Ouston Parish Council Annual Newsletter 2024

Inside This Issue

Ouston Parish Council Meeting Dates....2
Councillor Vacancies.....2
OPC What We Do.....3
Autumn & Winter OPC Events.....4
Our Community Together.....5
A Big Thank You!.....5
Do It Online.....6
2023 Competition Results.....7
No Cold Calling Awareness.....8
In the Know.....9
Parking outside of Schools.....10
Concerns from Residents.....11
Ouston Community Centre.....12-15
OFGEM Information.....16-17
Anti-Social Behaviour Information ..18-19
Useful Contacts.....20

Your Ouston Parish Councillors are:

Chairperson – Councillor Alan Wake

Vice Chairperson – Councillor Annemarie Bell

Councillor Glenn Batey

Councillor Margaret Duncan

Councillor Danny Wood

Ouston Parish Council – About Us

The role of a Parish Council is to represent the interests of the local community as a whole and promote a harmonious local environment.

We are committed to:

- Listening and responding to the views and needs of local residents
- Working in partnership with people who are committed to our village
- Proactively working to improve our village and the wellbeing of our residents

Parish councils are the first tier of local governance and are the initial point of contact for anyone concerned with a community issue.

To give your views you can email the Clerk at clerk@oustonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Alternatively, attend a meeting every fourth Thursday at Ouston Community Centre commencing at 7pm. Please come along and share your views, ideas or concerns.

Monthly Meeting Dates 2024/25

Thursday 26th September	Thursday 24th October
Thursday 28th November	Thursday 19th December
Thursday 16th January	Thursday 27th February
Thursday 27th March	Thursday 17th April

Thursday 22nd May – Parish Assembly & Annual General Meeting - TBC

Parish Councillor Vacancies

Would You Like To Make A Difference In Your Village?

We currently have two Parish Councillor vacancies in Ouston Parish which can be filled by co-option. Mr John Tate has stepped down and our thanks go to him for all his efforts during his time as a Parish Councillor. Anyone interested should speak to an existing councillor or email the Clerk at clerk@oustonparishcouncil.gov.uk

We strongly recommend candidates should attend at least one Parish Council meeting before they apply. Applications are invited by anyone who is a British subject, over 18 years old and an elector. You must reside within Ouston, or within 3 miles of it, or occupy as owner or tenant any land or premises therein, or have your principal or only place of work there. You must not be disqualified from holding office as a councillor.

Ouston Parish Council – What We Do For Our Village

Last year, April 2023/ March 24 Ouston Parish Council has:
Produced and delivered the Annual Newsletter.
Worked with the Ouston Community Association to provide a Christmas event for the community to enjoy.
Provided OCA with financial donations to contribute to running costs for half term holiday events for children, Easter and Halloween events.
Held the annual Christmas Tree lighting Event where we lit 3 living trees and two temporary trees.
Held a Residents Christmas Lights Competition.
Held a Residents Best Garden Competition
Maintained Flower tubs and Memorial Garden with the help of OAA
Paying service level agreement for DCC to maintain our flowerbeds.

This year April 2024/ March 2025 we plan to:
Hold monies in reserve to keep Ouston Bank and Station Lane lit.
Hold monies in reserve to refurbish the Brooms Park in the future.
We are working with the County Councillors and other Parishes in Pelton Division to form a traffic calming scheme.
Supporting with financial contributions, future OCA events.
Hold a Christmas Tree lighting Event where we will light 3 living trees and two temporary trees.
Hold a Residents Christmas Lights Competition.
Hold a Residents Best Garden Competition
Maintain Flower tubs and Memorial Garden.
Paying service level agreement for DCC to maintain our flowerbeds.
Produce and deliver the Annual Newsletter.

Ouston Parish Council Events - Autumn and Winter 2024

OPC Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Event

Our annual Christmas tree lights switch on is scheduled for **Saturday 30th November at 4pm.** It will take place at the Ouston Community Centre tree to coincide with the OCA Christmas event which will take place 2-4pm. We look forward to seeing you there!

