetings were arranged for each of our allotment associations to come in and discuss possible ways forward.

This council's position was that as they were essentially self-managing anyway that should be recognised in a new lease, something which gives them as much protection as we could offer yet allows them to oversee the management of the allotments themselves.

In other words free of council control and separated as much as is possible.

That has now eventually been agreed and both Ridge Terrace Allotments and Dr Pit Allotments are now completely self-managed with new long leases in place.

Councillor Christine Taylor was recently invited to The North East Allotment Associations Annual General Meeting where she explained West Bedlington Town Council's strategy regarding allotment self-management, this was seen as an innovative solution and fully endorsed by the attending membership.

Once again West Bedlington Town Council not afraid to try innovative solutions to break age old problems!

# TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS



You can attend Town Council meetings (usually the second Thursday of the month at Bedlington Community Centre at 6.30pm)

Before each Town Council meeting there will be a 15 minute open Session. The Chair will invite members of the public present to put questions to, or draw relevant matters to the attention of the Council prior to commencement of business. In order to give every member of the public a fair chance of asking a question, the number of questions asked by any individual person may be limited at the Chairs discretion.

## Council and Committee Meeting Diary

All meeting dates are subject to Council approval. Provisional dates for 2017 are shown in the table below.

Year	Month	Full Council	Service Committee
		6.30pm	6.00pm
2017	March	9th	23rd
2017	April	6th	27th

Further meetings will be scheduled after the 4th May 2017 election.

## Councillors Attendance at Meetings (Full Council)

	May 16	Jun 16	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Jan 17
Keith Dalton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Joe Dobie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
David Graham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paul Headley	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adam Hogg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Malcolm Robinson (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jim Tyler	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Simon Tyler	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Christine Taylor (Deputy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Councillors Attendance at Meetings (Services)

	May 16	Jun 16	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Jan 17
Keith Dalton (Deputy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Joe Dobie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
David Graham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paul Headley	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adam Hogg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Malcolm Robinson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jim Tyler	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Christine Taylor (Chair)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

NB Councillor Simon Taylor is not a member of the Services Committee

# Litter Bins in Bedlington

**West Bedlington Town Council always ready to listen to residents' difficulties became worried about the above normal height of the lamp post mounted litter bins which the new lighting project was putting back once they had replaced the lamp post.**

Also the fact that these now have to take all waste including dog poo was of concern. As we mentioned in our last newsletter funds were sought and agreed so we instigated a project of replacing all of these lamp post bins with much bigger and roomier floor standing ones.

We can now tell everyone that as well as getting funding for the bins and the works needed to put them in situ we have now been successful in locating a sponsor!

"We at Vets4Pets Bedlington are delighted to team up with West Bedlington Town Council to raise awareness of the importance of public hygiene when it comes to our pets. Together we are launching a campaign to encourage all dog owners to "bag it and bin it" in an effort to keep our pavements and parks clean.

It's not just common sense that we don't want to see poop on the path or worse still put our foot in it - there are important public health concerns to boot!

Intestinal worms, carried by our pets, lay microscopic eggs that are passed out in the faeces and then infect the environment. If these eggs find their way onto our hands

and are accidentally swallowed they can cause terrible diseases including blindness. Although it is children that are most at risk adults can be affected too.



At Vets4Pets we always advise our clients how best to protect their pets from worm infections, but this is only part of the cycle. It is just as vital that dog poop is not left to contaminate the ground. We are very grateful to West Bedlington Town Council for letting us post polite notices on many of the bins around our town to gently remind dog owners to pick up the poop."

We all have a responsibility to clean up after our pouches, so do the right thing - "bag it and bin it!"

(Anyone wanting more information please phone Vets4Pets Bedlington 01670 536 110)

## **Litter Bin Renewal Project - Further Update and Our Apologies.**

Early in 2016 we undertook to replace many of our current post mounted litter bins with larger capacity ground standing bins (subject to there been a suitable



alternative location for a ground standing bin in the vicinity).

We have invested considerably in purchasing 40 new larger capacity ground standing bins and had hoped to have all of these in place before now. We have them safely stored ready for installation.

We were pleased that Northumberland County Council supported the scheme and they have committed to installing the bins free of charge which was very welcome. Regrettably the installation of the bins has been delayed by other priorities for the County Council but it is still their intention to help us complete the project as soon as possible.

We are aware that a number of residents have requested new litter bins or a relocation of an existing litter bin and we wanted to assure residents that the project is still planned to be completed as soon as possible.

In the mean time we would like to apologise for not been able on this occasion to deliver the promised service as quickly as we would have liked. The Town Council prides itself on being able to provide the most local of services in the best way possible but regrettably on this occasion we feel we have come up short of our own high expectations for which we can only apologise again.

# ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE



# Town and Parish Council Election May 4th 2017

Remember to register to vote if you have not already done so.

You must register to vote before you can vote in UK elections.

You can register to vote when you're:

16 years old in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (and vote when you're 18)

After you've registered, your name and address will appear on the electoral register.

## Ways to vote

1. in person at a polling station
2. by post
3. by proxy (getting someone else to vote for you)

You can find out more how to register to vote online at [www.gov.uk/voting-in-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/voting-in-the-uk)

## Residents invited to vote by post

Residents in Northumberland are being asked by Northumberland County Council to consider voting by post at the forthcoming county and parish council elections which will take place on May 4 2017.

