



SHARLSTON

Parish Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2009

SHARLSTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2008-09

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, Sharlston Parish Council has chosen to follow best practice by producing an Annual Report which is available free to residents. This is one way in which the council communicates with the people that it serves.

Parish councillors give their service to the community on a wholly voluntary, unpaid and totally non-political basis. But they recognise the importance of channels of communication which enable residents to voice their concerns, ideas and suggestions to the council and at the same time for the council to report back on what it is doing and how it is tackling the concerns of the community.

A couple of years ago, the council completed the Parish Plan which was the outcome from an extensive consultation process with as wide a range of people as possible. Rural Action Yorkshire (formerly the Yorkshire Rural Community Council) has used the Sharlston Plan as a good example of the way consultation with the community can be done. However, things change year by year and there needs to be a continuing review of the Plan and residents' needs and concerns.

Residents are always welcome to attend council meetings and can keep track of the council's activities through the web site. A monthly report also goes into the Church and Community Magazine. Individual councillor's contact details are available (including here in this report) and any one can be contacted to bring issue of concern to the council meeting. Through a constant process of communication the council makes every effort to represent effectively the community it serves.

I hope you find this Annual Report helps to provide an insight into our business and activities over the past municipal year. An electronic copy of this report is also available on our website, www.sharlston.gov.uk. This website, now part of Wakefield District Communities Online, is regularly updated with all Parish Council minutes and news items.

Finally and sadly, this is my last report for the council, as I have now left the district. The new Clerk, Janet Hull, will take over my role and I know the council will be excellently supported by her. If you have any queries relating to the information contained in this report, please contact Janet either by telephone or email.

David Siddans
April 2008

New Clerk from April 2008: Janet Hull
01924 256565
janetehull@aol.co.uk

THE PARISH COUNCIL

Parish councillors are available to be contacted with any problem or issue which local residents may wish the parish council to discuss.

MEMBERS

June Cliffe	33 Clifton Road	862018
Alexandra Devey	3 The Green	860862
James Goodfellow	41 Eastville Road	865197
Peter Loosemore	54 Weeland Road	864339
Gary Oldroyd	17 Beechfield Drive	224173
Madge Pearson	100 High Street	860486
Dee Ranson	5 Heather View	860633
Kath Shingles	99 Grime Lane	862040
Keith Wager	10 Clifton Road	863229
Sheila Ward	205 Weeland Road	864717

Chair Councillor June Cliffe

Vice Chair Councillor Alexandra Devey

At 31 March 2009, there was one vacancy on the council.

CLERK (from 1 April 2009)

Janet Hull	1 Sandal Hall Close, Sandal, Wakefield	01924 256565
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The Parish Council holds eleven meetings a year (there is no meeting in August). Notices of meetings appear on the notice boards and members of the public are always welcome to attend.

PARISH COUNCILLORS POSITIONS ON COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Planning Committee

Cllr. June Cliffe Cllr. James Goodfellow Cllr Peter Loosemore
Cllr Alexandra Devey

Finance Committee

Cllr. June Cliffe Cllr. Peter Loosemore Cllr. James Goodfellow
Cllr. Alexandra Devey Cllr G Oldroyd

Parish Plan Working Group

Cllr. June Cliffe Cllr. Peter Loosemore Cllr. Alexandra Devey Cllr. Sheila
Ward Cllr G Oldroyd

Church Magazine Contributor

Cllr. June Cliffe

Yorkshire Local Councils Association Representative

Cllr. June Cliffe Cllr. Alexandra Devey.

