Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen and thank you all very much for coming along to our Annual Parish Meeting.

I would like to start by giving a very special welcome to our guest speakers for tonight Mr Kevin Walsh who is the Highways Manager for Cumbria County Council.

Kevin has come along tonight to explain the ‘Better Highways Initiative and answer any questions you may have in relation to Highways and Traffic issues in Dalston and the surrounding area.

Chris Drouet is going to give a short talk on the progress so far with faster Broadband in Cumbria and Alan Dinning will give an update on this years Dalston Festival.

I would like to start tonight by thanking all the members of the Parish Council for their continued support and enthusiasm during the past 12 months and I must not forget a special thanks to our Clerk Sue who has settled into her new role very well and gained a great deal of experience in what is presently a difficult and demanding job.

The Parish Council is a strange beast - and as most of the newer members will agree, it takes a little bit of getting used to as it is historically very difficult to get anything completed with any measure of urgency.

This however is changing and I am pleased to say that we now have a team who are much more proactive and possess a willingness to get on and get things done.

This has resulted in a number of schemes been carried out by a dedicated group of volunteers which have resulted in improvements throughout the village the most noticeable of which are the improvements to the Churchyard and Cemetery, the sterling efforts of the Dalston in Bloom team who arrange the flowers and floral decorations throughout the village and throughout the year and the regular Litter Picking days around the outskirts of the village.

There are our other regular and important volunteers not just in the village but also out there in the hamlets who work tirelessly in all weathers to keep public areas looking at their best. I am not going to mention anyone by name but you can be assured that your valuable contribution does not go un-noticed. One of these dedicated volunteers has picked ......bags of litter in the village during the last 12 months and another has picked up ......bags of dog dirt during the past 12 months.

Litter continues to be a major problem throughout the area and I would ask you all to do your bit in keeping the area clean and tidy. There are obviously people out there who persistently leave litter and allow their dogs to foul without picking it up. I would like to think that these people will be reported and suffer the consequences of their actions.
Although we came second in last years Cumbria in Bloom competition we continue with the challenge and will therefore be entering again in 2012 armed with additional knowledge and a band of dedicated horticultural experts who will hopefully put together a winning display.

The Parish Council continue to be consulted on a large number of Planning Applications, 60 in total this year which take up a substantial amount of our time during the monthly Council meetings and continue to restrict the discussion time in our agenda for other important issues.

ISSUES

Vandalism in the Cemetery has reduced in the last 12 months but there continues to be a problem with damage by Rabbits.

We now have a comprehensive programme of works to be carried out in the Churchyard split between Contractors and Volunteers and this work is ongoing throughout the year. Care of the memorials and headstones is the responsibility of the family concerned and although the Parish Council check these items for safety and security on a regular basis we urge everyone to report any damage or defects to the Clerk.

We continue to try and address the traffic and parking problems outside the Post Office and the inconsiderate parking on the surrounding roads in the vicinity of the two school’s. There are now new Traffic Regulation Orders in place throughout the village which should go some way towards solving some of the issues, there is no quick fix for the parking and traffic problems and I therefore ask you all to be patient and if you can see a way to overcome this problem, please let us know.

Depending on the level of grants available, our main projects for the forthcoming years will be to attempt the following:

- Environmental Improvements and the Provision of additional Parking for 43 cars on the Kingsway.
- We continue to work on the formation of a Parish Trust which I will speak about later.
- We will continue pressing for a 20mph limit through the Square and continue to part fund the annual traffic counts which some day will be an important tool in trying to justify a Southern By-Pass.
- We are organising for the digitisation of the burial records and undertaking a full survey of the churchyard which will give a more accurate record of the grave spaces and eventually allow full access to these records on the internet.
- We are putting together a schedule for the Repair and Re Painting the Cast Iron Sign Posts.
- We hope to put an additional Planter in the Square.
- Kitchen Improvements to No 2 Forge Green.
Floor repairs to No 1 Forge Green

This year we made the decision to convert the Grassed area to the front of Forge Green into 4 Allotments and we now have a team of 4 very hard working and enthusiastic local gardeners who are making a fantastic job of converting this area into productive gardens. We are also hoping to get the old Forge Green well back into working order which will make the allotments quite unique in this age of sustainability.