Voting by post will save a trip to the polling station and is often particularly helpful for the elderly and infirm, for those who may be away on polling day and for those who live in remote rural areas.

If in the past you have been a polling station voter and would like to give postal voting a try you will need to contact Northumberland County Council's electoral service team to request an application form.

This will need to be returned to the County Council by the statutory deadline of Thursday 18 April.

You can request a postal vote application form by ringing the council's election office on 01670 624811.

# The New Bedlington Gateway Features

Firstly, all of the new gateway features have been chosen for their association with Bedlington. All are inextricably linked either by their commercial, religious or social heritage to the Town. They have all been placed at strategic points to give anyone coming into the town by car or bus the maximum view point and all carry the adage “Welcome to Bedlington”.

Possibly the most obvious one is the Bedlington Terrier on the south entrance. This signifies Bedlington’s association with the dog breed and Terrier owners have already said how much they admire it.

Next on the north entrance we have a St Cuthberts Cross. Bedlington has a long and established connection with St Cuthbert; in fact it’s one of our earliest historical records, and the Church in the centre of town is named after this saint. The site of the church dates back to around 1069AD.

On the western entrance we see the

Bedlington coat of arms. This was something the old BUDC applied for and Welwyn Electronics paid the fees for it. This has as much social documentary as historical given the socio-economic changes it represents.

On the eastern entrance we see a scale model of the first steam train sent to Holland, built in Bedlington of course. The De Arend, or the Eagle, was the first steam train to run in Holland in 1839 and in 1939 they built a replica for their Centenary. After speaking to Spela Semion at the Dutch National Railways Museum in Utrecht, they allowed us to use the picture of their replica to show just how impressive the original would have been in its day.

There will be lecterns with full explanations adjacent to each feature and whilst the grass and planting in the roundabout at the top end was our gateway feature (thank you NCC) residents, we hope, will understand why we wanted much more pertinent and prominent gateways and entrances into our Town. Can’t think of another Town that has four such bespoke gateway features, once again Bedlington leading where others fear to tread!



# What a relief

**West Bedlington Town Council has been trying to get a public toilet open within the confines of the Town centre for some time, a couple of years in fact!**

We felt not having a publicly accessible toilet facility would be detrimental to the Town's attractiveness and initially we tried to reopen the one which had been closed at the rear of Tesco. However Northumberland County Council had included that in the site sale so in effect it was then Tesco's and they had no intention of reopening it.

It was demolished in pretty quick order once Arch took over control of the site.

Turning our attention to the toilet block next to the car parks opposite the library and here Northumberland County Council told us these were an uneconomical option to repair and reopen. We have on several occasions asked to see these figures because whilst they might be uneconomical for



Northumberland County Council they might not have been for this Town Council. The figures have never been supplied.

We even explored reopening the block in Attlee Park but given its position it soon became untenable financially.

Working in partnership with the

Trustees in the Bedlington Community Centre we have been able to come up with a public toilet provision.

The toilets within the Community Centre will be available and open to members of public, whenever the Community Centre is open.

Opening times are dependent upon volunteers been available to staff the building, but generally the building is open Monday to Friday between 9am and 1pm.

We would like to extend the opening times of the building and the availability of the toilets and to that end we are appealing for new volunteers to help staff the building please see Bedlington Community Centre trustees advert elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Council and Trustees have signed up to Northumberland County Councils "You're Welcome" initiative, which encourages local businesses to allow people to use their toilets without the need to make a purchase.

## Enterprise Challenge

**West Bedlington Town Council is keen to invest in our young people so as part of our Christmas activities we offered financial support to groups led by Leading Link who are encouraging young people to get involved in community activities by designing and making products to sell at our Christmas Fair.**

Leading Link led workshops to produce items for sale and on the day of our Christmas Fair they filled three tables with their goods. These youngsters are encouraged to throw themselves into these projects and an incentive prize of a voucher was awarded to the winning group with a profit of approximately £120.

Evaluation of the overall experience clearly demonstrated an increase in confidence; experience in product design as well as marketing and sales all skills which will stand them in good stead going forward.

As a Council we would like to thank them all for their contribution to our Christmas Fair and for the positivity and energy they brought to the occasion.







## Bedlington Trade

**We feel a Town Council should be backing local traders, especially the smaller ones who have put their money where their mouths are and taken the gamble to open up businesses in our Town. It seems inherent within the remit of a Town Council that should be the case and I hope it will be in any future issues.**

We do have some new business in the Town already, even before the proposed redeveloped of the Tesco site into a retail complex, and I have asked some, without any prejudice, for a brief quote... Hopefully all new businesses in the Town will appear in future newsletters. If you are a new business in Bedlington and would like to be included within future newsletters please get in touch.

**Party zone...** "Opening a small business in our own Town was something of a dream for us but we did it. We now offer a full range of party goods, house hold goods, sweets, boys and girls toys, cards for any occasion and more....."

