

# Great Aycliffe Town Council



**PARISH PERFORMANCE PLAN**

**2008/2009**

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## 1. Foreword by the Mayor

This is the second Parish Performance Plan, which has combined elements of the previous Parish Plan and Best Value Performance Plan. As such it is recognised that changes to the format may be required in future years. Indeed a comprehensive parish planning exercise is due to be undertaken during 2008/09.

It is an important strategic document that the Town Council will continue to produce each year to inform the people of Great Aycliffe about our services. It provides details of what was achieved in the last financial year and what we propose to undertake this financial year.

The first few pages of this document is intended to provide a brief summary of the past year including some financial information and a snapshot of the year to come.

### What we did last year

- ◆ Achieved an overall saving of £293,687 on Town Council budgets, which has been set aside in the Council's balances for future investment in Council services and assets.
- ◆ Put in place the Council's first Medium Term Financial Plan, setting out the Council's financial strategy for the next three years.
- ◆ Developed and implemented the Council's first Asset Management Plan, setting out the Council's strategy for the long term management and maintenance of its buildings, plant, vehicles, machinery and equipment.
- ◆ Undertook asset management works in the Town Council office building consisting of;
  - ◆ Disabled access;
  - ◆ Hearing loop installed in the council chamber;
  - ◆ New boiler and heating works.
- ◆ We undertook a Best Value Review of the pre-school service. This concluded that the service provided value for money and was a valuable asset to the Town Council. Satisfaction with the pre-school service and facilities' is high.
- ◆ Undertook a Great Aycliffe wide satisfaction survey of all residents. The results of which have been published and are being used as the basis for strategic documents, investment decisions and our targets for 2008/09. The Town Council achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 67% which is a great result. 76% of people thought Great Aycliffe was a pleasant place to live and 63% thought the Town Council provided value for money for its services.
- ◆ Retained the Investors in People Award. Some areas of good practice highlighted were; clear aims and objectives captured in corporate and departmental plans; consultation with customers and staff and a common sense approach to service delivery.

- ◆ As a direct result of the survey the Council have agreed to fund the appointment of an Environment Officer and 2 additional Works Operatives who will provide support to the works section and the Environment Officer. This will enable the Town Council to concentrate on key issues raised in the survey.
- ◆ Have gone some way in developing a Youth Council to ensure the young people of the Town have a voice. We also held an Agenda Day with the findings being reported to committee by some of the young people who attended.
- ◆ A Local Improvement Programme (LIP) bid has been approved to provide additional play facilities at Simpasture Park. A second application has been submitted to provide play equipment at St. Oswald's Park. In addition a LIP bid to improve the Moore Lane building to provide an Environmental Studies centre has been approved. These projects will be joint funded with the Town Council.
- ◆ In addition Sedgefield Borough Council Members have used their Neighbourhood Enhancement Programme allowance to provide cross party support to provide resources and new play equipment and facilities at Horndale and Woodham Parks.
- ◆ Held a Family Fun day at the Oakleaf Sports Complex where facilities were provided free of charge. This was a great success with over 300 people attending.
- ◆ Delivered a programme of special events for the people of Great Aycliffe including; the annual pensioners trips; fun in the parks; the firework display and Christmas activities.

### **Key targets for this year**

Following a review of the Town Council aims and targets and including recommendations from the residents of Great Aycliffe some of our key targets for 2008/2009 are:

- ◆ Undertake the refurbishment and improvement of Simpasture and St. Oswald's Parks.
- ◆ Undertake improvements at the Moore Lane building to provide an Environmental Centre.
- ◆ Appoint an Environment Officer to raise environmental awareness and 2 additional works staff to deal with urgent and environmental issues.
- ◆ Refurbish the Oakleaf bar area and install a DDA compliant lift to improve access.
- ◆ Retain the 'Quality Parish' status.
- ◆ Provide a multi use games area at Woodham Park and Infant play equipment at Horndale Park.
- ◆ Continue to provide an annual special events programme.
- ◆ To achieve an unqualified opinion in the Annual Audit Letter.
- ◆ To achieve year on year efficiency savings, to enable reinvestment in key priorities and keep Council Tax increases low.
- ◆ Undertake a Best Value Review of the Sports Complex facility.

## **Council Finances**

The Council's financial standing is a key element in demonstrating Best Value. The Council must, by law, make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and in doing so secure economic, efficient and effective use of its resources, safeguard its assets and take reasonable steps to prevent fraud and other irregularities.

The key performance measure of the Council's financial standing, is the annual Audit Letter, which is based on an annual inspection undertaken by the Audit Commission.

The Council must obtain an 'unqualified' audit opinion within this Letter in order to retain its Quality Council status. The Council achieved this in 2006/2007 and a copy of the 2006/2007 Audit Letter is appended to this document.

2007/2008 was also a good year financially for the Council, with significant savings being achieved on the Council Budgets, the Council's first Medium Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan being developed, and the achievement of a good response in the satisfaction survey which saw 63% of respondents believing that the Town Council Tax represented value for money.

The 2007/2008 Audit Letter is due to be received in October / November 2008.

An overview of the Council's finances is included in Section 21 of the Parish Performance Plan on pages 38 – 40.

### **Did You Know?**

The following table shows how much each of the Council's many services will cost you, the council taxpayer, in 2008/2009, per week, based on the Band A Council Tax:-

|                                           |     |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| Parks and Play Areas                      | 42p |
| Corporate Management                      | 40p |
| Sports Complex                            | 34p |
| Environment and Grounds Maintenance       | 24p |
| Financial Management                      | 18p |
| Administration and Council Offices        | 16p |
| Civic Costs and Councillors               | 14p |
| Contingency                               | 12p |
| Pre-Schools                               | 12p |
| Senior Citizens Trips                     | 9p  |
| Aycliffe Show                             | 8p  |
| Cemeteries                                | 8p  |
| Public Seating, Lighting and Bus Shelters | 4p  |
| CCTV Cameras                              | 3p  |
| Golf Course and Driving Range             | 2p  |
| Allotments                                | 2p  |
| Football Pitches                          | 2p  |
| Fun in the Parks                          | 2p  |
| Fireworks Display                         | 2p  |
| Santa Tours and Christmas Lights          | 1p  |
| Sports Coaching for Children              | 1p  |
| Other Special Events                      | 1p  |

Total Cost per Tax Payer per **week** of Great Aycliffe Town Council Services **£2.57**

Total Cost per Taxpayer per **year** of Great Aycliffe Town Council Services **£133.53**



## 2. Introduction

The Town Council have for the past eight years been guided by Best Value legislation. During 2007 the Government undertook a consultation exercise with Town and Parish Councils and subsequently the requirements of Best Value were removed. Great Aycliffe Town Council has agreed, whilst we are no longer bound by this legislation, we will maintain the principles of Best Value and incorporate these into our strategic documents.

This is the second Parish Performance Plan which has combined the previous Parish and Best Value Performance Plans into one document. It is also intended to be a working document which will be used as the Corporate Service Plan.

The Parish Plan process usually involves a large consultation exercise and can last for 12 months, details of the first process can be found in chapter 9. However due to the Local Government review this document is intended as a stop gap measure to ensure the Town Council still progress the matters which are important to the people of Great Aycliffe.

In order to refresh the findings of the first Parish Plan process a satisfaction survey was sent to every household in the Great Aycliffe area and a number of Open Days were held to gather the views of the residents. These views have been used to update the Parish Plan.

The Council accepts full responsibility for its preparation and for the information contained in it. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is correct and that it meets the requirements of the legislation and Government guidance.

Copies of the Plan are available for public reference in the following locations:

Town Council Offices

Newton Aycliffe Library

Oakleaf Sports Complex

Aycliffe Village Post Office

And the Council's website – [www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk](http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk)

Copies have also been sent to Sedgefield Borough Council and to Durham County Council and neighbouring Town and Parish Councils.

### **3. Equalities**

Great Aycliffe Town Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability or geographic location.

Following government guidance information will generally be provided by the Council in English only. Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated. You can request and alternative format copy by contacting Great Aycliffe Town Council on 01325 300700.

### **4. Views on the Plan**

The Town Council would welcome your views and comments on the Plan and these can be sent to:

Andrew Bailey, Town Clerk, at Great Aycliffe Town Council, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham, DL5 6QF

Fax: (01325) 301053

E-mail: [info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk](mailto:info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk)

### **5. Introduction to Great Aycliffe**

Great Aycliffe comprises the town of Newton Aycliffe and the villages of Aycliffe and School Aycliffe. It is part of the Sedgefield local authority area, in County Durham. The population of Great Aycliffe is approximately 29,000.