OPC Remembrance Sunday Service

Our Annual Remembrance Sunday Service will take place on Sunday 10th November at 10.55am. It will be held in our Memorial Garden on St Benet's Way. All are welcome.

Poppy Project – Remembrance 2024

This year we will display Poppys through our village leading up to Remembrance Sunday. They will link up with Poppys from the other Parishes in Pelton Division. Each Parish will fund the Poppys from the Royal British Legion with the help of match funding from the County Councillors Neighbourhood Budget.

Our Community - Together

Volunteer Gardeners

A big thank you to those residents who volunteered to 'adopt a flower tub'. Several of the tubs in the village have been planted and looked after by volunteers this year and their help is greatly appreciated. We still need volunteers for the three tubs on Milbanke Junction and four tubs on Iris Crescent traffic lights and Cooks Corner side of the road. We need residents to weed and water the tubs during the summer months. If they aren't cared for, we will have to remove them.

The flower tubs are there for the enjoyment of the whole community. If you live near one and are able to water it, it would be appreciated by all.

A big thank you to Ouston Allotment Association, who continue to water and maintain the Memorial Garden during the summer months.

Volunteer Litter Pickers

We are also lucky to have some kind residents in our community regularly volunteering their time to litter pick. They make our village a much nicer place to walk around and enjoy. Thank you to every one of you - you know who you are!

A Big Thank You To Residents!

The Parish Councillors would like to thank residents for tending to their gardens and sharing their festive Christmas lights for all to enjoy. It really does bring joy when residents continue go above and beyond to make our village a beautiful place to live. It is a pleasure to walk round our village.

Newsletter Distribution

Anyone who could assist with the distribution of future newsletters should contact the parish clerk and give their name and contact details as well as the streets they are able to deliver to. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Have Your Say…

If you have an idea or suggestion that you believe would improve or enhance our village then we would be delighted to hear from you. We encourage residents to actively engage with the Parish Council and put forward their views.

To have your, say you can e-mail Lisa Blondrage, the Parish Clerk, or, alternatively, attend a Parish Council meeting held every fourth Thursday of the month at Ouston Community Centre commencing at 7pm.

Do It Online

To report any concerns or to find out information please visit www.doitonline.durham.gov.uk If you create an account and report any issues using your account, you will receive a reference number and will be able see any updates regarding the issue.

Ouston Allotments

If you are interested in an Ouston Allotment, please contact Lisa Blondrage – Parish Clerk by email: clerk@oustonparishcouncil.gov.uk or in writing by handing a brief letter with your contact details to: Ouston Parish Council, Ouston Community Centre, DH2 1RJ.

Church Coffee Morning

The popular Church Coffee Morning is held every Friday in the Community Centre at 10.30am. Come along for coffee, tea and biscuits and of course a good chat, keep warm with friends.

Ouston Parish Website

Ouston Parish Council have a new website. Why not visit and you can keep up to date with the dates and agenda items of our monthly Parish meetings plus all the minutes from our previous meetings, allotment information, emergency /resilience information and Durham County Council consultations.

Our new website address is www.oustonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Ouston Parish Best Garden Competition

During Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter our Parish Councillors walk round the village looking at resident's gardens. The winner of Ouston Parish Best Garden 2023 was a garden in Rothesay and the runner up was a garden in Milbanke.

Residents will get the opportunity to be awarded Ouston Parish Best Garden 2024. This year's winner will be awarded later this year and the competition will be running again next year. Cllr Duncan will be looking for Wildlife, Butterfly & Bee friendly features when judging. No need to enter, Parish Councillors will be judging gardens as they walk round our village. The Parish Council will be awarding a £50.00 voucher to the winner. A £25.00 voucher goes to the runner up. Good luck!

2023 Winner – Rothesay

2023 Runner Up – Milbanke

Ouston Parish Christmas Lights Competition

Don't forget our Christmas Lights Competition will be running again this year and the Parish Council will be awarding a £50.00 voucher to the winner. A £25.00 voucher goes to the runner up.

The winner of Ouston Parish Christmas Lights Competition 2023 was a property in Rothesay and the runner up was a property in Ross. Again, no need to enter, Parish Councillors will be judging Christmas lights as they walk round our village. Good luck!