**Vets4Pets...** "Before Vets4Pets Bedlington opened there wasn't a full time, fully equipped veterinary surgery in the town meaning pet owners had to travel to Morpeth or Cramlington. At Vets4Pets Bedlington our goal is to be the community's vet of choice, supporting pet owners; putting their pets first at every stage of their life."



## The Bedlington Jobs Fair

At Bedlington Community Centre

Tuesday 7th  
March 2017

10am to 3pm

Because of the successful nature of our last Jobs fair West Bedlington Town Council have again teamed up with Dept. Works and Pensions to hold another. Our last Jobs fair attracted well over 300 job seekers through the door and many reported a successful outcome to their day.

This time many more full and part time jobs are on offer in fields as varied as care workers to bus drivers, seasonal hospitality staff to retail workers.

As well as a fantastic range of real jobs there will also be agencies who can offer help and advice to anyone with any type of special needs and ones specialising in training and retraining.

So if you are looking for a job or want to change direction or even get back into the workplace please come along and see for yourself what's on offer.

Once again WBTC putting our residents needs front and centre!



# A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO WEST BEDLINGTON COMMUNITY CHEST PROGRAMME

On behalf of Morpeth & District Cage Bird Society, the Committee and Members would like to extend a very special thank you to the Committee of the West Bedlington Town Council Community Chest Programme for their kind donation of £200 towards the running of our 2016 Annual Open Show, which was held this year at Bedlington Community Centre on Saturday 22nd October.

This sum of money helps our Society in so many ways, it pays for the hire of the show hall and enables us to keep the Society flourishing, and in turn the money is returned to the community by the expenditure of our exhibitors in the facilities of the Community Centre and the local pubs and cafe's of Bedlington. We warmly welcome members of the public, who seem to enjoy the afternoon as much as us.

The Show attracted 600 top quality cage bird exhibits including the full range of Canaries through to the beauty of our native British Birds and the incredibly colourful Foreign birds. We welcomed exhibitors from all over the North, and as far afield as Fife in Scotland to Halifax in the South. Every one of them commented on the excellent facilities provided by the Community Centre and the very well run Show. We were particularly delighted to welcome Christine Taylor, the Deputy Mayor who very kindly and graciously presented the trophies to the winning exhibitors.

Morpeth Cage Bird Society was formed in 1901 by a group of local cage bird fanciers, and an exhibition of Cage Birds was held every year in the Town Hall in Morpeth, except for the war years when it was temporarily disbanded. It reformed after the war years when it was renamed Morpeth & District Cage Bird Society.

Unfortunately the cost of the Town Hall became prohibitive, and as nearly all the Committee lived in the Bedlington area, it was decided that the show would move to a venue in Bedlington and for many years it was held at St Benet Biscops RC High School at Ridge Terrace. Three years ago, after a major electrical problem at the School just before the Show was scheduled to run, Bedlington Community Centre stepped in and allowed us to have the show in their function hall.

The feedback from all of our members and exhibitors was so positive regarding the facilities, the food provided for our Judges and the exhibitors by the Centre staff, and the welcome we received.

We therefore have had the pleasure of hosting our event every year since.

Thank you to you all.



## Sporting Club Bedlington

**It's been some time since we last carried an update on this subject. It is certainly not a case of nothing heard soonest forgotten!**

Since West Bedlington Town Council took up the principled offer by Mr Rutherford for some land to build a sport facility there have been serious efforts made by a small number of people to put in place the foundations needed to turn that dream into a reality. The concept has been discussed, an architect has drawn up some planning ideas and an artist's impression has even been produced.

West Bedlington Town Council have asked the Bedlingtonshire Development Trust to play a lead role in this because of their contacts, business acumen and ability to draw down funding from places inaccessible to even the Town Council! We would expect to see regular updates on progress, certainly once refined planning options for the ground is produced. Once that has been agreed then it will be the national funders who will say yea or nay to our ambitions!





## Bedlington Picnic 2017

**On a wet July day in 2016, the best of Bedlington shone through down at Attlee Park.**

The Bedlington Picnic brought so many of our organisations together and we were able to put on a fantastic show of everything that makes our town great. From Bedlington Terriers to bands, crafts to cheer leading, football to indulging in too many of Lynn's pies, the day had something for everyone.

As an inaugural event last year it would be wonderful if we could continue with this in 2017, however we need your support. We would love to have faces old and new to support

us in this event and are looking for people to support us in whichever way they can. We are looking for people with organisational experience to form a working group, entertainers, stallholders, sponsors... or anyone else who think they might like to join us for the fun of it!

With summer drawing ever nearer we will be working further on the project over the next few months. Should anyone wish to get involved, please get in touch either via [www.facebook.com/bedlingtonpicnic](http://www.facebook.com/bedlingtonpicnic) or at [bedlingtonpicnic@gmail.com](mailto:bedlingtonpicnic@gmail.com)

We look forward to seeing you all again in the summer!

## New Christmas Lights for Bedlington

**As part of the councils continued commitment to enhance Bedlington around the festive season we purchased 13 new lamp post mounted Christmas light motifs for the Front Street ahead of last Christmas. All switched on by Her Majesty, Michael Jackson and The Grindge - where else but Bedlington?**



Listening to residents and taking on board further comments we have set aside money to purchase additional lights for this coming festive season which will see new light motifs down Glebe Bank and along Schalksmuhle Road and back up to re-join the Front Street.

