

# Focus on **Swalwell**

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## Plans for Leven House withdrawn



Permission was sought from the Council to convert the property into an House of Multiple Occupancy with 15 rentable bedrooms, a shared kitchen and living facilities.

After careful consideration and feedback from various internal and external consultees, planning officers expressed concerns to the applicant regarding the development's potential impact on local residents and its conflict with the Specialist and Supported Housing SPD.

It was indicated to the applicant that a recommendation for refusal was highly likely. Following consideration of their position, taking into account the above, the applicant has chosen to withdraw the planning application.

## Dunston Pool survives cuts

Dunston Pool, home to Gateshead & Whickham Swimming Club and Gateshead Synchronised Swimming Club has been saved from Council cuts.

The pool was originally on the shortlist for closure in January, but following a public consultation exercise, it was decided to delay the decision until after the local elections, spending about £700,000 from reserves.

**Sonya Hawkins** said "Protesters backed the Lib Dem call for all centres to be retained for the year ahead, using £2.1 million from reserves. They believed that the delay until early summer would not allow enough time for community groups to take over the centres. That's why they wanted them to remain open for a year, rather than just 3 months."

And unfortunately, this has proved to be the case - with Gateshead Leisure Centre and Birtley Swim Centre closing on 21<sup>st</sup> July, just before the school summer holidays.

The closures, have been met with anger and disappointment in the local community.

Council leaders said the closures would be "devastating" but they could no longer afford to run the leisure centres and must keep to their forecasted budget.



## Should fly-tippers be fined?

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There was a heated argument about this at the September meeting of Gateshead Council.

In 2021-22, the Council issued just a single fine across the whole borough, down from 44 in 2019-20.

However, the Evening Chronicle reported that in the same year, Lib Dem led neighbouring Durham County Council issued almost 1,000 fines for fly tipping, dog fouling, and other environmental breaches.

At the September Council meeting, Lib Dem councillors proposed that Gateshead Council should meet with officers from Durham to see how they had achieved this.

But, Labour councillors said 'no'. And it turns out that the reduction in fines was not solely caused by Covid, but by a change of policy. The Council no longer wants to fine 'small' fly-tippers, but educate them instead.

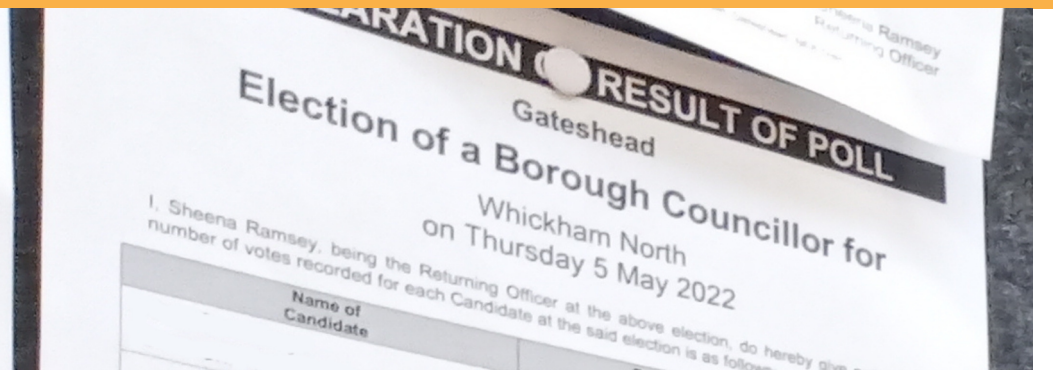
They argued that: "the people who would have got Fixed Penalty Notices for small fly tips were often vulnerable people, who needed help and support to permanently change their behaviour."

**Peter Craig** said: "Fly tipping is a very real issue to residents in certain parts of Swalwell. We agree that people should be educated to behave better, but we also believe that those who fly-tip should be fined."



Fly-tipping in Swalwell

## Recognition for Swalwell at last?



A review of ward boundaries is underway by the Local Government Boundary Commission and your ward councillors have put forward a proposal to change the ward name to Whickham North and Swalwell.

"The official ward name does not reflect the communities it includes" said **Chris Ord**, "even though we do always call it Whickham North and Swalwell between ourselves"

"Last time the boundaries changed in 2004, the ward councillors put forward this same proposal but were knocked back. Hopefully there will be more success this time."

Your local Lib Dem Focus Team can also report that during the early part of the review, the decision has been already made to keep the number of councillors in Gateshead to 66.

Gateshead Liberal Democrats had argued that the number should be cut, but the Local Government Boundary Commission opted to keep the size the same.

The process of drawing up new ward boundaries is now underway and draft proposals are due later this year.

**Liberal Democrats Focus Team - working for you, all year round**



# News on Swalwell Christmas tree

**We will have a Christmas tree again this year, but perhaps this could be the last one for a while.**

**Chris Ord** explains: "We are extraordinarily grateful to the members of Swalwell Community Group who have been so dedicated in raising the funds needed for the Swalwell Christmas tree since the Council stopped funding these ten years ago."

"But now the group are seeking further support to be able to continue to provide a tree for Swalwell into the future."

"This year, the ward councillors have helped by donating a large part of the ward councillor's Local Community Fund to the project and we are lucky in that the rest will come from donations from local businesses and personal contributions from residents, so we have it covered for this year."

The cost of providing a Christmas tree has shot up to almost £2,700. When the group first started to fundraise for this the cost was only £1,500.

If you would like to be part of a fundraising group, are able to make a donation or have any other ideas to help with this project, please contact one of your ward councillors using the details at the bottom of the page.



## Environmental projects

**"If you are out and about in the Market Lane area of Swalwell you might see some work going on in the fields" says Sonya Hawkins.**



Project Groundwater Northumbria is developing a groundwater flood risk map as a forecasting system - to create a picture of what happens underground with groundwater particularly when it interacts with abandoned mine working. This will allow better management of incidents such as the flooding at the Metro Centre in 2016 where the source identified was in Kibblesworth. There will be some groundwater monitoring in one of the fields in Cross Lane Meadows, but access will not be disrupted.

Also, in the late part of the year or early next year Gateshead Council are planning additional tree planting in the area behind Swalwell Community Fire Station.

## Swalwell Warm Spaces



**Swalwell Community Centre will continue to support "Warm Spaces" again this year.**

Centre Trustee **Peter Craig** reports "This is a great facility in Swalwell. Any local resident can go to keep warm, enjoy a little company and some hot refreshments. It is also an opportunity to see what else is going on at the centre and maybe get involved in those other activities."

The warm space will be open on Mondays between 10:30 am until 1:00 pm and on Thursdays from 11:00 am until 12:30.

Outside of these times, other local organisations, including Whickham Volunteer Library Association have also declared themselves as hosting "Warm Spaces".

### Surgeries:

Gateshead Council have suspended all indoor ward surgeries at the moment, but your ward councillors are continuing to hold street surgeries in Swalwell.

Your next street surgery will be on:

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November**

**between**

**10am - 10:30 am**

**at**

**Swalwell Community Centre (outside)**



**Between Peter, Sonya & Chris they have 60 years experience of being a ward councillor and are always available to help if you need them.**

  
**LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**  
**Focus Team**

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