Kingsway

The Kingsway Car Park and Environmental Project went out to tender in September 2011 giving us a lowest price for the revised scheme of £189537.52

Owing to the fact that this was well over our original budget, we decided to split the scheme and re-tender for the Car Park element including some of the Environmental Works to the top end of the Kingsway. That leaves the remaining area as a separate scheme which would attract more grant aid and much of the work could be done by volunteers.

The revised tenders came in at £161,000 which was still well over our budget so we started negotiations with the preferred contractor in an attempt to reduce the cost of the project.

These negotiations continue and we have now reduced the price to £118000 which is £28000 more than the loan repayment we budgeted for when raising the precept in November 2005/6.

These funds are accumulating and are now ring fenced for the project within the Parish Council accounts. It is hoped that more will come from grants and we will be asking for a contribution from the businesses within the village, who by the way, stand to gain the most from the increased parking provision.

The Kingsway project will hopefully be put to the Parish Council for a final decision in June and if approved work is programmed to start in August.

Grass Cutting

We have a new Grass Cutting Contractor which for the next 3 years it is Cumbria County Council who are based in Dalston which is good news and have already started work and are doing an excellent job.

Parish Trust

The formation of a Parish Trust was mentioned last year with the intention of setting up a legacy fund to be used for the good of the people of Dalston.

Since then we have moved on a little and are now concerned that under proposed Government Boundary and District changes, the Parish Council could change and we may eventually become part of a larger Parish.

It was therefore felt that we need to protect the assets of Dalston Parish such as The Green, Forge Green premises and the Kingsway taking them out of Local Authority ownership and into a trust for benefit the people of Dalston.
in perpetuity. This would prevent any future Authority from selling these valuable assets.

■ This will take some time and there is a great deal of research needed to ensure that we get this right for future generations in Dalston.

Diamond Jubilee

■ On the afternoon of 4th June at 2.00pm Dalston is celebrating the event in style.

■ A great deal of planning and organising has gone into what is hoped to be an event to remember and I would like to thank the team consisting of Parish Councillors and residents for all their valuable work.

■ There are copies of the days schedule here for you tonight and they are displayed throughout the village and on the Dalston Website.

■ We have already made a start by planting 25 Diamond Jubilee roses in a new diamond shaped bed in the Jubilee Garden and our thanks go out again for the two hard working volunteers who carried out this work and protected them from the Rabbits.

Precept

■ The Parish Council voted to keep the Parish Precept at its current level for 2012/13 and I am sure that you will all agree it is very good value for money considering the unique level of facilities and services that are available in Dalston

■ The Parish Council feels that the level of Precept in Dalston offers good value for the services we have and our expenditure is below that of Arthuret, Brampton, Hethersgill, Kirkandrews and Walton Parish Councils and still costs less than 68p a week for a Band C property and only (3.5ppw dearer than Cummersdale)

■ The Precept is used for the following purposes.

Looking after the Cemetery which is owned by the Parish Council
Cutting the Grass throughout Dalston and the hamlets including the Recreation Field and all the areas of Common Land
Looking after all the seats, Litter Bins, Signposts, Notice Boards and wild flower areas.
Maintenance of all the footpaths, gates and stiles
Maintaining the buildings at Forge Green
Maintenance of the Green, its fences and river bank
Paying the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
And out of this sum we have also give out Grants and Section 137 Payments of around £2735 to Local organisations.

■ Some of you may have noticed that there was a small 0.2% increase in the precept shown on your Council Tax information. I have been informed that this is a Tax Base adjustment made by Carlisle City Council to maintain the
Precept at last year’s level and is due to changes in the number of taxable properties and the level of occupancy.

■ That is the current situation and as we have other matters to discuss this evening and other speaker to hear, I will conclude by saying thank you all very much for coming along tonight, and please remember that the Parish Council is here to act on your behalf and for the good of the Parish and its residents.

■ So - If you have any issues concerning the Parish please let us know.

■ If you feel you that you have any criticism to make, make them to us, we need to know how you want to see Dalston in the future.

■ And on a final note, I would like to thank the WI for providing the delicious refreshments that we to sample later tonight

■ Has anyone any Questions?