In addition we also plan to light up the market



square with string lights between the bespoke lamp posts to give a cosier feel around the Christmas tree.

We will also be replacing some of the string lights in the trees along the front street down to Attlee Bank to carry the festive feel along the main areas of the town for Christmas 2017.



## Our new seats

**West Bedlington Town Council decided to invest in the Bedlingtonshire Development Trust's new Terrier designed seats. The Council felt that they have an important significance to the Town and because of the way the project is funded and run by the Trust we are delighted to help them deliver more community improvements for many of our residents.**

The seats are actually bespoke to the town but the new seat outside the Red Lion is truly a one off.

Good comments have been made about these seats not just locally or regionally but nationally too!

Like the gateway features these seats were a determined effort to endorse Bedlington as a brand and show this is a Town willing to embrace its heritage and canine repute in ways which promote the Town for all to see.

We have also invested in new seats for our war memorial. As well as new seats we hope to see a revised and much better planting in place soon to make this a focal feature in the Town centre.

The seats themselves are poignantly commemorating WW1 as can easily be seen.

The idea is to make a kind of contemplative and relaxing seating area just behind the Bedlington Cenotaph and to show our respect for our brave past fallen.



## Play Area Equipment Replacement Update

**Following our initial article in our last Newsletter which outlined our plans to upgrade and replace the play equipment in both Meadowdale and Westlea play areas we are pleased to say that the work is (at the time of going to press) scheduled to be completed and both play areas are to be open for use .**

As we have previously stated this is the biggest spend this council has ever undertaken and we have been extremely careful to have had adequate supervision for each step in the process to come up with the best options for our residents.

Going forward as long as future councils budget responsibly, we should be able to see a sensible periodic replacement of this expensive equipment without the need to raise precepts. A lot of this equipment carries a 30 year guarantee and due to the prudence of this council's plan to put away approximately 10% of this cost each year the replacement costs will be provided for over the next few years.

We sincerely hope our younger residents get years of enjoyment out of these facilities.

**From our Contractor HAGS SMP. Bedlington see two Play Areas re-developed.**

"In developing the proposals for the two new Play Areas at Meadowdale and Westlea HAGS wanted to really understand the Town Councils specific desired outcomes which would result from the re-development of both play areas. What was important to both the Town Council but more importantly, the Community of Bedlington helped lead the development of the designed proposals for both play areas.

Firstly we wanted to understand the Town Council's vision for Bedlington, where it saw itself, and how it wanted to be forward thinking for the improvement for both the Town itself and the Community to which it serves. Secondly, consideration wanted to be given to the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of the newly designed play areas to ensure they remained modern and exciting for the Children within the community but which were also manageable and serviceable assets within the Town. Thirdly, HAGS wanted to understand what within these two new play areas the children and community using them would best benefit from. What types of equipment would they like, for what age groups, how important was inclusion as an aspect of the play areas and what did 'Wow' factor mean to the children of Bedlington. All

of this information helped to inform the designed proposals and completed installations of the new play areas which now provide fun, excitement, challenge and stimulation for all ages and abilities.

Throughout the entire process from initial consultation through to contract delivery stage the Town Council made sure that the investment being made into these two new play areas offered the community of Bedlington what they wanted, signified good value for money, and provided best practice play environments for the use and enjoyment of the community as a whole.

One key importance to the successful delivery of both play areas is the ongoing support which HAGS will provide post installation completion. This includes the availability of spare parts to keep the play areas running and operational, along with assistance when the play areas are officially opened to the public, and celebrated.

The working relationship between the Town Council and HAGS has been a harmonious one in which both parties have used effective communication and best practice to deliver fantastic, exciting and engaging play areas which are suitable for children of all ages and abilities, and which will, we hope be enjoyed by the Community of Bedlington for many years to come."

# COMMUNITY GRANTS

**West Bedlington Town Council has a 'Community Chest' scheme which gives local voluntary groups and organisations a chance to bid for funding.**

This might be to help establish a new group or to carry out extra activities that they wouldn't otherwise be able to do - e.g. sporting activities, arts, music or craft group, new equipment for a youth club - but these ideas will be coming from the community themselves.

To qualify for an award the applicant must be able to demonstrate clearly that any funding from West Bedlington Town Council will benefit the Town, or residents of the Town.

Grant applications will be dealt with by the Full Council. In determining the validity of an application, the Council will refer to the following guidelines:

Applications will be considered for the following purposes:

1. For the purpose of purchasing equipment or materials either in part or in full.
2. For the purchase of services e.g. venue hire or transport that will enable group members to partake in a group trip or outing regardless of their incomes.
3. For running costs (but not wages) of a viable group that is experiencing a period of hardship.



4. For the provision of recreational activities and facilities.
5. For activities that raise the profile of the area.

There is £5,000 available for community grants in the current financial year.

Application forms are available from the Council's web page or from the Council's Office.



Councillor Paul Hedley on the new bench

## New Seat for Hartford Bridge

**Residents of Hartford Bridge now have a new public seat to use.**

The seat chosen by local resident and Councillor Paul Hedley, is made from reclaimed material which will not rust and requires the minimum of maintenance.