2023 Winner – Rothesay

2023 Runner Up - Ross

No Cold Calling Awareness Zones

The core objective of the zones is the prevention or reduction of doorstep crime.

The zones have the backing of the Local Authorities, Durham County Council, Durham County Trading Standard, Durham Constabulary and Ouston Parish Council. Whilst No Cold Calling Awareness Zones have no force in law, the scheme gives householders the confidence to say "NO" and direct the cold caller out of the area.

Quite simply, this is about residents having said "NO" to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold callers that they are not welcome. The NO COLD CALLING AWARENESS ZONE in your area has been set up to assist residents in dealing with such callers.

Street signs have been visible for a number of years. These signs ask that companies or individuals do not call at the door of residents within the zone without a prior appointment. Door stickers have proved to be a useful way of deterring callers. Replacement stickers are available at your Community Centre.

Recently, there have been individuals/traders who have ignored the street signs and even claimed to have police permission to call. This is not true!

If you receive cold callers and they refuse to leave the zone please obtain their details. If possible, the name of the organisation and caller's name. Then pass the information on to Durham Trading Standards on 0300 0261016.

Trusted trader schemes

If you're looking for a trustworthy trader to carry out work on your property or garden there are a number of approved trader schemes that can help.

The Government endorse the standards of the Trust Mark scheme, which is delivered by a number of member organisations that sit under the Trust Mark umbrella.

Other approved trader schemes can be found by searching the internet.

Helpful tips

Remember the following when you're looking for someone to do some work:

- don't accept the services of uninvited doorstep callers
- don't pay up front for any work even if it's for materials
- do seek recommendations from friends and family
- do make sure that gas engineers and electricians are registered
- do try and use members of an approved trader scheme

- do ask to see a business card, ID card and get full contact details for the company
- do call the police or trading standards if you suspect that rogue traders are operating in your community

Report a rogue trader - Emergency incidents should be reported to Durham Constabulary emergency number - 999. In the case of a non-emergency, rogue trader activity can be reported by calling the Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133 or police on 101.

For more information visit www.durham.gov.uk/trustedtraderschemes

Contact details for Durham Trading Standards:

Telephone number 03000 261 016 Email tradingstandards@durham.gov.uk

Keep in the Know

Keep In the Know is a free messaging service brought to you by Durham Constabulary where you decide when and how you are kept informed about the issues that matter to you. We believe that by improving the flow of information between the community and its police we can all make a greater impact in the prevention and detection of crime and anti-social behaviour. Email alerts are sent to particular groups and communities so the more information you tell us when you register, the better our messaging will be. For example, if you indicate you have CCTV installed in your business or home, when a crime occurs or we are seeking a missing person in your area, we will contact you to see if you can provide invaluable help. The more we know about you, the better our community resilience can be. Although it is not for reporting crimes or incidents, you can reply to emails and let us know what is affecting you.

Find out what's really happening in your area - receive regular crime updates, information on road closures and learn about what your local neighbourhood policing team is doing.

To find out more and sign up for email updates please visit www.keepintheknow.co.uk

Parking outside schools

When you drop your children off at school, do not park around the school gates. Safer parking around schools improves the safety of your children and you.

How to park safely

You can help by doing the following:

- park away from school gates to reduce congestion
- keep clear of zig zags, school entrances, dropped kerbs, junctions and residents' driveways
- stop for a school crossing patrol when asked
- don't park on pavements in a way which stops pedestrians, disabled users or parents with prams/pushchairs from using the pavement
- don't park on corners - this will make sure our children can see cars and drivers can see our children
- don't stop on school 'keep clear' markings or safer crossing place
- don't block a road which could prevent emergency vehicle access
- don't stop in the middle of the road to drop your child off - this makes it dangerous for children

Travel to school a different way

Why don't you try walking or cycling to school? It is beneficial for you and your children as it helps to keep them healthy, develops their road safety skills and reduces traffic outside of school at the beginning and end of the school day, which creates a safer and better environment for us all.

You could also consider:

- parking away from school and walking the rest of the way
- setting up a walking bus with other parents/carers and the school
- car-sharing
- using public transport

The start and end of the school day can be hectic with the school run, but safety around schools must come first.