S.A.N.S. (Sharlston and New Sharlston Development Group)

Cllr. June Cliffe Cllr. Keith Wager Cllr Sheila Ward

Sharlston Community Centre Representatives

Cllr J Goodfellow

Sharlston Community Partnership

Cllr. June Cliffe Cllr. James Goodfellow Cllr. Peter Loosemore

Town and Parish Council Liaison Group (Wakefield MDC)

The Chair The Clerk

West Yorkshire Rural Transport Partnership

Cllr Sheila Ward

Sharlston Colliery Liaison Committee

Cllr Alexandra Devey Cllr Gary Oldroyd

Featherstone Road Safety Committee

Cllr. June Cliffe

Representation on School Governing Bodies

Sharlston Community School
Normanton Freeston Foundation

Cllr. Peter Loosemore
Cllr. June Cliffe

STATISTICS AND INFORMATION

Sharlston Parish Council is a second-tier local government authority within the Wakefield District. Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (MDC) is the unitary authority for the area.

There are some 2750 people residing within the parish boundary¹ of which 2129 are registered as electors².

The Parish Precept is collected on the Parish Council's behalf by Wakefield MDC. For the fiscal year 2008-09 it was set at £16,000. This equated to a sum of £13.14 per year for a Band A dwelling up to £32.84 per year for a band G dwelling³.

Out of the 24 Town and Parish Councils in the Wakefield District, Sharlston ranks 19th lowest in terms of how much it costs per dwelling to pay for the services provided. (see the table at the end of this report).

The main responsibilities of the Parish Council are:

- Representing the parish with the District Council, central government and various local, regional and national bodies.
- Promoting local projects
- Dealing with residents' concerns
- Supporting local groups and organisations
- Maintaining the Weeland Road playing field
- Maintaining the footpath round Sharlston Dam
- Monitoring and commenting on planning applications and proposed developments
- Promoting the Parish Plan
- Acting in partnership with Wakefield MDC to deliver services
- Improving the quality of life and the environment for residents

¹ Source: Census 2001

² Source: Electoral Register 2008.

³ Source: Wakefield MDC: Parish precept levy per band 2008-09

THE MUNICIPAL YEAR UNDER REVIEW

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

As I reflect back over my past year as Chair of Sharlston Parish Council, I cannot fail to be amazed at just how much has taken place within our Parish during that time. As you well know, the Parish Council meets every month. This meeting is generally held on the first Monday of the month in order to give the Parish Councillors the ability to focus their diaries. This routine for meetings also helps the general public should they wish to come along to ask questions and share information. Our monthly meeting helps to keep everyone focused on events that are taking place both within and beyond our Parish boundaries. It is also at these meetings that our clerk has the opportunity to make sure our legal obligations are addressed and adhered to.

Not all the work that the Chair and the Parish Councillors do takes place at the monthly meetings. I feel sure that the Parish Councillors would all agree that in between and beyond the Parish meetings is where most of the nitty, gritty work goes on. As a team we all work together and share out the many tasks presented to us to the best of our ability.

Life as a Parish Councillor is a very busy one. We attend many other meetings throughout the year. Meetings on transport issues, policing, road safety, school governance as well as taking a place on several community groups within the Parish and Wakefield District. Whilst it may be a busy life, it has its rewards.

Last autumn, thanks to a generous donation given to us by Ms. Joanne Bulmer, we were able to involve the school children of our villages in a bulb planting project. This spring we saw the results of the project in the wonderful splash of colour from crocus and daffodils planted by the children along the edge of the Green.

A further environmental project was initiated by the Parish Council this year, when we employed the services of a landscape gardening firm to tidy up and prune the trees within the Playing Fields. We then requested a further ten young trees to be planted along the edges of the field. We felt this project would help to improve the look of the centre of the village for many years to come.

A further project we have worked on has been to have the old library and clinic site cleared and tidied. But not everything goes as smoothly as we would wish. This particular project has been dogged with delays. Several starting dates have been given to us by Goundworks Wakefield only to be told that the starting date could not be met and a new date would then be arranged, only to meet the same fate. The last date given to begin the work, was April/May 2009 – we are all keeping our fingers crossed in the hope that this date will be the one.