The new seat is located close to a local dog walkers route into the green flag awarded Plessey Woods which is said to be a good "dark sky" location for stargazing.

Picture shows Hartford Bridge resident Councillor Hedley on the new seat.

# A review from The Mayor

## Councillor Malcolm Robinson

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Another year and this time quite a few changes, some still to come. This will be the last time I write one of these roundups as Mayor. I would like to mention some of the things we have done over the last 2 years during my time as chair of the council and what shape we intend to leave council in when we dissolve this present administration.

In my first newsletter update I said transparency and engagement with the community were the two things I wanted to promote and improve. For transparency, anyone looking at the landing page on our web site can see for themselves we have the most up to date council information in terms of minutes of meetings etc for any Town or Parish council in the county.

A lot of the information contained there quite literally isn't so freely available in other councils, in fact that's a problem the Northumberland Association of Local Councils has been highlighting of late! Your Council once again, ahead of the curve and not frightened to go where others fear to tread!

Renewed engagement with the community we represent was another aim and I hope no one or group can say we have turned down any request to speak to them or hidden ourselves behind a council facade.

The most difficult and awkward questions and decisions have been met head on with none being deferred for convenience. We even held an internal investigation after unsubstantiated accusations were levelled against members.

We have stood shoulder to shoulder with residents at the likes of NCC planning meetings over such diverse subjects as our Conservation Area, hedge removals, new housing and everything in between.

We implemented a resident's panel, which is now looking at preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, and a Youth Council which allows us to ask our young people what their thoughts and

ideas are for the town. We instigated and support the Bedlington in Bloom group and very many thanks to them for all of their efforts. We have worked with and also supported our young people, some as they represented Bedlington in some pretty far flung places throughout the world as well, of course, as more localised ones such as the Enterprise Challenge delivered by Leading Link last Xmas.

Some of the things we have achieved are not really on public show however their value is apparent once we look a little closer.

I have repeatedly talked about getting the working structure of this council into a fit shape and that coupled with a now functional budget means we can expect to see progress for the Town in the years to come.

We have done the dirty work, we have got through it, most if not all of our assets are in as good a shape as they can possibly be in, most are brand new, so now is the time for some more ambitious plans to emerge! That coupled with the Town centre redevelopment should see our Town transform, from the frankly ignored market town it has been allowed to decay into, to one which exudes confidence and innovation.

We have renewed our bus shelters, removed the small lamp post bins and replaced them with larger floor standing ones, completely renewed our young people's play areas, installed new gateway features which demonstrate Bedlington's long prestigious heritage, introduced a corporate colour scheme for all of our

fixed assets, reinvented Bedlington Fair Days, with one attracting over 10,000 visitors, put on Xmas lights switch on events which have been of a professional standard, held dog shows, brass band competitions, placed defibrillators throughout the Town, supported Bedlington Picnic, provided financial support to local groups and our first schools.

All this has been achieved essentially in the last 2 years but I will also include the new parking bays on Glebe Road and the new footpath down to Attlee Park seeing as I proposed and then had to oversee both those projects when they became moribund and bring them in on time and both under budget!

From what was essentially a ramshackle start the changes we have introduced in the last two years have been proactive and positive and I applaud all the councillors who held their nerves and saw the various projects through. Quite a few would have been unthinkable only a few short years ago!

All in all I hope everyone can see that when I said this council will adopt transparency and a renewed community engagement, that's exactly what we have delivered, as well as other things of course!

So how do we leave this council? In a dammed sight better shape than we found it in that's for sure! Four years ago the previous administration had taken on a huge increase in costs in their final hours. Why; we can only speculate! However the fact remained over 70p in every pound paid by



residents to this council in precept was being spent on the costs of having a Town Council! For the next two years that figure dropped slightly but still was over 60p in every pound! That figure is now around 23p in every pound, a huge turnaround in the last two years and one, which I would speculate, knocks every other parish council into a cocked hat!

With our successful bids and transactions regarding the most expensive assets we have renewed, namely our children's play area equipment, we have rebalanced our financial reserves back into an envious order and been able to purchase extra equipment for disabled children! For once we have a council using astute business practices for community benefit!

We have set up working structures within council now so sub committees and working groups can examine potential projects and make reports back to full council for their approval or not as the case may be. The accounts are set out in much clearer ways these days so more people can understand where their money is going. In fact we have just had a very good report back from our auditor!

So we have reorganised this council so it can function properly, be financially judicious, give considered opinions, back its residents and make decisions based on the merits of the argument and Town enhancements rather than political shenanigans.

I have been proud to serve two terms as your Mayor and I think the changes we have introduced during those

terms have been both extensive and of significance. None of this could have been achieved without the backing of the majority of other councillors. Debates have been fraught at times and sometimes even loud and 'flamboyant' but that just shows a passion for the subject and as long as it was all about improving our Town and its environs then as chair my position was and is 'let it rip'!

One final thought...

There have been questions about why do we have more than one council for Bedlington and the old Shire. There have also been calls for a reunification into a present day sort of BUDC. (Bedlingtonshire Urban District Council)

I don't really want to go over old ground but suffice it to say the area (Bedlingtonshire) was split into three because of the politics of the day. That's history or folklore depending on who you ask!

