



Tupton Parish Council

Serving the people of Tupton

Rebuilding Communities



RECONNECTING AND REENGAGING THE COMMUNITY
THROUGH THE COVID RECOVERY AND BEYOND.

Cllr David Hancock, Cllr Ross Shipman

ADOPTED AS TUPTON PARISH COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2021/2 AT TUPTON PARISH COUNCIL'S MEETING ON 11 NOVEMBER 2020.

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Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has had a profound impact on many lives, the economy and local communities. Local (parish and town) councils are having to think differently about how they work, connect and engage with their communities to reflect this new context. Local councils were at the heart of the initial response to the pandemic and will play a vital role in the local leadership needed through the recovery and beyond.

Inherited Issues

Inconsistencies in relationships between the Parish Council and community groups in terms of financial and voluntary support.

The draft local plan has a significant impact on the future of the parish; with major developments totalling c.300 new properties (via the Ankerbold Road development and the extension to Sunningdale Park). This will increase the overall population of Tupton by around 20-25% over the next five years.

The lease on the Community Garden terminates in 2028.

The lease on the Birkin Avenue Park terminates c.2050

Steps Taken to Date

The Parish Council has begun establishing stronger relationships with the wider community groups. Sometimes this has been both direct and indirect through the formation of the VE Day working group.

Unsurprisingly, Covid-19 has had a direct impact on most of these relationships. Although, positively, several have strengthened.

It is important that positive relationships are established with all groups; however, they must be built and maintained on the same foundations as all other relationships to ensure that there is no bias towards or against any particular group.

A proposal submitted to the Parish Council for consideration at the October 2020 meeting radically overhauling the method of providing direct support to local community groups was approved. The policy factored in the acquisition of the Tupton Community Hub, enabling the Parish Council to provide facility support to those groups that need it without the need to draw directly on the public purse; thereby increasing the discretionary cash fund to support other organisations.

The proposal placed a cap of £500 (with specific exceptions for capital applications/funding in response to emergency situations) per application per community group, with a maximum of four applications per annum; again, with the intent of enabling the fund to benefit more organisations.

The HR Committee has been tasked with the responsibility of preparing a draft plan to assess the Parish's staffing needs and the likely shift in service requirements as the parish population increases under the *Future-Proofing the Parish* project.

At the Parish Council's June meeting, members unanimously adopted the following vision statement:

Tupton Parish Council's Vision Statement

Tupton Parish Council believes and recognises that the diversity of our population is one of our greatest strengths and assets.

We are committed to ensuring that people are treated fairly and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone to live, learn, work and relax in the Parish.

We will address inequality both in the workplace and in relation to access to services and outcomes.

We strongly oppose all forms of discrimination and will actively work to eliminate discriminatory barriers and ensure that individuals and communities within Tupton have a sense of shared, common belonging and understanding.

We formally condemn all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, religious beliefs and any other characteristics as defined in the Equality Act.

This statement must be more than words. Our aim must be to genuinely improve the lives of those living and working in the parish and to ensure that we are able to identify and provide a helping hand to those who would otherwise fall through the gaps in the wider community.

Supporting Community

Community Engagement

The VE Day Working Group/Tupton Community Group

Despite the huge impact Coronavirus had on the event itself, the creation of a working group comprising councillors, members of the public and representatives from the community groups was an unqualified success; as was the decision to appoint a non-councillor as the working group's Chair – which builds trust with the groups and ensures that the group retains its own identity and independence; but without falling into the historic trap of being able to be infiltrated and swamped by political activists.

It's important that the group remains open to public membership and that the Chair be appointed by the Parish Council and operates under normal Parish Council rules – so it feeds back its recommendation to Council and they are then subject to normal council consideration; thereby ensuring the wider needs are always at the forefront of both the group and the Parish Council's objectives.

While, obviously, the group will need to be renamed going forward (at their meeting of 20 October, the group settled on Tupton Community Group) it is strongly recommended that the group continue in its current format with Gill Watters as Chair.

Community Magazine

Coronavirus has totally delayed the publication of the community run parish magazine. Although, in its own way, this has been fortuitous as it has allowed time for discussions with other parishes and learning from their experiences.