Some of the most memorable events of the year must be the invitations we receive to attend various functions both within the Parish and the surrounding areas. We receive invitations to Sharlston Male Voice Choir Patrons Concert; the Old Sharlston Cricket Club Presentation Night; the Sharlston Rovers Rugby Club Presentation Night; Normanton's Carnival Events and Civic ceremonies plus their annual Christmas Lights switch on event. We also receive invitations from Wakefield District Council to attend several events throughout the year, including their Mayoral events. We do our best to attend all these events. One of the highlight events to attend this

year for me, was the official opening of our new Children's Centre on Hammer Lane. There I met Matt Healey, the young man who played Matthew King in ITV's Emmerdale. What a lovely afternoon that was for everyone who attended, especially the children who took part in presentations.

Not only do we have memorable events to attend, we also have unusual events to attend. The most unusual this year was the project to remove pike from Sharlston Dam. This task was undertaken by a specialist firm who used quite interesting techniques. The technique they used was most successful and we were assured no harm befell any of the fish.

This report has given only a small glimpse of the past year. I'm sure you will agree we have a varied timetable of events, varied but enjoyable. However, all good things come to an end and my year as Chair is no exception to that rule. My year though has ended with mixed feelings, we had to say farewell to our Clerk David Siddans who has now moved house to North Yorkshire. David has served us well over the past seven years and he will be missed. We all thank David for the work he has done for Sharlston Parish. However, we now say a warm welcome to our new Clerk, Janet Hull. We look forward to the future and working with Janet who I know will help us all to steer a good helm. As I bring my report to an end I would like to thank, most sincerely, all the members of our team who have helped to make our ventures so successful and my year so interesting.

Last, but certainly by no means least, may I, on behalf of all the Parish Councillors, say best wishes to each and every one of you.

Cllr. June Cliffe

Chair of Sharlston Parish Council

April 2009

BRIEF SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Annual Parish Open Day

In 2008, an Open Day was again arranged and was held on Tuesday 3 April between 2.30 pm and 8.00 pm. This continued the successful format established in 2004 which gives as many local people as possible the opportunity to see what is happening in the parish, give their views and talk to councillors and others. The Open Day featured displays showing the work of the council with other exhibits from UK Coal, Neighbourhood Action, the Energy Efficiency Unit, Sharlston Forever Group and the Neighbourhood Policing Team. A progress statement on the Parish Plan was displayed. Attendance at the Open Day was excellent and feedback from residents suggests that it was again very successful.

Bulb Planting

Following a barn dance event held at School House Farm, one of the donations made by the organisers was a contribution of £400 to the Parish Council towards the planting of spring bulbs on The Green. The Parish Council undertook the arrangements for this, paid for Wakefield District council staff to prepare the area and invited the School to take part. On the day, two classes of schoolchildren donned high visibility jackets and set about planting about 800 crocus and daffodil bulbs.

Bowling Club

The bowling club based at the Miners Welfare Club in New Sharlston approached the Parish Council for assistance in getting the green back into a playable condition. The council arranged for an assessment of the state of the green to be carried out and took part in further meetings following which the club felt able to proceed with clearing the boundary hedging and beginning the restoration. We will monitor progress and assist further if required.

Bus Services

The Parish Plan identified concerns at the lack of public transport links between New Sharlston, Sharlston and Crofton. These have been taken up through our representative on the newly formed West Yorkshire Rural Transport Partnership with the aim of setting up a community bus service. This work is actively being pursued.

Christmas Lights

Last year the standard of Christmas lights in the village was generally praised, although yet again there was an inadequate display in New Sharlston. Eventually Amey installed the four additional lighting features we had ordered, including two extra in New Sharlston. Christmas illuminations in local villages have to be paid for by the local community, and the cost of adapting the extra columns has been met by the Parish Council.

Community Centre

The Community Centre is run by the Management Committee with representation from the Parish Council. The Parish Council regularly monitors the situation at the Centre and continues to ensure that the viability of the Centre is maintained.

District Councillors

The Parish Council has a good working relationship with the three District Councillors representing Ward 6 (Featherstone and Sharlston). Many of the activities of the Parish Council require close working with the District Council as well as other agencies who possess appropriate powers and can often help with funding. As a routine, one or more of the District Councillors attends all Parish Council meetings and this helps to co-ordinate our efforts on behalf of the local community.