To report issues the contact details for Parking Services are 03000 263 985
or parkingservices@durham.gov.uk

To report issue via Do It Online the link is called "Road or Footpath Obstruction - Vehicle".

Concerns From Residents

Beware -Slip Hazard!

Before washing cars, over the winter months, it is best to check the local weather forecast first to avoid frozen pools of water on pavements which could, obviously, be hazardous to pedestrians.

Overhanging Trees and Hedges

The Parish Council would like to remind residents that it is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain their own hedges and to keep them within their house boundary. Trees and shrubs should not overhang pavements where they can be hazardous to pedestrians, especially at night when they are difficult to see and avoid. Residents in wheelchairs or those with pushchairs can be forced out to the edge of the pavement and curb side putting them in danger from passing traffic. Furthermore, due to this narrowing of the pavements, pedestrians trying to pass each other are stepping out on to the road.

If residents could be mindful of this and please make sure hedges, shrubs and trees are cut back to allow full and safe access to the area outside of their property including the footpath and road. Please be aware it is an offence to allow any overgrowth to impede visibility for motorists at junctions.

Don't Put A Child At Risk!

Please remember to park considerately if you are dropping off, or picking up, at either Ouston Primary School or St Benet's School. A number of cars are parking very close to junctions, with some even parking on the junctions themselves. This is an extremely dangerous practise as other motorists cannot see children stepping out from between parked cars to cross the road, potentially, putting children's lives at risk. Parking beside the shop fronts on Arcadia is also not allowed and can be dangerous too. There are allocated spaces near the shops for public use. Ouston Parish Council are very concerned about this and have made local police aware of the situation.

Don't Forget!

Clean Up After Your Pets

Neighbourhood Wardens have been patrolling Ouston Woods area replacing signage and using stencils to remind dog owners to clean up after their pets have fouled. Anyone caught not doing so can be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £100.

If you wish to report any of these issues, please contact the Neighbourhood Wardens. Please call 03000 260000 or use the online reporting system: www.durham.gov.uk/doitonline

Ouston
Community
Centre
Our Caring Community
VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED
Do you have any spare time? Are you interested in what goes on in your community and do you want to influence what you see happening in our community centre? If so, WE NEED YOU! We are setting up a friends group to get together to plan events and activities throughout the year for all members of the community.
BENEFIT
Make new friends
Be part of the community
Have your say and influence events
Be a valued friend of Ouston Community Centre
Join us as 'Friends of Ouston Community Centre'
find us on facebook - Ouston Community Centre
For more information contact 0191 4105183 or email
info@oustoncc.co.uk
Made with PosterMyWall.com

Ouston Community Centre is continuing to thrive under the current leadership and management, and with the invaluable support of our volunteers. We now offer various classes, activities and events which are enjoyed by residents of Ouston and the wider community. From Judo and Jujitsu to Pilates, and HIITStep to Yoga, there's something for everyone, and we are always open to suggestions.

If you prefer a cuppa and a chat, our Coffee Morning is held on Tuesday mornings and the Ouston Coffee Stop hosted by Ouston Christian Fellowship runs on Friday mornings, both 10:30 to 12:00pm (except for school holidays.) Our Tuesday morning Coffee Morning sometimes coincides with our Police PACT meeting, which is an opportunity to catch up on what is going on locally. Please contact our Centre Manager Trina Walker for more information regarding activities and classes (see contact details below.)

Events so far this year have included Easter Arts and Crafts and Easter Flower Arrangement Making, DDay80 Celebration, a visit from Animals About Town and an Ouston Olympic Games. At the time of going to print we have another children's Summer Holiday Magician event planned and are working on another for Halloween. We will be holding our annual Remembrance Day Service on Friday 8th November at which we have previously been lucky to have our 2 local schools year 6 children in attendance. We are beginning to advertise for stall holders for our Christmas Fair and Light switch on, in collaboration with Ouston Parish Council on Saturday 30th November. This has previously been a very well attended event as Santa always fits us into his busy schedule and brings free gifts for the children in attendance.