One key message that has come out of coronavirus is that communities have become much more online; and the need for print runs has been vastly reduced. Those Parishes where community magazines are well-established have resorted that online content has been much more effective at keeping residents up to date in rapidly changing situations; they've then typically circulated print copies to those areas which demographically are less likely to be online; and then liaised with local shops to display batches on their counters to allow people to take them as wanted.

It's important that the relationship between the Community Magazine team and the Tupton Community Group be maintained – purely on the basis that, without that link, the ability to create content is severely impacted; so, it's recommended, that the function be merged into the Tupton Community Group.

Parish Council Meetings

Parish Council meetings regularly reach several hundred viewers a month. This is positive and the use of remote video-conferencing has shown that we need to look, longer term at improving the method of broadcasting live meetings so that everyone is more visible and the wider interaction can be seen by the community.

Sadly, the lack of physical meetings had reduced public attendance at meetings – which had been growing nicely over the previous year. It must be a key focus of the Parish Council to encourage wider community involvement in the meetings again.

Over the past 18 months, the Chair has proactively utilised Standing Order 3(e) to permit members of the public to question the council and make representation during the items up for debate. This is always a difficult balancing act; but, overall, the experience has been positive and enabled the community to have a voice.

Council is conscious that most legislation governing parish council meetings is decades old, and very much a product of its time. The ratings for the Parish Council meetings demonstrate that there is a far wider public interest in the meetings than those people who are able to physically attend; and it would be prudent to look at ways of allowing members of the public viewing the livestream to be able to engage more directly as their questions and comments are unseen until after the conclusion of the meeting.

Direct Engagement

While the Tupton Community Group is proposed to continue as an entity, this should not be the only direct interface between the Parish Council and the wider community. The incumbent Parish Council has invited members of the public to sit on other working groups. This provides more than just direct engagement, but provides the Council with access to knowledge and experience from people who have no desire or interest in wider council activities and, to the wider community, legitimate empowerment into those aspects of council business where they have a specific interest.

This approach has worked effectively in working groups formed to oversee Grounds Maintenance, the acquisition of the Community Hub and the provision of services at the Community Hub; and should continue going forward.

Support

The acquisition of the Community Hub greatly extends the Parish Council's ability to support new and less financially viable community groups. Rental for the village hall can be unaffordable for some groups. There are several groups in the parish who pay their entrance fees/membership subscriptions direct to the Village Hall and fund their rental that way. However, a small number of groups (currently two) take no membership/entry fees and their rental is wholly subsidised by the Parish Council. Obviously, this impacts significantly on the public purse and neither group has a sufficiently large user group that the financial commitment could be considered legitimately commensurate.

The hub therefore provides the ability for the Parish Council to provide a rent free venue to those groups and any potential start-up groups, until such time as they can either fund themselves sufficiently to move to the Village Hall or come to some sort of arrangement.

Tupton Village Hall is a registered charity and therefore must remain financially viable. The community hub is not a facility which should be used as a competitive provision; it should be offered as an option only to those groups/ services who cannot fund themselves and who do not charge fees to their service users.

This use of the hub therefore frees up a significant amount of the Discretionary Grant cash fund (based on current figures c.£5,500) which can be used to provide financial support to other community groups and organisations.

The *Discretionary Grants Process: Ensuring the fair and appropriate allocation of public money* report identified the current lack of organisations accessing Parish Council grants. It is therefore recommended that the Parish Council becomes more proactive in advertising both the cash and facility support available; and encouraging all groups to access support.

One factor in expanding the reach of the council's support is to be more proactive in showing the benefits of what our support has provided to the community. As someone who has actively engaged in supporting a number of different community groups, most are very open about how (and I quote) that they couldn't have achieved what they have done without the support of the Parish Council. While Parish Council support should never be offered conditional to promoting the Parish Council, it should be used to promote the kind of support the Parish Council is able to provide.

Service Provision

Both the HR Committee and the working group established to oversee service provision at the Community Hub have been tasked with identifying the services of most use to the parish.