The second question is much more relevant to us today.

It is a difficult one to answer without drawing comparisons and I have never made direct reference to other parish councils but we can easily see what we might be giving up in any reconsolidation!

WBTC has the most positive council tax base, its responsible for the actual Town, it has an exceptionally low precept rate, it is run inexpensively, has a firm grip on costs, no debts, will have its own bespoke workforce and its making significant progress on one of the most divisive subjects for the

last 50 years... namely a sports centre. Joining up with other parishes' will give the new authority no new powers other than those we have at present.

Conversely WBTC residents now recipients of the lowest council tax charges will see their council tax rise to accommodate the higher spending and debt repayments of the other councils.

Also your ability to hold very local people to account diminishes every time councils get bigger and more remote and of course improvements into your local infrastructure and asset base get thrown into the mix along with other parishes which you would then be contributing towards.

There would be economies of scale of course and the one to reconcile immediately would be the fact that currently there are 3 parish clerks and several deputies etc.

A single council would only need a single clerk for a start and savings could be made on the additional administrative staff but there again West Bedlington Town Council residents enjoy the lowest staffing and office costs anyway!

Look at the relationship between staff and office costs set against service deliveries etc for our council, as quoted above ours runs at about 23% of income and that's even more impressive when you consider we are the lowest taxing council as well!

So the next time you hear or see someone suggesting the councils in Bedlingtonshire join up consider the real costs closely!

# 2017 - 18 West Bedlington Town Council Budget

Once again we had to set a budget for the year ahead. Because of the decisions and the budget we set last year we had a bit more scope to bring even more improvements into the Town.

Last year I said that we had to get all of our fixed assets into the best shape possible and by and large we renewed everything. We did this to reset our budget and asset replacement programme back to zero because of years of underfunding and neglect. Well this year we have applied a figure which will go into reserves but which will be ring-fenced for future asset replacements. This means that for the first time ever we will be running a properly accountable future proofed budget, well as far as it can be reasonably foreseen anyway! Paying a little every year means that when these assets need to be replaced in 10, 15, 20 years the money will be there and we shouldn't see any need for large increases in our precept. I also said that funding would be applied for and we have been successful in that so the actual costs in strictly cash terms has been significantly reduced.

Residents might be pleased to see we have brought in a reduction in what this Town Council is charging and at 11+% it's not a bad reduction. However looking at the budget in detail we can see that the reduction is even greater when we compare budgets in a like for like way over the last 3-4 years. Last year was exceptional because we needed to get all of our assets in the best shape we could and we used an increase in precept and some of our financial reserves to pay for that, but

looking at the two previous years we were running similar budget figures.

Stripping out new initiatives in the current year's budget we see a reduction in charge compared to the budget figure of two or three years ago of around 20% and that's on top of the current saving figure of 11%!

So a huge reduction in costs coupled with last year's massive injection of funding to renew our bus shelters, play areas and street furniture and this year sees a large increase in service delivery means this Town Council is not only delivering for its residents it is doing so in innovative and adept ways, never before undertaken.

Looking at one of the main new features in this year's budget we see a figure set aside for an operative. This was something this council has wanted to do for a couple of years as the services we get off NCC are cut back but we want our Town to be in the best shape possible. We could have bought extra services in, as other councils do, however we felt the flexibility of having our own multi skilled operative on hand to do a variety of jobs was the way to go and the fact that it's actually the cheapest way to do it sealed the deal!

So over the last 2 years we have reduced costs, introduced new streamlined working practices, renewed all of the assets in our portfolio and now increased service delivery to new standards while reducing what we charge residents.

That's a Town Council working to benefit its residents and I would commend all councillors who gave up their time and sat through many hours of meetings to get us to that stage.