Floral Displays

The contract for hanging baskets was renewed again for 2009, with the contractor being responsible for providing brackets on the new street lighting columns. During 2008, the council was successful in obtaining and at the two village boundary signs on Weeland Road.

Members of the council continued to maintain the four large planters which are located at the north end of Cow Lane, the south end of Grime Lane and on Weeland Road. Following the theft of the plants from the planter near Snyderdale Villas, the council moved the planter closer to the village.

Footpath round the Dam

Following the completion of the footpath project in March 2006, the Parish Council has been managing a contract for the annual maintenance of the path and car park area which includes grass cutting, keeping the path free from weeds and trimming back overhanging vegetation.

Former Library and Clinic Site

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has been pressing for the completion of a scheme to provide a new access road to the doctors' surgery from Weeland Road and landscape the remainder of the site. Lengthy delays have occurred with the District Council's highways and planning departments and their Neighbourhoods department who temporarily lost the funding for the scheme. Groundwork Wakefield is now expected to complete the access road and landscape the remainder of the site by May 2009.

The Parish Council is in negotiation with Wakefield District Council to take a lease on the former library and clinic site so that the area can be safeguarded for community use in the future. The original scheme for a community building on the site will be reviewed.

Grants to local groups

As part of its desire to help and support groups and organisations which benefit local people, the Parish Council has continued with its policy of awarding grants. Any local

group can apply by completing a simple application form, available from the Clerk or at the Post Office. Groups can apply for one grant in any financial year.

In 2008-09 the following have been awarded grants to support their activities:

Sharlston Male Voice Choir
SANS Luncheon Club
St Luke's PCC (for the Church and Community magazine)
New Sharlston Activities Group

Highway defects

A number of defects to highways, footpaths and signing were reported to the Parish Council over the year. Several of these have now been dealt with as a result of our discussions with the Highways Maintenance officers in Wakefield MDC.

Litter bins

The Council is keen to promote a clean and safe environment for the residents of Sharlston, and the conditions and adequacy of the bins supplied is regularly monitored, particularly after the disruption caused by the replacement of lighting columns throughout the area.

Neighbourhood Network

The Parish Council is co-operating with the recently formed Neighbourhood Network for Walton, Crofton and Sharlston. Meetings are held in rotation at Sharlston, Walton and Crofton. Membership of the network is open to all groups or interested individuals in the area. The purpose is to establish a forum for the exchange of ideas, giving mutual help and encouragement and possibly pooling of resources.

Parish Council Charter

Sharlston Parish Council along with all the other town and parish councils in Wakefield District have been involved in discussions with the District Council which have resulted in a draft Parish Council Charter being drawn up. This sets out the way in which both levels of authority will work together to achieve the effective delivery of services to the community.

Parish Plan

Following the launch of the Parish Plan on 17 March 2006, the Parish Council set up a working group to review progress on the implementation of the action points in the plan. Several of the items in the action plan have now been achieved and others are being actively pursued.

Parish Council Web Site

The content of the Parish Council's web site: www.sharlston.gov.uk is now included within the new Wakefield Community Online site. wdco.org contains a vast range of community based links and is well worth visiting to see what is going on in the

district. The Community Online address is www.wdco.org but the Sharlston site can still be accessed through the original address.

The site gives all the contact details for the Parish Council as well as minutes of recent meetings, this annual report and a downloadable version of the Parish Plan.

Our site was recently rated in the top ten of all the sites within the district.

Play Area

Whilst Wakefield District Council is responsible for the maintenance and general upkeep of the new play area, the Parish Council currently pays to keep the surrounding area tidy.

Playing Field

The Parish Council owns and maintains the playing field on Weeland Road. During 2008-09, following discussions with Sharlston Rovers ARLFC, we have commissioned legal assistance in drawing up a longer term lease to the club. This will give the club greater security of tenure on the site and longer-term stability for the Parish and enable the club to fund ongoing improvements to the facilities.