The approach should be very much one of identifying gaps. For example, there are already three separate toddler groups operating within the parish – so it would be meaningless to invest Parish time and money into providing a fourth. However, despite the best effort of existing community groups, there is a definite shortage of provision for men's mental health. We also need to provide services for teenagers, and for residents living with debt and addiction. As a council we need to acknowledge the more unpleasant aspects of life that some in our community are living with and to seek to help them address those issues. Most importantly, these services need to be delivered by engaging with partners. It is impossible, both financially and logistically, for the Parish Council to deliver these services directly; however, we need to ensure that we fully support anyone wishing to address them as community group or service provider and proactively help to identify and connect those who will assist.

Social Isolation

Potentially one of the greatest problems of the modern age. As a society we have more people living alone and modern developments tend to focus on higher selling prices rather than addressing local housing need – which has the effect of bringing more commuters into the local area; often with no existing connections and finding themselves in the position of trying to integrate into the wider community.

Our community groups have an excellent network of volunteers but reaching out to those who are otherwise isolated is difficult and it's often not financially viable for them to blanket leaflet the whole parish. So the parish council needs to look at (cost effective) ways of reaching out to those residents who are otherwise isolated.

Tupton Carnival: Showcasing the Parish

Firstly, it is important to note that this report does not seek to criticise (or otherwise) the current (or historic) organisers of the Carnival. It is a significant event that requires a lot of organisation. The Carnival is a means of bringing together the whole community.

In no small part, it is a huge undertaking for any single organisation and Council notes the success of two separate groups holding complementary events during the 2019 Christmas Festival, shows how much more inclusive and effective an event can be by having additional involvement.

If the Carnival is to truly return to being a parish-wide event; the Parish should look to the all-inclusive Tupton Community Group to bring additional elements into the heart of the village by enabling other groups and businesses to hold concurrent events around the parish.

it would be sensible for the Parish Council to host an information stall on the Community Garden and assist in directing visitors to all venues as appropriate. Further stalls could also stand (free of charge) on the Community Garden – prioritising those appealing to individuals for whom the recreation ground is less accessible and to those who may wish to host an authorised tombola, raffles, sponsorships or other activities that are prohibited by Tupton Celebrates Together.

It's also important that the Parish Council recognises that it has a duty to all businesses and community groups in Tupton, in the immediate vicinity of the community garden is the Britannia Inn, Tupton Village Hall, the Evangelical Church, New Tupton Social Club, St John's Church – all of whom should feel free to have events of their own that weekend to encourage people to use their facilities. Additionally, New Tupton Fish Bar, the Cornerstone Café and McColls are all nearby. There is nothing wrong with someone spending an hour on the recreation ground, followed by quick cup of tea, afternoon bingo at the village hall, a wander around the information stalls at the community garden, buying fish and chips and onto the Britannia for live singers and a beer.

If the Carnival is truly meant to continue as a village event, it needs to take in more of the village and have the cooperation and support of multiple groups and businesses. The community is stronger for it, as are the relationships between different organisations who can each promote the others.

Facilities

The Parish Council currently has a range of facilities. Historically, coordination between them facilities hasn't always been as unified as it should (e.g. the play areas on Ford Street and North Side being aimed at different age groups and failing to meet the needs of families with children of different ages) other have been underutilised.

The Community Garden

The garden is one of the most underused assets in the village, which is doubly frustrating as its one of the most costly to maintain. Typically, it's either walked past or used as a shortcut. Council has proposals to create a remembrance garden to the rear, and a proposal has been put forward to decorate the garden for Halloween.

The latter, I believe, is a significant first step. At Christmas, the garden plays host to the Christmas Tree; but little else beyond the light switch on event and carol service. It would be prudent to try and decorate the remainder of the garden in some way – but, as the heart of the village, we need to link it into other events.

The flagpole has already been utilised for this. The feedback following the decision to fly the LGBT Pride flag throughout June was so positive and Councillors received some genuinely heart-warming thanks from members and allies of the LGBT community. The Ivanhoes' flag has been flown to celebrate their successes and advertise their tournaments – again with very positive feedback (with one exception).

Because of Covid restrictions, 2020 will see the garden being used to mark remembrance in a way that has never been done before. Going forward, Council needs to look at using the garden to mark key events: Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Remembrance, Pride etc. I think it is also important to ensure that Tupton Carnival encompasses the whole community.

Parish Councils also have the powers to run markets. Located adjacent to the car park, the Community Garden would be the ideal location to host craft fairs etc. These should not be used as a revenue generating exercise, but to build community involvement and showcase the parish.