West Bedlington Town Council		
		% Budget
2017 - 2018 BUDGET		New Year 2017 2018 BUDGET
<b>Administration</b>		
Staff Salaries	25,223	
Ni Employers Contribution	2,361	
Pension Employers Contribution	4,868	
Contingency	2,500	
Clerks Training + SLCC	300	
Payroll Charge by NCC	24	
Travel / Subsistence	100	
<b>Sub- total Administration</b>	<b>36,376</b>	<b>18.07</b>
<b>Office Costs</b>		
Rent + Room Hire	8,000	
Telephone	360	
Internet	0	
Computer Software	200	
Computer Equipment	1,000	
Postage	200	
Printing	300	
Stationery	200	
<b>Sub Total Office Costs</b>	<b>10,260</b>	<b>5.24</b>
<b>Fees &amp; Charges</b>		
Audit - Internal	250	
Audit - External	500	
Legal Fees	1,000	
Subscriptions NALC	1,400	
Subscriptions General	50	
Advertising + Publicity	300	
<b>Sub Total Fees and Charges</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>1.79</b>
<b>Members Expenses</b>		
Councillor's Expenses	300	
Councillor Training	300	
Civic Expenses	100	
Annual Meeting of the Town	300	
<b>Sub Total Members Expenses</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0.51</b>
<b>Grants &amp; Donations</b>		
Community Chest	5,000	
Pupils Fund	4,500	
<b>Sub Total Grants &amp; Donations</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>4.85</b>
<b>Services Provided by West Bedlington Town Council</b>		
Allotments	0	
Play Areas	3,500	
Bus Shelters	5,000	
Grass Cutting	4,000	
Bedding Plants	13,500	
War Memorials	200	
Litter Bins	2,500	
Public Seating	5,000	
Environmental	3,000	
Services Contingency	1,000	
Grit Bins	500	
Meadowdale Gates SLA	2,500	
Atlee Park Path Maintenance	1,500	
Bedlington In Bloom SLA	2,000	
Insurance	3,600	
Newsletter	5,000	
<b>Sub Total Services</b>	<b>52,800</b>	<b>26.98</b>
<b>Events Provided by West Bedlington Town Council</b>		
Remembrance Day	100	
Christmas Tree	1,500	
Existing Christmas Lights	10,000	
Christmas Event	5,000	
New / Upgraded Christmas Lights	7,000	
Events	15,000	
Northumbria in Bloom Entry	200	
Youth / Leisure Support	1,000	
Events Contingencies	0	
<b>Sub Total Events</b>	<b>39,800</b>	<b>20.33</b>
<b>Current Year Projects</b>		
Bus Shelter Renewal Project 2016	4,000	
2016 Play Area Renewal	6,000	
Defibrillators	500	
<b>Sub Total Projects</b>	<b>12,500</b>	<b>6.39</b>
<b>New Year Projects</b>		
Glebe Bank Maintenance Costs	500	
Operative	30,000	
Jobs Fair x2	500	
<b>Sub Total New Projects / Renewals</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>15.84</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>196,736</b>	<b>100.00</b>



# An introduction to Bedlington's quiet man...

**Tony Moss lives quietly right in the heart of Bedlington, however he's known around the world as a designer and builder of sundials which are very much sort after and prominently displayed in the most extraordinary places around the world.**

Following a career in teaching Tony retired early as Senior Lecturer in 'Technology & Design' at Newcastle Polytechnic 1989 due to his wife's terminal illness. He went on to qualify as a Senior inspector of Airframes with British Gliding Association and ran Lindisfarne Aviation Ltd. as M.D. for five years doing annual Certificates of Airworthiness and repairs until retirement called him again.....this gave him more time to donate to his long standing passion Sundials.

Tony formed a lifelong love of sundials as a child and has been a long standing member of the British Sundial Society (BSS) and the North American Sundial Society (NASS). Always intrigued by sundials it wasn't until his second retirement that he made his first one for himself. Moving forward some 20 years and Tony has created in excess of 170 sundials which are situated worldwide from Vancouver

Island to Hong Kong.

You may have seen some of Tony's work right here in the North East as he designed the 20 meter diameter dial on the hill at Silverlink. It's been difficult to choose which ones to tell you about in this article so I've listed a few below:

- The most northerly sundial on Earth at Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen (Svalbard)
- A heliochronometer now on permanent display in the Time Gallery of the South Kensington Museum and a Borromean Ring Armillary Dial on display at the Horniman Museum in London.
- A large bronze horizontal for Holland College, Prince Edward island, Canada.
- A dial from the Royal Astronomical Society for Sir Patrick Moore as their Millennium presentation.
- The Millennium Dial at Ferryhill in Co. Durham.
- A large marble sundial in Greece made to his design.

Very hands on from design to installation Tony was recognised for his work through the award of the annual Sawyer Dialling Prize from the North American Sundial Society for excellence of craftsmanship this lead to a dial to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the first English settlement in America at Jamestown near Washington DC.



Not one to take retirement easy Tony is also a prolific writer and his Sundialling Publications include:

- Educational material on the BSS website.
- His design for a downloadable educational dial which will work anywhere in the UK, parts of Europe and the USA.
- Published dialling articles in BSS 'Bulletin' and NASS 'Compendium'
- And "How Sundials Work" has been translated into several languages including Polish, Dutch, Catalan and Brazilian.

Retirement is calling Tony again and as a final gesture to the town where he lives Tony has agreed to design and build his final sun dial for us. We hope to install it in the market place as a working timepiece with the hope that people of the town and visitors will stop to admire its construction as it has been designed with more than a nod to Bedlington's life and history.

## Strawberry Hill Lunch Club

**A new weekly lunch club for the community of West Bedlington will be starting on Friday 21st April 2017.**

For only £16 we provide you with safe accessible transport which will collect you from your door, take you to Lynemouth Resource Centre where you can enjoy a freshly made 2 course meal in a safe warm environment, take part in a game or two, meet new friends and gain knowledge of other support services you may require, all before being returned home to your door.

If you are over 60 and can tick any of these boxes, this service could be for you.

- Over 60
- Poor health or mobility
- Feeling lonely or isolated
- Enjoy socialising
- Enjoy meeting new people

If you think this service is for you or someone you know and would like to book a place or ask any questions please ring 861662.

# Latest Events

## March 2017 Onwards

### 4 SQUARE MUSIC

Sunday 5th March 2017

Doors open 7.30pm | Band on stage 8pm

Tickets  
£15

Ferocious folk foursome 4Square play their music with zest, fire and virtuosity, yet an understated maturity which has grown throughout their nine year journey as a band. The sight and sound of simultaneous fiddle-clog dancing will quicken the pulse, galvanised by driving piano and percussion. By contrast, the listener is then stirred and softened with 4Square's melancholic three part harmony singing. An outright musical journey, all in an acoustic setting.