The relatively large size of the Great Aycliffe area is a recent phenomenon. The settlement has been in existence from early Saxon times, and was originally Aclay, a Saxon term thought to mean 'a clearing in the oaks'. Middridge was originally the settlement on the ridge between School Aycliffe and the village of Eldon.

The Saxon settlers were not allowed to live in peace in their clearings and ridges, however, as the south of Durham was an area of intensive Viking incursion throughout the tenth century. The legacy of these raiders is reflected in the name of School Aycliffe, which was land given to Scula, a general who served the Viking King Ragnald.

Life changed radically for the inhabitants of Aclay in 1069. The Norman conquest of England, which had begun three years earlier, eventually reached the northern shires, as the well-equipped invasion force marched relentlessly northwards. The Saxon way of life was all but destroyed in the 'Harrying of the North'.

Oderic Vitalis, a monk who chronicled the event, claimed that the lives of almost 100,000 men, women and children were taken in the winter of 1069/70.

Aycliffe became part of the great seat of the Bishop of Durham and the peasants lived a feudal life as serfs, working on the land as little more than slaves. The

distance from the capital in London and the dominance of the church combined to reinforce the sense of alienation felt by many of the region's families. In 1569, 28 inhabitants of Middridge and Aycliffe joined the rebellion of the North, as Catholic families sought to replace the Protestant sovereign Elizabeth I with Mary Queen of Scots. The rebellion failed and five local rebels who had joined the uprising were executed.

However, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a new direction for the spirit of revolution. The Stockton to Darlington railway was built by George Stephenson in 1821, ushering in the industrial age, and with it Aycliffe's first rail line at Simpasture.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mining industry dominated Durham, although by 1938 the mine at Middridge was abandoned. During World War II, the Government established an Ordnance factory near to Aycliffe Village, to supply munitions to the services. The workforce, mainly women, became known as the 'Aycliffe Angels' or the 'canaries' so called because the chemicals used in shells turned their hands and skin yellow.

After the war, Aycliffe became the site of a new town, planned to provide good quality homes near to the Aycliffe Industrial Estate. Under the guidance and control of the Aycliffe Development Corporation, the town flourished and has grown to be part of the Great Aycliffe settlement.

## **6. Setting the Scene**

Great Aycliffe is a vibrant community, set in an attractive semi-rural setting. It is bounded on all sides with open countryside and the area administered by the Town Council contains many attractive green spaces.

Schools in the area are generally good, and are increasingly linked to the higher education network. The towns and villages have excellent road links to the A1, and Newton Aycliffe has a train station on the Darlington to Bishop Auckland rail line.

The Aycliffe Industrial Park comprises 230 hectares and is a base for a mix of local, national and international companies.

There are a wide range of clubs and societies active in the area, and play and leisure facilities are provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council and Sedgfield Borough Council. The Oakleaf Sports Complex and the Oak Leaf Golf Course are valued and well used by local residents and visitors.

Housing conditions are generally above average, with no homes in the area falling below the Decent Homes Standard. Significant levels of new house building mean that Aycliffe can offer a wide choice of choice of starter, family and executive homes to new residents coming to the area.

The Town Centre has a mix of individual retail outlets and smaller chain stores, with individual retail outlets in neighbourhood areas. Consultation is on-going regarding the proposed redevelopment of the town centre. A wider range of shopping facilities is available in Darlington and Bishop Auckland.

As with much of the North East, the highly attractive environment can, however, serve to mask some of the problems inherent in the area. The region is the poorest

region in the United Kingdom and the gross domestic product of the Durham Tees Valley area lags behind the national and EU average. Over the last 15 years, the North East has been able to access significant resources from both UK and European governments to support a wide programme of regeneration, as the North East undergoes the process of transformation from an economy traditionally based on heavy engineering and manufacturing, with a lower skills base, towards the more modern, higher skilled mixed economy visualised in the regional economic strategy.

While this intervention has undoubtedly acted to stem decline and provide growth in some areas, there is still much to do. The UK therefore has identified which areas of the country are deemed to be a priority for concerted action to support regeneration. To do this the Government produces a list of deprived areas, and parts of Great Aycliffe are ranked within the poorest 20% of deprived areas nationally.

## **7. Relationship with other Durham Councils**

Local government in England and Wales is provided by a network of primary and secondary councils. The primary councils serving the Great Aycliffe area are Durham County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council. Following the Local Government Review, due for completion in April 2009, Sedgefield Borough Council will cease to exist and will be replaced by the new Unitary Authority for County Durham.

Great Aycliffe is constituted as a town or parish council and is therefore the tier of local government closest to the neighbourhood.

Durham County Council is responsible for providing educational and social services, fire and consumer protection, strategic planning, waste disposal and economic development.

Sedgefield Borough Council is responsible for housing, waste collection, leisure and local planning.

What the Town Council **don't** do:

- ◆ Manage schools
- ◆ Manage the Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre
- ◆ Run economic development
- ◆ Manage the highways
- ◆ Manage the police, fire or ambulance
- ◆ Grant planning permission
- ◆ Run social services
- ◆ Run housing services
- ◆ Provide bus services

## **8. Services Provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council**

Great Aycliffe Town Council works with other Town Councils in the area through the mechanism of the County Durham Association of Local Councils. This forum brings together local neighbourhood councils to share good practice, developing a strong voice for the local council sector in Durham.

What we do:

- ◆ Run the Oakleaf Sports Complex
- ◆ Run the Golf Complex
- ◆ Manage the cemeteries
- ◆ Manage the parks and most of the town's play areas / sports pitches
- ◆ Run a programme of excursions for senior citizens
- ◆ Run 3 pre-school play settings
- ◆ Provide 136 allotment plots; 9 pigeon plots and 5 poultry plots
- ◆ Provide a wide range of leisure events – Fun-in-the-Parks, Santa Tours, Firework Display
- ◆ Produce and manage the Great Aycliffe Show
- ◆ Comment on all planning applications
- ◆ Manage woodlands, nature walks and woodham burn
- ◆ Maintain most of the bus shelters

## **9. Parish Planning Process for Great Aycliffe Town Council**

In the 2000 Rural White Paper, the Government introduced the concept of "Parish Plans". Parish plans are designed to assist communities to set out their vision for the area they live in, and to identify the action that is required to help them to achieve it.

There is no set format for a parish plan, and the Government expected that they will vary considerably from community to community. There are, however, strong policy values underpinning the concept. These can be summarised as requiring parish plans to be user friendly, understandable, and to be produced after detailed, good quality consultation.

Following a report produced by SOLACE, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, for Great Aycliffe Town Council, it was agreed to produce the first parish plan. This would "define and articulate clearly its [the Town Council] vision and key priorities". SOLACE also identified that the Council should "develop longer term service and budgetary planning arrangements" with the Parish Plan forming part of

the development of the future budgetary framework, in order to reflect the aspirations of the Great Aycliffe community as expressed in the Plan.

GATC decided therefore to produce a Plan to:

- ◆ Help us to improve services.
- ◆ Help us to work with others to improve their services.
- ◆ Help us to lobby and speak up for Great Aycliffe when needed.
- ◆ Help us to plan what should happen in the area over the next few years.

The first Parish Plan was produced in 2006 following a lengthy consultation which consisted of:

- ◆ The setting up of a Steering Group;
- ◆ Attending a number of community group meetings;
- ◆ Attending a number of community events;
- ◆ Consultation with the senior schools;
- ◆ A survey of the users of Town Council facilities;
- ◆ A random survey of Great Aycliffe residents and
- ◆ A Churches Together consultation.

All of the results and findings were then analysed and the Parish Plan produced. The process took approximately 11 months to complete. The Town Council are due to undertake a similar exercise during 2009 with the findings providing the base for the 2010.

## 10. The Civic Year

Councillor Brian Hall was elected as Mayor of Great Aycliffe in May 2007 and his term of office lasted until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2008.



There are a number of formal civic engagements each year, which include:

- ✿ The Civic Service
- ✿ The Christmas Carol Service
- ✿ The Civic Ball
- ✿ Remembrance Sunday
- ✿ Mayor's 'At Home'

In addition to these the Mayor attended a further 182 engagements. Mrs Florence Evans was his Mayoress during his term of office.

The Mayor raised £6,720 for his nominated charities in his year of office. These were, the Butterwick Hospice at Bishop Auckland and Cancer Research UK.

## 11. Election of Mayor

The Council elects a Town Mayor annually from amongst its members and the Mayor for 2008/09 is Councillor George C Gray. He has chosen the British Heart Foundation and BLESMA (British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association) as his charities for his term of office.