Birkin Avenue Park

The redesign of the park is underway, with the public remit that it becomes a place for families – designed to be appealing to children of all ages, people living with disabilities and older residents.

By its nature it should contribute towards being a more communal part of the village and, while its location isn't great; it sits immediately adjacent to one of the major development sites. However, because of this location, the park needs to be more actively promoted by the parish council.

As the trees and planting grows it should develop its own biodiversity and, again, widen its appeal.

Ford Street Play Area

The facilities appeal only to the very younger children. As an area it's ideal if one has smaller children; however, as they grow the Birkin Avenue park provides a better option. The Ford Street area has the outdoor gym and five-a-side field -which we need to get better at marketing.

North Side Recreation Ground

The key appeal here is the greenery and access to sporting style games. It's unclear what the wider intended purpose of the play area was as it's targeted at older children; so doesn't meet the needs of those families who have smaller children and is too remote for those who want to give their children some degree of independence but still maintain a watchful eye on them. The play area should have a decent lifespan left; but, going forward, I think the key aim of the recreation ground has to be the sports facilities/open space.

The Community Hub

Tupton Village Hall provides a great range of services. However, it's financially beyond the reach of some potential users and lacks the privacy for any kind of consultation. The Hub needs to address those gaps and ensure that Tupton residents have access to services that are currently unavailable to them.

The Parish Council doesn't have the budget to buy in services; however, many of these services are provided by charities or voluntary organisations; as such, it would be prudent to offer them room for free and potentially look at having different services on different days of the week – without residents having to travel to Clay Cross or Chesterfield.

Ideas which have been mooted and would merit further investigation would be Citizen's Advice Bureau, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre, debt counselling facility, drug misuse counselling and, potentially, support for those families who have loved ones living with addiction. These are all very real problems that Tupton residents experience and issues we, as councillors, have dealt with on a regular basis. Going forward, it may even provide an office for Rykneld to meet with residents/potential residents.

We are also aware that many community groups have to meet in members' homes, or public houses etc. Whilst this is the preference for some, the hub can ensure a safe provision for group meetings.

The Hub also provides ample office space which will be covered in more detail in the *Supporting the Local Economy* section.

Ward Street Allotments

The current arrangement with Northa Allotments needs further investment. Management of the allotment needs to be brought in line with the Council's own green credentials; but the Allotment Association needs to feel more supported. From recent conversations, it appears to be in the limbo state of wanting autonomy, but also needing validation. Council needs to ensure that balance is struck.

The Community Orchard [Project]

Still in negotiation, the proposed orchard off Ankerbold Road will provide a haven for wildlife and diversity. Again, appealing to the interests of a sizable, but hitherto ignored, section of the community.

Supporting the Local Economy

All too often businesses tend to be a forgotten part of the local community; but they are vital – typically providing jobs to local people and the Parish Council needs to do what it can to support the local economy.

Procurement

Obviously, it is a requirement that the council obtains value for money and ensures that it is purchasing goods and services from reputable suppliers who hold all appropriate insurances etc. This doesn't, however, preclude the Council from buying local. If the supplier is absolutely compliant and is providing value for money preference can be given to local providers.

Facilities

The Community Hub

As per the previous section, the Hub has several usable office spaces. These could be let out to sole traders/start-up businesses; both raising additional revenue for the Parish Council and providing low rent accommodation for local business.

The Community Garden

As mentioned in the previous section, a more proactive community garden should help to support numerous businesses in the immediate vicinity: New Tupton Fish Bar, The Britannia Inn, McColls, the Cornerstone Café, New Tupton Social Club.

Birkin Avenue Play Area

While probably limited, investment in the park will potentially increase business for the sandwich shop and (possibly) the New Inn.

Ford Street Play Area/Footpath

This has potential to assist business at the Sales Avenue convenience store. However, the council's proposed resurfacing of the footpath (should that be within the Parish Council's budget) between Tupton Hall School and Redfern Street should have a positive impact on footfall to the shop.

Support

Financially, the Parish Council has no legal powers to support local businesses. However, there are some areas where support can be provided.

The Community Hub

For smaller traders, who operate from their homes, the Hub can provide meeting room facilities.