### RAG MAMA RAG

Sunday 26th March

Doors open 7.30pm | Band on stage 8pm

Tickets  
£15

One of Europe's finest Country Blues acts. With an interesting and wide range of instruments, (ASHLEY DOW, Henderson Acoustic Guitar, National & Dobro Resonator Bottleneck Guitars, Weissenborn Acoustic Lap Steel, Ukulele and Vocals, plus DEBORAH DOW, Harmonica, Washboard, Percussion and Backing Vocals), RAG MAMA RAG create an exceptionally full and hard driving rhythmic sound which soon has audiences feet tapping.

Their repertoire is 20s and 30s Blues based, but extremely varied, encompassing Mississippi Blues, East Coast Ragtime sounds, early White Country tunes, Original Compositions, and many other regional styles of the 20s and 30s!

### PRELUDE

Friday 21st April 2017

Doors open 7.30pm | Band on stage 8pm

Tickets  
£15

Prelude, was formed by Brian Hume and fellow guitarist/vocalist Ian Vardy in 1970. The pair who had been working together since they'd left school and made their recording debut under the name of Carnival in 1967 when they issued a version of Paul Simon's 'Big Bright Green Pleasure Machine'. They persuaded Irene Hume to join them in 1971 and under the name of Trilogy, started to play local folk clubs in the Newcastle area.

### HOWIE B

#### (Howard Baker)

Friday 19th May 2017

Doors open 7.30pm | 8pm start

Tickets  
£12

Back by popular request.

Howard has an extraordinary talent for singing. He covers Rock, Swing, Irish, 60s,70s, to the most beautiful ballads. He is truly a thoroughbred in today's world of music. His shows have something for everyone.

### BACKWORTH MALE VOICE CHOIR

Saturday 1st July 2017

Doors open 6.30pm | Choir on stage 7pm

Tickets  
£6

The Choir performs extensively throughout the region and beyond, performing alongside some of the region's finest instrumental/choral. The Choir performed at The Sage, Gateshead in 2015, as part of a "Choral Spectacular of Massed Voices", arranged by the National Association of Choirs.

### THE HAPPY CATS

Friday 20th October

Doors open 7.30pm Band on stage 8pm

Tickets  
£15

Ferocious folk foursome 4Square is winning fans from all four corners of Europe and beyond. The powerful young quartet has already stormed festivals and venues all across the UK, Canada, Norway, Sweden, The Czech Republic, Greece, and Denmark with their fiery, inventive and virtuosic brand of alternative folk. Ticket includes Pie & Pea supper!

## Contact Details

E: [bedlingtoncommunitycentre@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bedlingtoncommunitycentre@hotmail.co.uk)

W: [www.bedlingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk](http://www.bedlingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk)

Bedlington Community Centre, Front Street,  
West Bedlington, NE22 5TT

Charity number: 1151177



# The 2017 Annual Town Meeting

Wednesday 31st May 2017

In Bedlington Community Centre

Starting at 6.30pm

**West Bedlington Town Council would like to invite community based groups and organisations within Bedlington to The Annual Town Meeting.**

The Annual Town meeting is not a regular meeting of the Town Council, it is very informal and is an opportunity to raise awareness of your group / organisation and its activities within the town over the last year. You may perhaps wish to use the event to encourage recruitment or sign up of new members to your group or simply use the event to show residents and others present what you have achieved over the past year, it's really up to you.

**In the first instance please register your interest by contacting The Town Clerk as soon as possible**

**Email - [westbedlingtontowncouncil@gmail.com](mailto:westbedlingtontowncouncil@gmail.com) or Phone - 01670 457070**

## Contact details for the Council Office



Town Clerk, Steven Young

You can contact Steven at the Town Council office:

Telephone: **(01670) 457070**

E-mail: **[westbedlingtontowncouncil@gmail.com](mailto:westbedlingtontowncouncil@gmail.com)**

Post: **Bedlington Community Centre, Front Street West, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 5TT.**

Office Opening times:

**The office is generally open Monday Wednesday and Friday (9.00am - 5.00pm)**

However and regrettably due to staffing levels we cannot guarantee any fixed opening times.

We would advise that in the first instance you contact us via telephone or email and we will endeavour to answer your query or if you prefer we can arrange an appointment at the office.

# WEST BEDLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

## COUNCILLOR CONTACT DETAILS



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**Malcolm Robinson**

West

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## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Allotments
- Bus Shelters
- Children's Play Areas
- Grit Bins - if the County Council won't supply the Town Council may supply
- Litter Bins
- Public Seating
- War Memorials
- Christmas Lights
- Christmas Tree
- Notice board Provision
- Flower beds and bulb planting
- Town gateway features
- Additional grass cuts - The County Council does not cut grass in April and October so we may pay for additional grass cuts in those months
- Any entry into the Northumbria in Bloom completion
- Support of Community Events.

All other local Council Services (e.g. Housing, Refuse Collection, Council Tax and Housing Benefits) are the responsibility of Northumberland County Council.

[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)  
or call **0345 600 6400**