## 12. The Council, its Members and Establishment

### 12.1 The Council

Great Aycliffe Town Council is probably one of the largest Town Council's in the country, employing around 72 full and part-time staff, with a planned revenue budget of £1,576,775 in 2008/09.

### 12.2 Members

The Council has a membership of 30, which is made up of 17 Labour and 12 Independent Councillors. (NOTE: 1 vacancy at the time of publication)

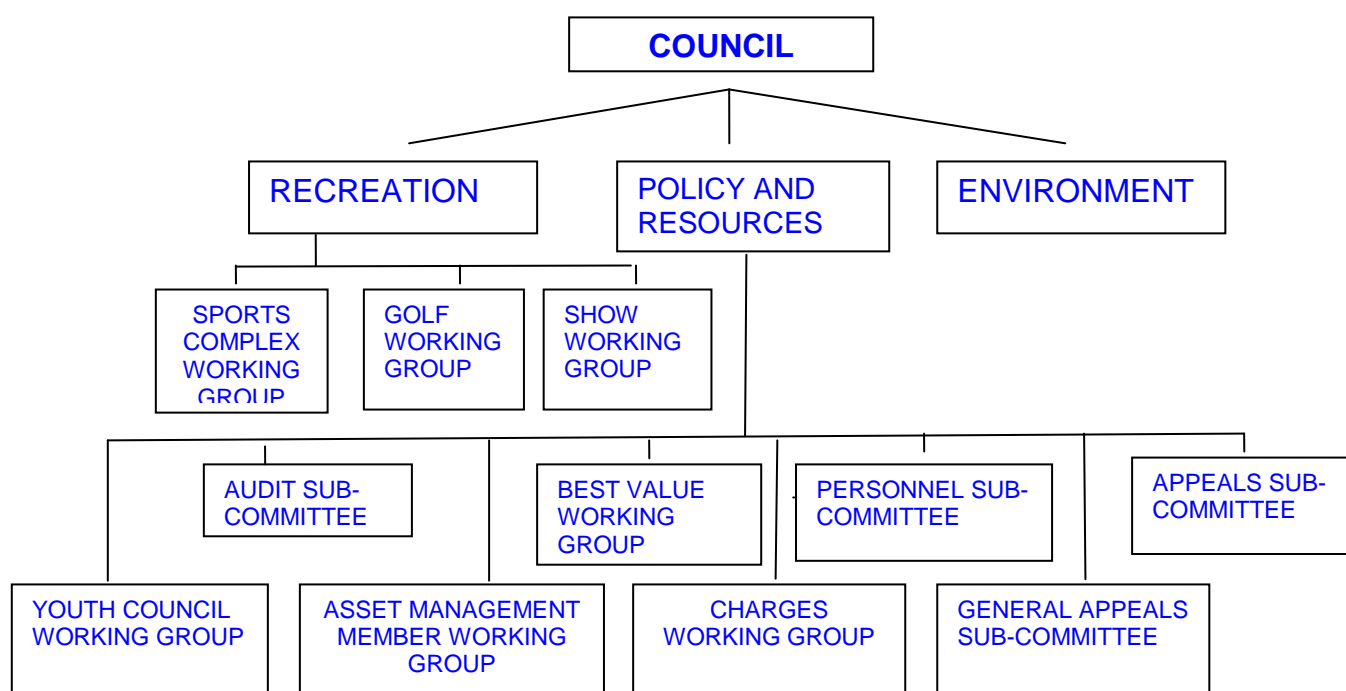
The area represented by the Town Council is divided into eight wards.

|   |                                          |           |
|---|------------------------------------------|-----------|
| ◆ | Byerley Park, Horndale and Cobblers Hall | 6 members |
| ◆ | Shafto/St Mary's                         | 3 members |
| ◆ | Woodham South                            | 3 members |
| ◆ | Woodham North                            | 6 members |
| ◆ | Simpasture                               | 2 members |
| ◆ | Neville                                  | 3 members |
| ◆ | West                                     | 6 members |
| ◆ | Aycliffe Village                         | 1 member  |

The Council conducts its business through committees and the committee structure is set out below. The responsibilities of each committee are set out in the Council's Scheme of Administration and are reviewed annually.

### 12.3 Committee Structure

The Council considered its Constitution in 2005/06 and resolved to introduce a new Constitution with effect from May 2006. However, the constitution will not be reviewed until the outcome of the Local Government Reorganisation is known.



The Local Authorities' (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003 came into force on 1 May 2003, which allowed the Council to pay each member a basic parish allowance.

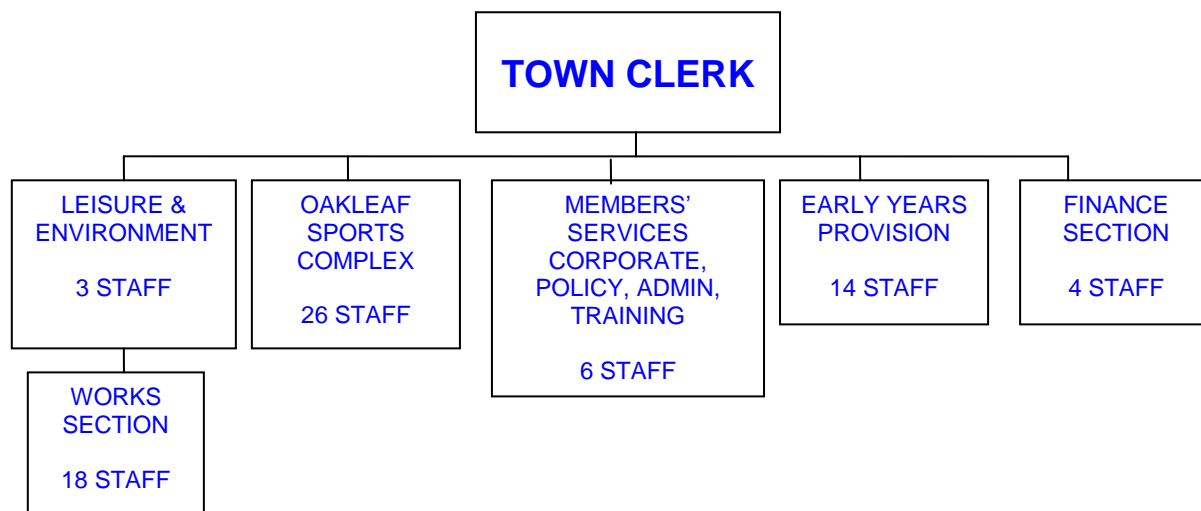
After taking advice from the Independent Remuneration Panel of Sedgfield Borough Council, the level of remuneration is currently set at £1,059.60 per annum for each member of the Town Council.

### 12.4 Appointment of Committees

The three main committees are appointed at the Council's Annual General Meeting in May each year and a list of the dates for the committee meetings in 2008/09 are set out in the Council's newsletter.

### 12.5 The Council's Establishment

The Council employs 38 full-time and 34 part-time employees.



**The Senior Officers within the Council are:**

|                            |                  |                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Town Clerk                 | Andrew Bailey    | <a href="mailto:info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a>                         |
| Corporate & Policy Officer | Christine Walton | <a href="mailto:christine.walton@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">christine.walton@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a> |
| Finance Manager            | Dan Austin       | <a href="mailto:daniel.austin@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">daniel.austin@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a>       |
| Works Manager              | Don Thompson     | <a href="mailto:info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a>                         |
| Complex Manager            | Derek Snowball   | <a href="mailto:derek.snowball@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">derek.snowball@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a>     |
| Early Years Officer        | Jackie Swainston | <a href="mailto:Jackie.swainston@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">Jackie.swainston@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a> |
| Senior Admin Officer       | Christine Ryder  | <a href="mailto:christine.ryder@great-aycliffe.gov.uk">christine.ryder@great-aycliffe.gov.uk</a>   |

Great Aycliffe Town Council occasionally employs casual staff, which do not form part of the formal staff establishment.

The Council also retains the services of consultants for HR matters, Health & Safety and Occupational Health services and other speciality services.

**13. Council Targets 2007/08**

To maintain Quality Parish Council Status, there was increased emphasis on reviewing our progress and performance. In response to this requirement progress on the Council targets are discussed at Performance Management Group and reported to the Council on a quarterly basis. The progress made during the year informs the development of targets for the following year.