During the year the Council has removed some of the weaker trees from the Weeland Road frontage and planted new trees on this frontage and The Heathers frontage.

Quality Parish Council Status

The Council reaffirmed its ambition to gain Quality Parish Council status which will ultimately improve its ability to promote improvements in the parish. There are several demanding tests to be met before this can be achieved and we are well on the way towards this goal.

Sharlston Colliery Liaison Committee

The Council continues to play a full part in the work of the liaison committee to ensure that the local community gets all the benefits it can from the major reclamation and restoration contract under way at the former colliery site.

Sharlston Common

The Parish Council has supported the appointment of a voluntary nature warden for the common and encourages others to join a "friends of the common" group.

In March 2009, news of possible changes in the ownership of the common were discussed at a council meeting. The Council vigorously supports the continuing enjoyment of the common by the public and will closely monitor the situation as it develops during 2009.

Sharlston Dovecote

English Heritage has consulted the Parish Council on proposals for the restoration of the grade II listed dovecote near Sharlston Old Hall. The Council has welcomed the

proposals and hope the building will be accessible to the public following the restoration.

Speed Limits

The Parish Council co-operated with Warmfield-cum-Heath Parish Council to press for the introduction of a 40 mph speed limit on Crossley Street north of the railway bridge. This has now been enacted by Wakefield District Council.

Following nearly two years of investigation and discussion between the Parish Council and Wakefield District Council, traffic calming measures were introduced on The Green, the approaches to Grime Lane junction and Fernside junction.

Village boundary signs

The sign located at the western end of High Street / Hell Lane suffered wind damage and vandalism in 2007. Following discussions with the Parish Council's insurance company, this was replaced in November 2008.

PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES, 2008-09

The income we received

Parish Council Precept (via Council Tax)	16000
Bank interest	584
Refund of VAT	1061
Other	400
TOTAL	18045

How we spent the money

Staff costs and expenses	6361
Floral displays	108
Insurance	1367
Maintenance of playing field/playarea	1461
Christmas lights	2361
Subscriptions	760
Training and conferences	606
Newsletters and publicity	745
Telephone and broadband services	374
VAT	851
Grants to local groups	345
Fees for auditors	310
Councillors' expenses	82
Election expenses	140
Annual Open Day	330
Bulb planting	699
Quality Council	210
Business rates for playing field building	156
National Insurance	47
Publications and other purchases	293
Boundary signs	4234
TOTAL	21840

NOTES Invoices for the new village boundary signs which were ordered in 2006 and 2007 were finally received in 2008. The cost of these has been met by carrying forward money underspent in previous years.

These are the latest fully audited figures. Unaudited accounts for 2008-09 will be available to the public in June 2009 and the audited figures will be available in October or November 2009.

Full accounts can be inspected by contacting the clerk.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER PARISHES

Precept 2008-09 in order of Band D charge

		Precept	band D
1	South Kirkby	584500	188.98
2	Hemsworth	464000	120.83
3	South Elmsall	194341	103.43
4	Havercroft	46149	78.09
5	Ryhill	45470	52.57
6	Ackworth	126000	50.77
7	South Heindley	26600	46.18
8	Upton	90000	41.78
9	Badsworth	13275	38.26
10	West Bretton	5800	28.86
11	Woolley	16000	28.83
12	Thorpe Audlin	8500	28.52
13	Warmfield	9000	27.44
14	Normanton	165000	26.28
15	Walton	30000	25.95
16	Featherstone	106440	23.31
17	Nostell	2100	23.08
18	Crofton	42000	22.71
19	Sharlston	16000	19.70
20	Sitlington	39000	19.48
21	East Hardwick	1530	18.66
22	Darrington	8941	13.67
23	Notton	5345	12.55
24	Crigglestone	38500	12.40

Source: Wakefield MDC Council Tax 2008/09 summary



Hanging baskets
Bulb Planting
Traffic calming
Flower planter
Parish open day