

# Focus on Whickham North and Swalwell

Issue 173  
March  
2024

Find us on Facebook: Focus on NE16

## 4.99% Council Tax rise

Labour-run Gateshead Council have increased Council Tax yet again in this year's budget.

The increase is 4.99%, the same as last year, keeping Gateshead as the highest charging Metropolitan District authority in England.

The increase comes shortly after the Daily Telegraph ranked Gateshead as the second worst council in Britain for value for money.



**Sonya Hawkins** said "The Council reported that the budget position is just over £6m better than originally thought, so they had the opportunity to give something back to Gateshead residents in return for this increase, but they have not done so."

**Councillor Ron Beadle**, in his role as Leader of the Opposition said during his speech at the Budget meeting "Your message to Gateshead's residents is that they will pay more and get less."

### Example 2023-24 Band D council tax (excluding parish precepts)

Gateshead	£2,071	Leeds	£1,645
Liverpool	£1,948	Sunderland	£1,637
Sheffield	£1,841	Manchester	£1,618

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-council-tax>

**Chris Ord** said "We know that the Council is under pressure as the government has reduced financial support for Councils, especially in poorer areas, but people deserve much better services for the amount we are paying."

Labour-run Gateshead Council wastes far too much money and doesn't listen properly to local people. Things need to change."

### Gateshead Council - Poor value for money

In December, The Telegraph analysed council tax rates versus the quality of services provided by local authorities.

Based on Band D rates for 2023/2024, this review was performed across all 127 upper-tier authorities in England for which data were available.

The analysis included the share of top-rated schools and care homes, the state of roads, the amount of social housing, how many burglaries occur per 1,000 homes and the amount of all collected waste sent for recycling, composting or reuse.

Gateshead Council was ranked 126<sup>th</sup> out of 127.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/tax/are-you-living-in-britains-worst-value-council/>

## Lib Dems release new Six to Fix



The Lib Dem opposition on Gateshead Council have been surveying residents.

The 17 Liberal Democrat councillors in Gateshead have been talking and listening to residents about what needs to change with the way the Council is being run.

"As a result," reported **Peter Craig**, "a new Six to Fix has been released. Please let us know your feedback, so that your ward councillors can continue to focus on your priorities."

### Our priorities for Gateshead Council

- ✓ Look after our green spaces and trees better
- ✓ Increase street cleaning and dog warden services
- ✓ Bring back Resident Parking Zones
- ✓ Develop better plans for our town centres and traffic
- ✓ Enforce fines for fly tippers
- ✓ Make house building and repairs a priority

## Sonya selected as Lib Dem candidate



**Sonya Hawkins** has been selected by local Lib Dem members to stand in this May's local election.

Sonya was first elected to Gateshead Council in 2012, joining her two other ward councillors; Chris and Peter - and she has been active in the community and standing up for residents ever since.

"I am delighted to have been chosen again to be the candidate for Whickham North (and Swalwell) ward, said Sonya "and would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Whickham and Swalwell for their support."

If I am re-elected, I will continue to work hard with the Focus Team on many things that are important to residents. With the Lib Dems, residents know that they will get hard working councillors who are active in their community and work all year round to speak up for people in Whickham and Swalwell."



# Whickham and Swalwell's Rector to retire



The Reverend Barry Abbott, officiating at one of the many Remembrance Day services that he has conducted since 2005.

The Reverend Barry Abbott, known to us as Father Barry is to retire at the end of March.

Father Barry became the Rector of St. Mary's the Virgin in Whickham in 2005 and then Rector of Holy Trinity, Swalwell more recently.

There is an open invitation to his final service which will be held at St. Mary's Church at 10:30 am, Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March, Easter Sunday.

Peter Craig, who has worked alongside Father Barry on all of the Remembrance Day events since 2005, said "Barry will be missed by everyone and we wish him well in his retirement."

# Community Fair planned for June



**Chase Park Community Fair**

and Fun Dog Show

organised by Chase Park Community Group

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**12:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

(Dog class registration 12:00 until 1:00 p.m.)

Entertainment, Fairground rides and Refreshments plus Stalls by local organisations and charities

**Admission Free**

There is no parking directly at the park or surrounding streets. Public parking is available at the Glebe, behind the library and next to The Gibside.



We encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport to attend the event. Bus services X30, 69, 06, 643 and Coaster 01 stop adjacent to the park.

For further information : 0191 488 0787

Chase Park Community Group are a newly constituted organisation, with the aim: "To promote and protect people's well-being, enjoyment and safety within the park - for the benefit of the local community."

The group are organising a Community Fair in Chase Park on Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup> 2024, which will bring together the whole community and provide an opportunity for local groups and charities to raise funds or recruit extra volunteers..

If you are interested in having a stall please contact the organisers, together with the type of stall you would like to have.



## Schools included:

- Blaydon West Primary
- Chopwell Primary
- Clover Hill Whickham
- Dunston Hill Primary
- Emmanuel College (S)
- Front Street Primary Whickham
- Highfields Community Primary Rowlands Gill
- High Spen Primary
- Kingsmeadow (S)
- Riverside Primary Academy Dunston
- Rowlands Gill Primary
- St Joseph's Primary Blaydon
- St Joseph's Rowlands Gill
- St Mary and St Thomas Aquinas
- St Thomas More (S)
- Stepping Stones Day Nursery
- West Lane Primary Winlaton
- Whickham School (S)

S = secondary school

Gateshead West Uniform Scheme was founded in 2021.

The aim is to help fight uniform poverty and to reduce the number of school uniform items going to landfill unnecessarily.

The group takes donations of good quality items of school uniform in the west of Gateshead, including Front Street Primary, Whickham School and Stepping Stones Day Nursery.

A full list of schools included is shown opposite. Swalwell Primary School also have their own pre-loved uniform bank.

Regular markets are held for families to select the items they require and all of the items are offered on a pay as you feel basis. Our nearest market is at St Cuthberts Church Hall, in Blaydon. Please use the link below to check the market dates.



Library trustee Chris Ord said "We are delighted to report that Whickham Library Volunteers are supporting the scheme by becoming a drop off point for these items."

Further details from: <https://gatesheadwestuniformscheme.org.uk>



## Swalwell recognised at last?

The Local Government Boundary Commission is the independent body with a legal duty to carry out an electoral review of each council in England 'from time to time'.

A report issued by the Commission in January has proposed new boundaries and new ward names for some of the council wards in Gateshead.

These are minor changes to reflect the communities in Gateshead better and ensure that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors.

Sonya reports "People are pleased that the Boundary Commission have agreed with the ward councillors' suggestion and the new ward name being proposed is **Whickham North and Swalwell**."

And the Commission wants to hear what residents and local organisations think about the proposals. Full details can be obtained from : <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/gateshead/feedback>

You have until 8 April 2024 to have your say on the recommendations.

Welcome to Gateshead Council



Between them, Peter, Sonya & Chris have 60 years experience as ward councillors and are always available to help if you need them.



## Focus Team

Write to the team or call them:

**Peter Craig**  
73 Whaggs Lane NE16 4PQ  
Tel. 488 0787

**Sonya Hawkins**  
50 Kingsley Place NE16 4BQ  
Tel. 422 2206

**Chris Ord**  
35 Fellside Road NE16 4JR  
Tel. 488 2545