Following the designation as a Quality Parish, the Council agreed a strategic mission statement in February 2005, which is that Great Aycliffe aims to be:

**“A quality Council, working in partnership, listening to and speaking up for the community, to bring excellent services to Great Aycliffe.”**

In support of this statement, the Council agreed the following strategic Aims:

1. **To provide good quality governance and management of the Council.**
2. **To manage the council’s finances and assets in a responsible manner.**
3. **To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities.**
4. **To provide pre-school education as appropriate in Great Aycliffe.**

5. **To contribute to the environmental improvement of Aycliffe by managing and developing parks, play areas and green spaces.**
6. **To influence the design and delivery of services provided by others in partnership.**
7. **To deliver services for partners where that would provide added value.**
8. **To research information and make the case for Great Aycliffe.**

Aim 6. used to be - To provide facilities for burials it has been agreed that this should be moved to the Works and Environment Service Plan.

To ensure that the aims are met, the Council set a series of targets under each aim. These were initially developed through the Parish Planning process and following the SOLACE report.

Every effort is made to ensure aims and targets are reviewed as part of the budget setting process, although it is acknowledged that many work matters and projects are generated from other areas as and when funding becomes available. The Parish Plan is therefore only a guide for the Council in deciding on spending priorities in future years and assist in the medium term financial planning for the Council.

Most capital projects are undertaken within the context of the Great Aycliffe aims and targets. However, we cannot forget that additional funding is occasionally made available from other sources giving rise to one off projects that are not part of the aims and targets but are important to take advantage of.

The targets set out for 2007/08 under each aim are attached as Appendix 1, including a statement of progress achieved against each target.

## **14. Council Targets 2008/09**

Following a large satisfaction consultation exercise, covering the whole of the Great Aycliffe area, and the setting up of a Strategy Customer Panel many of the targets for 2008/09 were chosen. The Council's budgets were developed in line with these targets and the survey results which identified the customers needs. However, many additional projects arise throughout the year which cannot be budgeted for. The projects are progressed when funding becomes available.

In consultation with the Strategy Customer Panel, made up of residents from the Great Aycliffe area, the Council has made a minor amendment to the Aims. Aim 6 was "to provide facilities' for burials", it has been agreed that this will be devolved to the Works and Environment service plan. The list of targets for 2008/09 is attached as Appendix 2.

## **15. Performance Indicators**

In addition to targets set by the Council, one of the key aspects of Best Value is the requirement to establish a system for measuring the Council's performance against other councils. We do this year on year by examining our performance against a number of indicators and where possible comparing those against other councils.

We are founder-members of the '41' Group, which consists of those parish and town councils, which fell within the definition of Best Value Authorities.

However, we recognise that Great Aycliffe is probably one of the largest Town Council's in England in terms of expenditure, and that comparison with other parishes poses some difficulty. There are only two other councils within the '41' who maintain leisure centres, none provides a golf course, only one provides a driving range and none provides pre-school learning centres. We continue to work and share information with the other members of the Group, but due to the differences in services provided it is extremely difficult to compare like for like.

The Government does not stipulate performance indicators for parish and town councils. In addition to the local indicators we monitor we have adopted some of the Best Value indicators for principal councils. Our performance against these indicators can be seen at Table 1 on the following page.

Last year saw the introduction of a comprehensive performance management framework to ensure a consistent approach to performance management across all services. Quarterly monitoring of targets and regular progress reports to the Council are also undertaken. These improvements have been closely linked with the budget setting process and risk assessment.

**TABLE 1  
ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST PERFORMANCE INDICATOR**

| REF  | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR                                                                                 | ACTUAL 2006/07           | TARGET 2007/08           | ACTUAL 2007/08                  | TARGET 2008/09           | COMMENT                                                                                                                      |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BV1  | Number of complaints received                                                                         | NIL                      | Nil                      | 3                               | NIL                      |                                                                                                                              |
| BV2  | % of those making complaint satisfied with handling of complaint                                      | N/A                      | 100%                     | 75%                             | 100%                     |                                                                                                                              |
| BV3  | % of correspondence where acknowledgement sent in 5 working days                                      | 100%                     | 99.5%                    | 98.5%                           | 99%                      |                                                                                                                              |
| BV4  | % of undisputed invoices paid in 30 days                                                              | 95.12%                   | 96%                      | 98.54%                          | 97%                      | Achieved                                                                                                                     |
| BV5  | Sports Complex – cost per visit.<br>Baseline data - Cost per visit in 2005/06 was £1.98               | £1.51                    | £1.96                    | £2.49                           | £2.95                    | New Torex system now used to count users. More accurate and removes double counting. Cost per visit has therefore increased. |
| BV6  | Sports Complex - % of visitors satisfied with service<br>Baseline data - The level in 2004/05 was 96% | 94%                      | 95%                      | Survey to be undertaken Dec. 08 | 95%                      |                                                                                                                              |
| BV7  | Cost per round of golf<br>Baseline data - In 2004/05 the cost was - £0.96                             | -£0.36                   | £0.92                    | -£0.06                          | £0.87                    | Golf Course achieved a surplus in 2007/08                                                                                    |
| BV8  | Number of Senior Citizens using excursions                                                            | 34 trips<br>1580 clients | 35 trips<br>1555 clients | 31 trips<br>1586 clients        | 31 trips<br>1519 clients |                                                                                                                              |
| BV9  | % of occupied allotments                                                                              | 99%                      | 100%                     | 98.5%                           | 100%                     |                                                                                                                              |
| BV10 | % of allotment tenants satisfied with the overall service<br>Baseline data - 81.7% in 2004/05         | 99%                      | 99%                      | N/A                             | 99%                      | No survey undertaken this year                                                                                               |
| BV11 | Cost per allotment plot<br>Baseline data - £54.85 in 2004/05                                          | £96.59                   | £111.96                  | £41.69                          | £49.33                   | Savings achieved on cost of providing allotments                                                                             |
| BV12 | No of aims and targets completed                                                                      | 26                       | 32                       | 25                              | 22                       | A number of targets were not progressed due to LGR                                                                           |
| BV13 | Deliver 2½% efficiencies (£)                                                                          | N/A                      | £38,000                  | £312,498                        | 40,000                   | A number of factors helped deliver significant saving on the 2008/09 revenue budget                                          |
| BV14 | Average no. of days lost to sickness per employee                                                     | 6.29                     | 5                        | 7.6                             | 5                        | 4 long term sickness absences have affected this figure                                                                      |
| BV15 | Net cost per resident for the provision of all special events                                         | N/A                      | £18.98                   | £16.59                          | £19.09                   | Savings achieved on cost of providing events                                                                                 |

## 16. Service Areas

This section of the Plan explains the individual services we provide and the purpose of the service.

Because of the increasing emphasis on ensuring that all Great Aycliffe Town Council targets can demonstrate direct linkage to the overall aims of the Council, service areas have developed service plans; action plans and performance indicators which can clearly be linked back to the Council's aims.

As always, we invite the community's comments on the Plan and positively welcome constructive criticism, which will help us to improve the information we provide for you each year.

### 16.1 Members/Civic Services

This service area covers principally the work undertaken by the Mayor's Secretary and the general administration office staff in supporting the Mayor during their year of office.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To support the Mayor in their year of office
- ◆ To ensure that proper conventions and protocols are observed at all times
- ◆ To organise successfully the necessary civic functions agreed annually by the Council
- ◆ To manage the Members' Allowances Scheme.

### 16.2 Corporate Services/Best Value/Personnel

This service area covers corporate and cross-cutting issues which have an effect across the entire Council. These are policy, best value, planning, performance management, risk management, administrative and committee services, training, and customer engagement.

This service area is responsible for the implementation of new performance management arrangements and in particular for setting up systems for monitoring the Council's progress in relation to continuous improvement.

The **objectives** of this service are:

- ◆ To ensure timely and appropriate advice to the Council on matters affecting the strategic and corporate activities of the Council
- ◆ To ensure effective management and implementation of the Council's policies and priorities
- ◆ To be aware of and ensure compliance with all duties and obligations as laid down in Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and specific guidelines

- ◆ To provide timely and appropriate advice in relation to all employee/employer relations issue
- ◆ To provide advice in relation to training requirements for members and employees.

### **16.3 Administration**

The Administration Section of the Council produces all minutes and agendas and provides support to members.

The **objectives** of the Administration function are:

- ◆ To provide effective and efficient typing, administration and reception services to members, officers and to the public in relation to the Council's functions
- ◆ To provide the necessary support at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

### **16.4 Finance Section**

The Finance Manager is the Council's formally designated Responsible Financial Officer, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The Finance Section is responsible for the financial aspects of the Council business.