Community Directory

The Parish Council has already approved free entries for local businesses.

Tupton Village Hall

As council is finally untangling the blurred relationship that has existed between the Parish Council and Tupton Village Hall, short term funding will be available to the Village Hall (one of the few exceptions permitted under the Local Government Act 1972) to facilitate their recruitment and salaries for new staff.

Supporting Health & Well-Being

Different aspects of health and well-being fall within the remit of the District and County Councils; but, as with anything, there are gaps and, resultant hardship, for those who fall between them.

Again, the Parish Council's budget makes anything other than partnership working impossible; however, there are several potential partners in our area, and we need to proactively engage with each of them. The upper tier councils aside, serving Tupton parish residents are:

- Tupton Pharmacy
- Peak Pharmacy
- Clay Cross Surgery
- Wingerworth Surgery
- St Lawrence Road Surgery
- Rykneld Homes
- Clay Cross SNT

We need to have some element of interaction with each and to ensure that support can be targeted at those who remain below the intervention level of social care; and to provide assistance to those who are otherwise forgotten – the carers.

Over the last 18 months, and particularly during Covid, the following areas have stood out:

Addiction

We're lying to ourselves if we try and pretend that Tupton doesn't have problems with drug addiction. Thankfully, it's cyclic, but, typically, addicts cause trouble in one area, get moved onto another and gradually keep getting moved around until they're back where they started. The provision of a proper programme has multiple benefits:

1. Helping someone to combat addiction
2. Providing support to the families of those whose loved ones have fallen into the addiction trap
3. Helping the wider community. A properly supported programme has multiple benefits to the wider community:
 - a. It reduces the criminal behaviour that follows addiction
 - b. When the housing authorities move addicts around we are more likely to be allocated with those wishing to combat their addictions – so as not to jeopardise the recovery of those on the programme and to improve the successful rehabilitation rate

Mental Health

The mental health crisis is already at breaking point and Covid has undeniably made it more pressing. Over the past few years we have had several suicides within the parish. Tupton Friendship & Support group has done a great job at tackling some elements of loneliness and has built a good self-support group. However, it has appealed only to a single demographic; so we need to identify a service/group that can target those most at risk.

Dementia

Like "mental health" dementia is an all-encompassing word that covers many different and complex conditions. The Covid crisis has again highlighted just how many residents we have who are living with early stage dementia. It's undeniable that many have deteriorated quite significantly as a result of lockdown; but many also fall outside the scope of getting assistance, or are being looked after by loved ones who are afraid of getting help because of fears that they will be put into a home. Again, we need to be linking with the proper agencies to encourage people to access the help that is out there, to allay the concerns they have and to provide some support for the carers.

Supporting the Local Environment

Birkin Avenue Park

Council wishes to increase the biodiversity of the Birkin Avenue Park. Phase one of this includes the planting of Willow Trees, which will also aid drainage and act as a sound barrier between the play area and the retirement community.

The Community Orchard [Project]

Still in negotiation, the proposed orchard off Ankerbold Road will provide a haven for wildlife and diversity.

Community Garden

The development of the living Memorial Garden area, adjacent to the existing community garden has already been approved. Some adaptations to the original proposal are required, but the fundamental principle of living works remains intact.

Tupton Community Hub

There is a patch of grassland immediately south of the hub; this is also utilised by Tupton Scouts – so it would be appropriate to form a joint working group to look at improving the biodiversity of that area.

Resolutions Passed:

1: To accept the report as the strategic plan for the year 2021/2

That council notes the content of this report and accepts it as the basis for its strategic plan for the period 2021/2

2: Community Garden

Council notes:

- that its lease of the community garden area from North East Derbyshire District Council is due to expire on 10 April 2028
- that North East Derbyshire District Council is currently trying to promote outdoor activities

Council believes:

- that the Community Garden is a valuable asset to the village
- that NEDDC's current focus would be an opportune time to seek to renew the lease

Council resolves:

- to begin negotiations to extend the lease for the maximum viable time beyond 2028.

3: Birkin Avenue Park

Council notes:

- that the lease of the Birkin Avenue Park is due to expire c.2050

Council believes:

- that it is in the interests of the Parish to retain this asset for the community

Council resolves:

- to begin negotiations to extend the lease for the maximum viable time