As a self-funded charity, we rely heavily on financial support from various sources and are very grateful to have support from both Ouston and Urpeth Parish Councils, and local County Councillors Alison Batey, Paul Pringle and Danny Wood. We also apply for grants from various organisations and this is an ongoing process, and we are currently exploring revision of our membership, as these monetary amounts help us hugely. Maintenance is ongoing and we are continuously working to improve the building cosmetically and with safety in mind, and we have recently had a new CCTV system installed thanks to funding from Cllr. Paul Pringle. The most important refurbishments are our newly resurfaced car park and new roof. Some electrical works have also been completed recently however a complete re-wire will be necessary in the near future,

along with some ongoing flooding issues related to drainage, and we are currently working with DCC and our local County Councillors to resolve this.

The Community Centre building was built in 1973 through a buy-a-brick scheme supported by the local Community, built on land owned by Durham County Council, on a long-term lease to us for a peppercorn rent. We are currently in negotiations to acquire the land from DCC via an Asset Transfer, which when completed, will enable us to access some funding sources which are not currently available to us. Cllr. Alison Batey is providing invaluable help to us throughout this process, and we hope to have this completed before the end of the year.

We would love to pull together a contact register of as many of the original buy-a-brick contributors as possible. This would enable us to personally invite them to our future events and ensure they don't miss out. Please pass these contact details onto Trina our Centre Manager. It is also worth reminding residents that the Centre runs with 3 part time members of staff and the support of volunteers, therefore there will not always be a member of staff on site however we can be contacted via Facebook messenger in an emergency. And finally, we could not continue to hold events without our trustees and fantastic volunteers, and we are always in need of more, therefore if you would like to join us in either capacity, please contact Trina.

Our Centre Manager works Monday to Friday 8:00am to 12:00pm weekdays.

Contacts – Tel No 0191 4105183

Email info@oustoncc.co.uk

Facebook https://www.facebook.com/OustonCommunityCentre

Thank you for your continued support and hope to see you soon.

Clare Marshall - Secretary

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

Ouston Community Association Events

Ouston Community Association's Christmas Wreath Event and Christmas Fayre December 2023

Animals About Town Event – 2024

D-Day 80 Event

Olympics Event Summer 2024

Important Information From The OFGEM Website

How To Be Included On The Priority Services Register

You are eligible if you:

- **have reached your state pension age**
- **are disabled or have a long-term medical condition**
- **are recovering from an injury**
- **have a hearing or sight condition**
- **have a mental health condition**
- **are pregnant or have young children**
- **have extra communication needs (such as if you don't speak or read English well)**

You might still be able to register for other reasons if your situation isn't listed. For example, if you need short-term support after a stay in hospital.

How to Register

Apply by contacting your energy supplier or network operator.

Give them your contact details and as much information as you can about your needs.

Your supplier can pass your details to your network operator to add you to their register too. It's a good idea to ask them to do this if you rely on your energy supply for medical reasons.

If you have a different supplier for your gas and electricity, you need to contact them both.

You'll need to register again with any new supplier if you switch supplier.

How you can get help

Advance notice of planned power cuts. If you rely on your energy supply for medical reasons your network operator can tell you about planned power cuts. For example, when they plan engineering work.

Priority support in an emergency. Network operators could provide heating and cooking facilities if you are cut off supply.

Identification and password scheme. This could include arranging a password or agreed on picture cards if callers need to visit or contact you. This way you can feel confident they are genuine.

Nominee scheme. You can nominate someone to receive communications and bills from your supplier. For example, a family member, carer or someone you trust.

Help with prepayment meter access. For example, moving a meter if you can't safely get to it to top up.

Regular meter reading services. For example, if nobody can read your meter.
Accessible information. For example, account info and bills in large print or braille.
Suppliers and Network operators could offer other support services. Ask them how they can help you.

Similar Support Services

Suppliers can offer free gas safety checks every 12 months. You can request a safety check if you get a means-tested benefit and either:

- **live with a child under five years old**
- **live alone or with others and have reached state pension age**
- **live alone or with others and are disabled or chronically ill**
- **live with others who have reached state pension age or are disabled, chronically ill or under 18 years old.**

Further information about landlord obligations is listed on the Health and Safety Executive website.