The objectives of this service area are:

- ◆ To ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs
- ◆ To ensure that an effective payroll function is maintained
- ◆ To ensure that the necessary systems of internal control are in place and that a robust internal audit plan is developed and kept under review
- ◆ To ensure that appropriate advice is provided to the Council in relation to its investments and borrowings
- ◆ To ensure compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations and to advise on appropriate changes in the light of new legislation
- ◆ To ensure effective procurement of council goods and services and prompt payment of invoices
- ◆ Prepare the Council's Statutory Statement of Accounts
- ◆ Prepare the Council's Annual Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan
- ◆ Monitor and control spending

- ◆ Income collection and banking
- ◆ Financial advice and training
- ◆ Insurance arrangements

## 16.5 Pre-School Learning Centres

The Council's aim is to help parents ensure that their children establish sound educational foundations and it seeks to do that by providing early years education in three Pre-School Learning Centres located within its administrative area.

All of the Centres deliver high quality early years education and have been praised by education professionals.

Our standards are high and each Centre has had a successful inspection from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

To achieve and maintain these standards we have an excellent ratio of well-trained and motivated staff.

The work of the Centres is managed by the Council's Early Years Officer and we retain the services of a specialist early years adviser, whose function is to help maintain and enhance the standards within all the Centres.

Continuing training is vital and the Council ensures that sufficient resources are available to ensure that the high standards continue to be achieved.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To meet the National Standards for sessional and full day care
- ◆ To ensure that the current high standards within the Pre-School Learning Centres are maintained and that quality early learning experiences are provided for the children who attend those centres
- ◆ To ensure that appropriate training is provided for supervisors and assistants
- ◆ To ensure effective liaison and joint working with other organisations, particularly with Sure Start County Durham, who have an interest in the provision of early years learning
- ◆ To seek to secure, for the benefit of the service, assistance, resources and contributions towards its operation
- ◆ To keep the service under review and to make appropriate recommendations.

## 16.6 Works and Environment Section

The Works and Environment Service provide a range of skilled services to the Council. These services include:

- ◆ Grass cutting
- ◆ Design, planting and maintenance of annual floral bedding displays
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of amenity trees
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of woodlands
- ◆ Management and maintenance of shrub beds and perennial borders
- ◆ Management, inspection, maintenance and renewal of play equipment and play areas
- ◆ Operational management and maintenance of the Oakleaf Golf Course and Driving Range
- ◆ Management, associated record keeping, burial service and maintenance of two cemeteries
- ◆ Maintenance and burial service of Aycliffe Village Churchyard
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of allotment sites
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of 8 parks
- ◆ Maintenance and inspection of Council buildings and property
- ◆ Maintenance and inspection of Council roads and footpaths
- ◆ Maintenance and inspection of bus shelters, litter bins and public seating
- ◆ Provide expertise and assistance in setting up and staging special events
- ◆ Management, setting up, inspection and maintenance of Christmas lighting display
- ◆ Management of the community enhancement award scheme
- ◆ Work in partnership with other agencies to enhance and improve other amenity areas not under the ownership of Great Aycliffe Town Council
- ◆ Provide and manage a park ranger service
- ◆ Provide an 'out of hours' service for emergency call outs in relation to security or health and safety issues

- ◆ Supply and maintain sufficient plant, vehicles and equipment required to undertake the above services
- ◆ To carry out operational duties in a safe manner by employing safe working practices and undertaking risk assessments to ensure the health and safety and welfare of staff and the general public
- ◆ To work with schools to encourage environmental awareness
- ◆ To manage and maintain wild flower areas and wetlands.

The Works and Environment Service charges are allocated across other service areas' budget headings as appropriate and this reflects the variety and range of the work which the Section undertakes.

The **objectives** of the Section therefore need to reflect the variety of services provision and are:

- ◆ 'To ensure adequate provision and management of well maintained and accessible environmental areas, allotments, cemeteries, parks and play areas, which meet the needs of all the community in a cost effective, efficient and timely manner'.

Individual service areas for Works and Environment are detailed in this chapter.

### **16.7 Works Section**

The Section provides a range of what might be called 'grounds maintenance' services, including grass-cutting, floral bedding displays, hard and soft landscaping, tree maintenance and planting, play equipment maintenance and installation, litter-picking, supervision of park activities, maintenance of parks, playing fields, woodlands, nature areas, open spaces and amenity areas and the preparation of graves.

In addition, the Section carries out the inspection and maintenance of Town Council owned buildings and property, and inspects and maintains Town Council owned footpaths, roads, cemeteries, bridges, public seats and play equipment.

### **16.8 Parks and Play Areas**

We currently manage and maintain 8 parks, all of which have play equipment. In addition West Park has a boating lake.

The 8 parks are:

- ◆ Town Park
- ◆ Woodham
- ◆ St Oswald's
- ◆ Simpasture
- ◆ Moore Lane
- ◆ West Park
- ◆ Horndale
- ◆ Byerley Park

We also provide and maintain play areas at Aycliffe Village, School Aycliffe, Scott Place and the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

The Works and Environment Section carry out maintenance and upkeep of the parks and the play equipment in them. Regular inspections are undertaken of play equipment to ensure that it is safe.

The Town Council currently pays Sedgefield Borough Council to provide two wardens to 'keep an eye' on its parks, principally the Town Park. The arrangement is working well, however it is unsure what services will be provided following the Local Government Review.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To maintain the Council's parks and play equipment in order to provide a clean, safe environment for the community to use
- ◆ To carry out a phased programme of replacing play equipment in the Council's parks.

## 16.9 Playing Pitches

The Council provides eight permanent football pitches for the use of the community and 11 teams use these during each football season. The football pitches are located at:

- ◆ Oakleaf Sports Complex
- ◆ Horndale Park
- ◆ Simpasture Park
- ◆ Moore Lane Park

In addition, mini-soccer facilities for the age groups 8-11 years are provided at St Oswald's.

Our seasonal charges for the pitches range from £220 to £400, depending on location and the facilities provided. Junior team fees are half the adult fees, in pursuance of our policy to assist junior football development.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To seek to provide sufficient playing pitches to meet the demand from the community
- ◆ To ensure that the pitches provided by the Council are maintained to an acceptable standard
- ◆ To liaise with and work in partnership with other appropriate bodies to secure the availability of suitable playing pitches and to consult as necessary with users
- ◆ To keep under review the charging policy for the use of playing pitches.

## 16.10 Outside Events

The Council organises several events each year for its community. The Service continues to be popular and the value of the service to the community was again ratified by the 2007 satisfaction survey.

There is input to this service area from a number of staff, principally the Leisure Manager, the Works Manager and the Leisure and Environment Assistant.

We continue to seek to work in partnership with other bodies in the organisation and staffing of outside events.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To organise and/or stage outside events in accordance with the Council's priorities as set down from time to time
- ◆ To ensure that the organisation of each event complies with all statutory regulations and requirements
- ◆ To continually survey the community in relation to its satisfaction with such events and to respond to the results of such surveys
- ◆ To actively seek to work in partnership with other appropriate organisations in staging or organising outside events.

## 16.11 Allotments

The Council provides and supervises five allotment sites. These are located at Aycliffe Village, Finchale Road, Clarence Chare, Byerley Park and St Oswald's Park. There are a total of 137 allotments and fees range from £10.75 for a half plot to £31.50 for a full plot.

We also provide 9 pigeon sites at St. Oswald's and 5 poultry sites at Clarence Chare.

At the inaugural Allotment Tenants Annual Meeting in 2001, tenants were asked if they would like to form an allotments association and manage the sites themselves.

The tenants decided that they wanted the Council to manage the sites and agreed to an 'Allotments Charter', which sets out the Council's future commitment to the allotments and also the maintenance standards we intend to achieve and maintain at the sites.

An annual meeting, which is open to all allotment tenants, ensure that the Charter's standards are adhered to. In addition a satisfaction survey is undertaken every two years.

As a Council we continue to explore new initiatives to reduce green waste, including financial incentives in the form of reduced rents for sites which recycle green waste and have produced a Good Composting Guide, which has been issued to all tenants.

New allotment tenants are also provided with an Allotment Tenants Handbook, which contains useful information and tips on how to get started.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To provide sufficient allotment plots to meet the demand for them
- ◆ To maintain all allotment sites up to the standards set out in the Council's Allotments Charter and tenancy agreement
- ◆ To liaise with allotment holders and their representatives on a regular basis
- ◆ To ensure that the obligations of the allotment holders under the Allotments Charter are carried out.

## 16.12 Cemeteries and Burials

The Town Council is the burial authority and is responsible for the following facilities:

- ◆ Stephenson Way Cemetery
- ◆ West Cemetery

Stephenson Way Cemetery was opened for interments in 1963 and West Cemetery in 2000.

Burial spaces are available at both cemeteries. However, at Stephenson Way this is now restricted to reserved, single-burial plots and cremated remains plots as the cemetery nears full capacity.

In addition, the Council carries out the burial function at Aycliffe Village Churchyard and also maintains the church grounds. The burial function is undertaken on a rechargeable basis.

The Council works hard to ensure that not only does it provide high quality services, delivered in a professional and sympathetic manner, but that these standards are also observed by funeral directors and stonemasons when carrying out duties in the cemeteries.

To this end, the Council introduced an approval scheme for stonemasons. Only stonemasons on the approved list are allowed to operate in the Council's cemeteries. Before being accepted on the approved list, stonemasons must provide references from other local authorities regarding standards of workmanship and also produce health and safety documentation and public liability insurance certificates.

In an effort to help bereaved families through a difficult time in their lives, the Council has also produced a reader-friendly booklet, which is issued to grant holders, detailing various aspects of cemetery procedures.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To provide facilities for burials.
- ◆ To provide and manage attractive and well-maintained cemeteries for parishioners and non-parishioners alike

- ◆ To ensure that liaison with undertakers, stonemasons, ministers and the bereaved, and the administration of the service are efficient, professional and sympathetic at all times.

### **16.13 Street Equipment**

This service area relates to the maintenance of street equipment such as bus shelters, dog bins, litter bins, public seats and parish footway lighting.

The Town Council provides most of the bus shelters within the parish (with the exception of the Adshell style shelters located on Woodham Way, Williamfield Way, Burnhill Way and the Industrial Estate) and public seating.

We also provide footway lighting, dog bins and litter bins on areas for which we have responsibility.

The objectives of this service area are:

- ◆ To keep under review the demand/requirements for additional street equipment
- ◆ To ensure that existing equipment is maintained in a clean and safe condition
- ◆ To respond effectively to remove graffiti from premises and property for which the Council has responsibility.

### **16.14 Environment**

The appointment of an Environmental Officer to raise environmental awareness and two multi skilled operatives will enable the Town Council to deal with urgent and environmental issues.

In addition, the Environment Officer will be working with other external bodies such as the local schools, the Police and Youth Offending Service to raise awareness about the environment, climate change and developing a sense of pride in our local area. The Environment Officer will also be responsible for the proposed Environmental Centre based in Moore Lane Pavilion.

The **objectives** of this service have yet to be determined.

### **16.15 Sports Complex**

Our Oak Leaf Sports Complex is open 7 days each week from 9am until 11pm. We continue to provide facilities for the following sports: five-a-side football, badminton, netball, hockey, cricket and table tennis within the main sports hall. The Complex also provides the Town's only squash courts and indoor bowls facility.

The bar/catering function provides an excellent facility and a range of reasonably priced meals. The function room can cater for 80 users and is able to provide an excellent venue for a number of leisure activities such as private functions, meetings, bridge and yoga classes. We employ 25 staff within the Complex.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To provide and maintain a variety of sporting activities commensurate with the size and capability of the Complex and in accordance with the Council's priorities as determined from time to time
- ◆ To be flexible in our approach to the facilities provided
- ◆ To provide and maintain a bar/catering facility
- ◆ To ensure that an efficient and effective booking service is operated for those wishing to use the facilities
- ◆ To seek to maintain or increase levels of usage for each of the activities undertaken
- ◆ To be alert to new initiatives and provide appropriate and timely advice to the Council in relation to the same
- ◆ To provide sports coaching courses as appropriate and to liaise with other bodies.

#### **16.16 Golf Course and Driving Range**

The Council provides an 18-hole Golf Course and an 18-bay Driving Range. There is involvement from a number of different sections in the operation of both. The Town Council has entered into a new contract for services with a Golf Professional, whose responsibilities are:

- ◆ To collect fees for the Course and Driving Range
- ◆ To operate the Driving Range and to collect the range balls
- ◆ To take tee reservations and to administer party bookings
- ◆ To provide a warden service for the Course
- ◆ To provide a golf shop with associated professional services.

The Works and Environment Section employ green-keeping specialists who are dedicated to maintaining the course to a high standard. The Recreation Committee of the Council has responsibility for overseeing the operation of both facilities and has established a Golf Working Group, whose remit is to discuss with representatives of users of the facilities how well they are being operated. Proposals from that Working Group are then fed back into the committee process.

The **objectives** in relation to these two facilities are:

- ◆ To keep under review the management arrangements for the two facilities
- ◆ To liaise appropriately with other municipal golf course providers

- ◆ To keep under review the cost of the green-keeping operation and compare costs with other municipal courses
- ◆ To ensure that there is an opportunity within the Golf Working Group for users to make their views known on the operation of the facilities
- ◆ To continue to work with the Oak Leaf Golf Club
- ◆ To promote and support junior golf in all appropriate ways
- ◆ To keep the course layout under review, with the intention of all-year-round 18-hole provision
- ◆ To maintain the Golf Course to an acceptable standard.

### **16.17 Capital Projects**

The Council reviews annually its programme of proposed capital projects i.e. investment in the Council's assets such as its buildings, vehicles and machinery. Some represent one-off proposals, others a continuing programme of improvements in a particular area. For example DDA works and Asset Management works.

In 2005/6 we recognised that we need to review the planning, management and delivery of capital projects. Work on the development of this initiative continues, with the Council now in a position where most capital projects are undertaken within the context of the Great Aycliffe aims and targets and the Medium Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan. However, we cannot forget that additional funding is occasionally made available from other sources giving rise to one off projects that are not part of the aims and targets but are important to take advantage of Local Improvement Programmes. All of these actions are subject to continuous monitoring by the Performance Monitoring Group, with any problems identified by that Group being notified to the Policy and Resources Committee.

A Medium Term Financial Plan has been approved by the Council and can clearly show the links to the Parish Performance Plan. The capital programme position of the Council is also monitored on a regular basis and discussed at the Policy & Resources Committee.

Capital works undertaken in 2007 / 2008:

- Refurbishment of St. Oswalds Pre-School Learning Centre.
- Improvements to Council Offices, heating, DDA staff / public toilet, access ramp to Council Chamber and creation of internal office space.
- Provision of a public address system and induction loop system to the Council Chamber.
- Improvement to access steps Butterwick Court / Woodham Burn.
- Extension to the Great Aycliffe Way.

## **17. Best Value**

Although the previous legislative requirements have been removed from Town and Parish Councils, and to date no further guidance has been released, the Town Council considers it vital to continue to deliver services under the ethos of Best Value.

The Town Council consults its community on a regular basis from a town wide satisfaction survey undertaken every three years to consultation on specific projects. It undertakes an annual review of its functions; measure performance on a quarterly basis and produce a number of strategic documents including the Medium Term Financial Plan, which are audited by an independent external auditor.

As a Quality Council, Great Aycliffe Town Council will continue to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which it exercises its functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Council, will continue to undertake Best Value reviews of services which have significant member involvement.

A Best Value Working Group was established and will be retained and this Group is charged with the following responsibilities:

- ◆ To consider and make recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee in relation to all aspects of Best Value
- ◆ To undertake reviews of services as determined by the Council and in accordance with the Council's review strategy
- ◆ To consider and make recommendations from in respect of the order of reviews

The Group appointed for the municipal year 2008/09, at the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2008, comprises of nine Councillors from both political parties.

Best Value principles now permeate the culture of the Council.

### **17.1 Best Value Reviews 2007/08**

A best value review was carried out by the Council's Best Value Working Group during 2007 which looked at the Council's provision of early learning centres for children aged 3 years to 4years 11 months.

Consultation took place with the parents / carers of every child, along with the head Teachers and Governors of the two schools which host pre-school centres.

It was also reported that all three pre-school learning centres had achieved a 'good' grading at their last inspection by Ofsted.

The results of the review acknowledged that the pre-schools are providing an excellent service of high quality and highlighted the benefit that pre-school provision provides to the children of Great Aycliffe.

The Council agreed that the pre-schools should remain under the control of the Council, that the planned refurbishments should be undertaken without further delay (these are now complete) and that officers look into the feasibility of St. Oswalds Pre-School Learning Centres being utilised as a full day care centre.

## **17.2 Planned Best Value Reviews 2008/09**

A review of the Oak Leaf Sports Complex was commenced in March 2008 and is ongoing. The findings will be reported to the Policy & Resources Committee in due course.

## **18. Project Reviews**

### **18.1 Asset Management**

The Town Council's assets have been reviewed and an Asset Management Plan has been developed from the findings. Work has been prioritised for the next 10 years and built into the financial and forward planning of the Council.