Reporting Anti-Social Behaviour

Types of Anti-Social Behaviour are as follows:

- Regular street drinking or drunken behaviour, environmental ASB, such as litter and fly-tipping, that is distressing residents.
- Other forms of environmental ASB, are vandalism, criminal damage, or graffiti to public buildings, vehicles, bus shelters or phone boxes, that is distressing residents and may be seen to be encouraging more serious types of crimes.
- Inconsiderate and repeated nuisance behaviours (such as the inappropriate use of fireworks; cycling or skateboarding in pedestrianised areas).
- Repeated loud noises (such as loud music playing in public parks).
- People using or dealing drugs or evidence left of drugs (such as discarded needles or nitrous oxide canisters).
- People being repeatedly intimidated, threatened, verbally abused, or harassed (including where related to people's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristic).
- Persistent vehicle related ASB (such as repeated illegal parking, abandoned vehicles, speeding cars or motorcycles, joyriding)

Don't Suffer In Silence

Responding to and tackling antisocial behaviour incidents are a top priority for partners and police across County Durham and Darlington. We have strong procedures which allow the police, councils, housing providers, health providers, other organisations, and communities to work in partnership with each other to tackle anti-social behaviour incidents.

If you want to report a crime completely anonymously, you can call **Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**. They will then pass the information to the local police.

However, with anti-social behaviour, it is better to report it to the local agencies yourself wherever possible. This means you can have a direct contact with someone in the police, local authority or housing association. Try and get a name. Then you can contact them directly to find out what they are doing about the problem. You can also give evidence which can be very important to getting results.

To report Anti-Social Behaviour visit www.durham-pcc.gov.uk/asb , call 101 or in an emergency call 999. Alternatively, contact DCC's Neighbourhood Wardens on 03000 260 0000 or durham.gov.uk/doitonline

If you want to report a crime completely anonymously, you can call **Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**. They will then pass the information to the local police.

Other help and advice

If you are a tenant with any former council housing company or other housing association, you can find more information on their website.

DCC's Neighbourhood wardens work to improve the quality of life for residents by reducing the level of anti-social behaviour. Numbers of incidents are included in their monthly performance reports.

Useful Contacts

If there is an emergency always call 999.

Local Police

Contact Durham Constabulary to report anti-social behaviour, or other incidents not classed as an emergency, and get advice about crime prevention and household security by calling **101**.

If there is something you want to contact the police about, but it is not an emergency please call the 24-hour non-emergency number **101 or visit www.durham.police.uk/**

Call Crime Stoppers to report anonymously 0800 555 111

Non-Emergency Fire Safety Advice

Contact County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to get advice about household fire safety, including the installation of smoke alarms, by calling 0845 305 8383.

NHS Non-Emergency

If you are feeling unwell but it is not a life-threatening emergency, visit NHS 111 or contact your GP, pharmacy or urgent care centre.

Durham County Council

During normal office hours, contact us on **03000 260 000** or visit www.doitonline.durham.gov.uk

The following services provide out of hours support:

- Call **03000 267 979** for emergency social care and child welfare concerns, including foster carer support.
- Call **08081 968 406** if you are homeless, or facing homelessness.
- Call **03000 262 195** for Care Connect (community alarm service).
- Call **03000 266 000** for births, deaths and marriages service.

Household Emergencies

- Electricity - If your power supply is interrupted call 105 or 0800 011 3332.
- Gas - if you smell gas contact the National Grid on 0800 111 999.
- Water - call 0800 393 084 for burst water mains or sewer issues call 0345 717 1100.

Fraud and Bogus Communication

Never give out your personal bank details over the phone or by email. If you have concerns regarding this or have received a similar call, text or email, please contact us on 101 or Action Fraud 0300 123 2040.

Our Pelton Division County Councillors are:
Councillor Alison Batey - **alison.batey@durham.gov.uk**
Councillor Paul Pringle - **paul.pringle@durham.gov.uk**
Councillor Danny Wood - **danny.wood@durham.gov.uk**