An Asset Management Database has been developed and will be reviewed annually. In addition, a schedule of expected life and replacement costs for plant and machinery has been completed, together with a recommended play area investment programme.

### **18.2 Risk Management**

Risk Management is now fully embedded in the Council. Risk Assessments are undertaken when required as part of the committee report process. Quarterly reviews are undertaken by PMG, reported to the Audit Sub-Group, Policy & Resource Committee and Full Council.

An electronic Corporate Risk Register has been developed.

### **18.3 Joint Working Arrangements**

The outcome of the Local Government Reorganisation is still not known but every effort is being made to communicate with the new Unitary Authority and current arrangements are still working well.

There may be the opportunity to undertake a larger role in the services provided within the Great Aycliffe area. However, this will be dependent on the new Unitary Authority.

### **18.4 Policies and Procedures**

Policies and procedures are reviewed on a continual basis. New policies are presented to committee and published on the web. The Town Council researches best practice in order to maintain high standards and deliver good quality governance and management of the Council.

## **18.5 Investors in People**

The Council recognise that the employees are the Authority's greatest asset in delivering services in the manner intended, and investment in employees is therefore paramount in achieving excellent services to Great Aycliffe.

It is therefore vitally important that the employees delivering front line and support services should have sufficient skills and training to meet customer expectations and requirements.

Personal Development Reviews, designed to promote continual professional development and training of employees has been an established part of our investment in employees which allows each to reach their full potential and assist each section to meet targets and maintain continuous improvement in service provision.

The Town Council underwent a reaccreditation inspection in April 2008 under the new guidelines and retained the Investors in People Award. Some areas of good practice highlighted were; clear aims and objectives captured in corporate and departmental plans; consultation with customers and staff; a common sense approach to service delivery; performance and financial management.

## **18.6 Youth Council**

One of the targets in last years Best Value Performance Plan was to develop a Youth Council. This project has involved partnership working with the Youth Worker at Sedgfield Borough Council, the Investing in Children Section at Durham Council, the MP's Office and the Youth Centre to ensure a joined up approach.

An Agenda day was held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008 which highlighted some of the young people's concerns and the options to progress a Youth Council. Work on this project will continue during the next financial year.

## **19. Consultation**

Effective communication and consultation with the community in Great Aycliffe are essential elements of best value.

We will continue to be flexible in our approach to consultation but our methods of consultation will be realistic in terms of cost and available resources. The Council continues to have a regular programme for surveying the users of our services, and we now publish a quarterly newsletter.

Surveys are undertaken each year for

- ◆ Users of the Oakleaf Sports Complex;
- ◆ Pensioners using the trips provided by the Council; and

The allotment holders are surveyed every two years and other ad-hoc surveys are undertaken as and when required.

A Strategy Customer Panel has been set up following the satisfaction survey undertaken in August 2007. This panel has been involved in the setting of council targets and are consulted on a range of matters.

## 19.1 Satisfaction Survey Findings

In August 2007 a Great Aycliffe satisfaction survey was undertaken by the Town Council. The Best Value Grant received from Central Government covered all the financial costs.

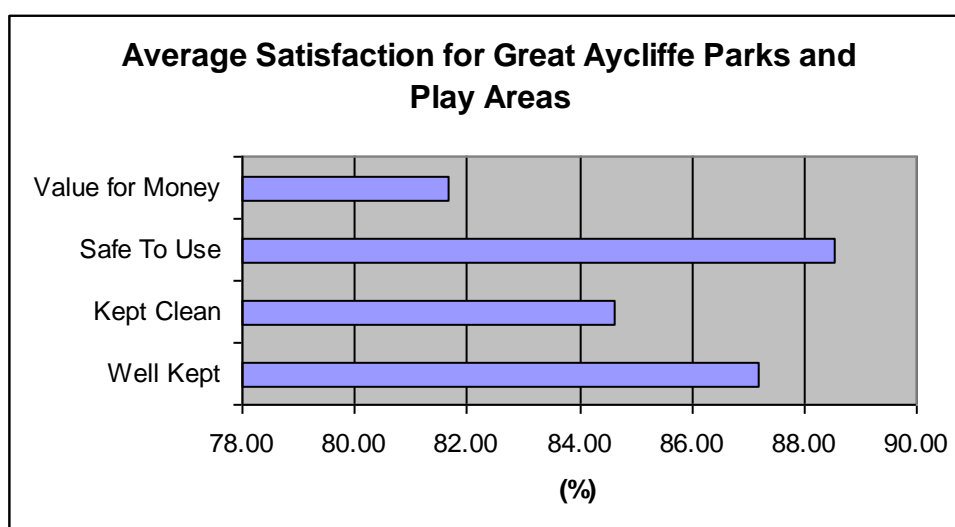
The Council received a total of 1395 responses and an overall a satisfaction figure of **67.03%** was achieved in addition **63%** thought the Town Council provided value for money for its services. Residents were asked – taking everything into account do you think Great Aycliffe is a pleasant place to live? Nearly **76%** (75.98) of respondents agreed it was.

These responses confirm that the Town Council are delivering the services to the people of Great Aycliffe to a high standard effectively and efficiently.

A number of other questions were asked and the following paragraphs try to give an overview of responses received.

**78%** of users thought the range of services provided by the Oak Leaf Sports Complex was good or very good and **70%** thought the complex provided value for money.

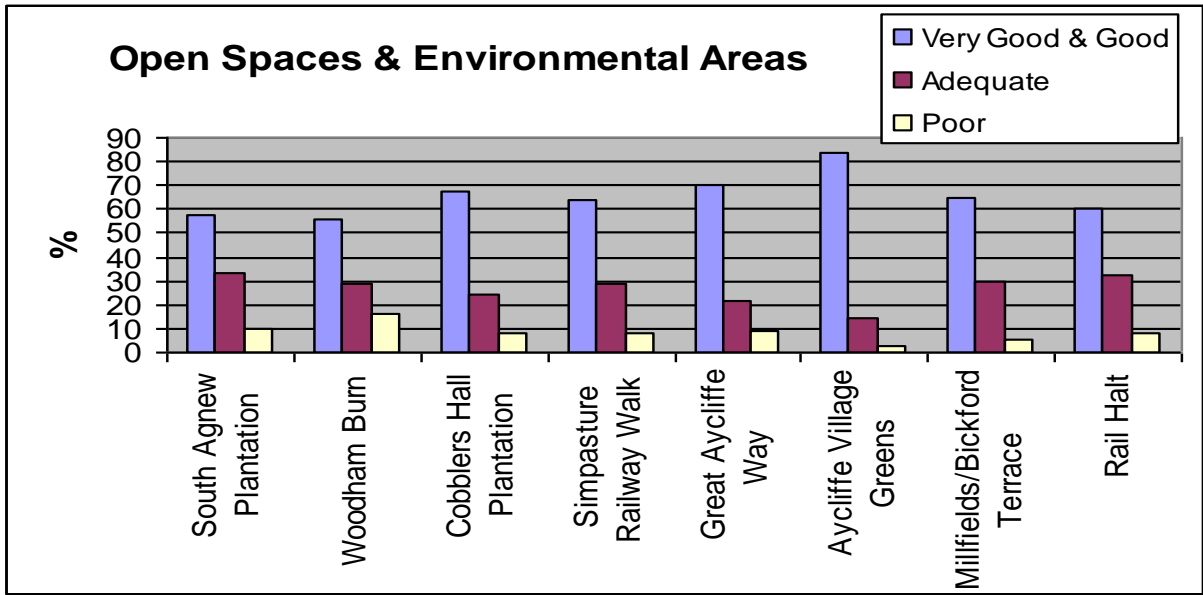
The following chart provides an overview of the parks and play areas.



## 19.2 Open Spaces and Environmental Areas

Great Aycliffe Town Council takes pride in the environmental appearance of the area and the following table shows the responses in respect of maintenance of the areas. The average for good value for money is 79.38% with Aycliffe Village Greens getting the highest score at 87.5% and Woodham Burn receiving the lowest score at 72.5%.

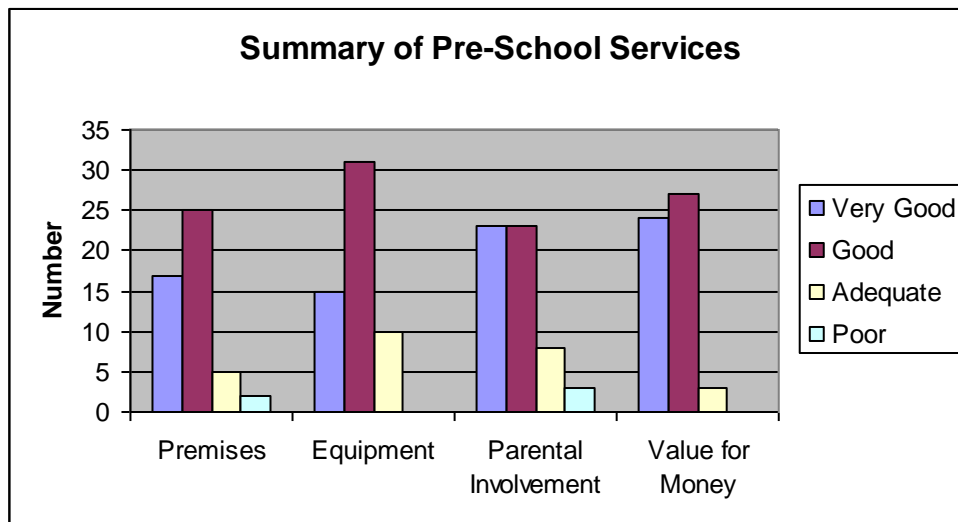
The following chart provides an overview of the open spaces and environmental areas which are the responsibility of the Town Council.



The cemetery and burial provision and service received an overwhelming positive response with all satisfaction over 96.5%. The visitors to the Stephenson Way and West Cemetery thought they were well kept, clean and peaceful.

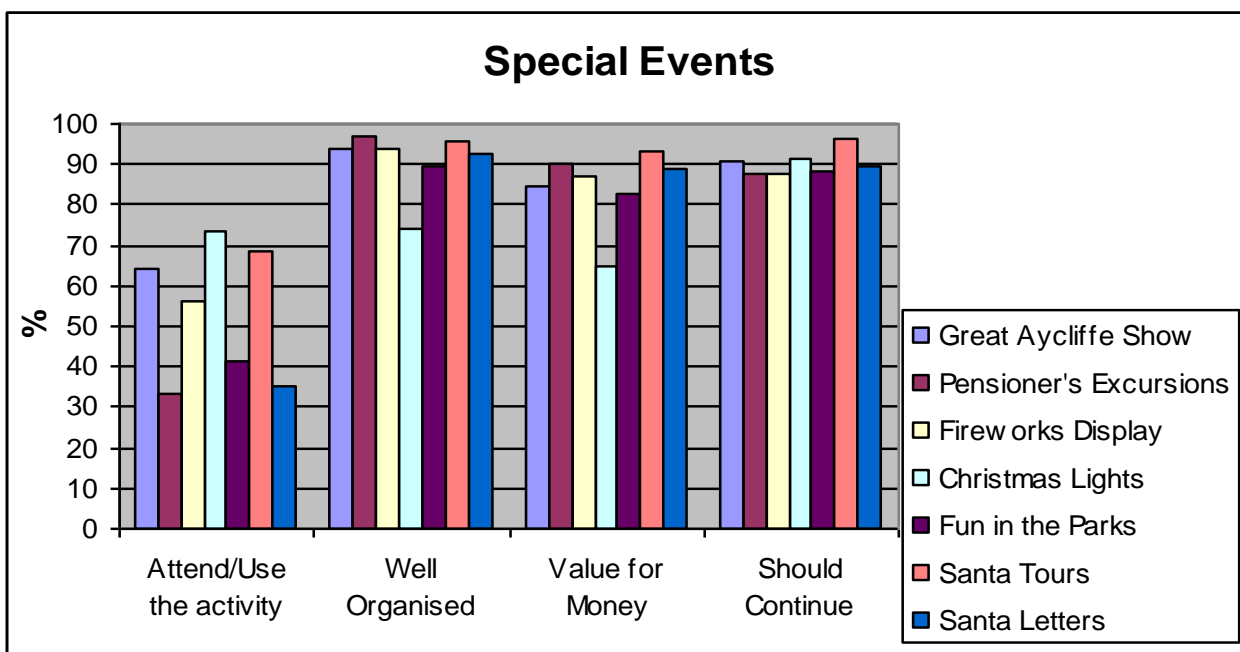
### 19.3 Pre-schools

The following table shows the overall service provision for pre-schools.



### 19.4 Special Events

The table below provides an overview of the special events delivered by the Town Council. Although attendance and usage of the activities is relatively low in some instances it is clear that the residents of Great Aycliffe think they should continue.



## 19.5 Safety

Residents were asked six statements with the following results.

- **64.41%** of respondents thought Great Aycliffe is a safe place to live and
- **85.07%** felt safe in their home with
- **52.05%** of respondents stating they felt safe in public places. The main area of concern regarding safety was the Town Centre.
- Unfortunately **59.36%** thought anti-social behaviour was a problem.
- Happily only **25.22%** thought bullying was a problem in schools in Great Aycliffe
- **72.30%** of respondents stated the presence of CCTV made them feel safer.

## 19.6 Respect

Although the questions in this section are not part of the Town Council's overall remit they help provide some background information and provide details to fit into the bigger picture of the Great Aycliffe area.

The top three areas which were considered to be a very big problem were rubbish and litter (**25.78%**); teenagers hanging around (**25.17%**) and a lack of consideration (**18.24%**).

The top three areas which were considered to be no problem were abandoned/burnt out cars (**62.75%**); neighbours (**55.21%**) and vandalism/graffiti (**29.17%**).

## 19.7 Investment

Residents were asked to give three priorities for further investment. As this was an open question it elicited a large amount of options. However, the following list provides the top ten responses for investment.

Environment and Grounds Maintenance  
Parks and Play Areas  
Pre Schools  
Footpath Repairs  
Public Seating  
Facilities for Teenagers and Children

Reduction of Anti Social Behaviour  
Town Centre Toilets  
Litter Picking and Removal / Litter and  
Dog Fouling Wardens  
Provision on Leisure / Sports Facilities

### **19.8 Disinvestment**

Again residents were asked to give three areas where they would like to see disinvestment. The following list gives the top ten individual responses.

Sports Complex  
Allotments  
Senior Citizens Trips  
Civic Ball  
Golf Complex

Fireworks  
Aycliffe Show  
Civic Events  
Councillor Expenses  
Mayor at Home

Although the sports complex came top in the list for disinvestment it should be noted new sports facilities/provision scored high in the requests for further investment. Allotments also scored high for disinvestment however this is a statutory duty the Council must perform. If responses for 'Don't cut the budget' had been included they would have ranked second in the above list.

### **19.9 Comments from Customers**

These are just a few of the comments made by customers which, where ever possible, will be built into the target setting for the Council for 2008/09.

### **19.10 Parks and Play Areas**

- ◆ Replace existing dog waste bins on Town Council owned land and investigate the possibility of providing more bins.
- ◆ Replace existing litter bins with more vandal resistant bins and investigate the possibility of providing additional bins in areas prone to littering.
- ◆ Rolling programme of investment/inspection of play areas (funding limited)
- ◆ Investigate provision of Crazy Golf facilities at an appropriate location
- ◆ Increased community activities
- ◆ Publicise parks and play areas via a map
- ◆ Investigate providing a map of Council facilities

### **19.11 Cemeteries**

- ◆ Improve landscaping
- ◆ New footpaths where required
- ◆ Publicise computerised Cemeteries Database

## 19.12 Allotments

- ◆ Continue 6-weekly meetings with allotment representatives
- ◆ Undertake 6-weekly inspections
- ◆ Undertake review of allotment rents
- ◆ Provide more half plots
- ◆ Review waiting list at St Oswald's and provide additional sites if required
- ◆ Continue to hold an Allotment AGM
- ◆ Review eviction protocol for bad tenants

## 19.13 Open Spaces/Environment

- ◆ Provide more dog bins
- ◆ Map open spaces
- ◆ Undertake a 6-monthly walk around of the Great Aycliffe Way and log incidents
- ◆ Provide additional seating
- ◆ Review signage on the Great Aycliffe Way

## 19.14 Oak Leaf Sports Complex

- ◆ Refurbish the bar and function room
- ◆ Facilities are looking tired
- ◆ Serve the food in a separate area to the bar
- ◆ Improve the food and catering
- ◆ Toilets are smelly
- ◆ Offer a wider range of facilities and promote more
- ◆ Reduce the prices and charge more for non Aycliffe residents
- ◆ Set up a user group to discuss things

## 19.15 Pre-schools

- ◆ Open during school holidays / extend the current hours
- ◆ Introduce more pre-schools
- ◆ Close them all
- ◆ DCC have adequate provision
- ◆ Invest in St. Oswald's, give them a new kitchen and bathroom facilities
- ◆ Make places available for 3 year olds
- ◆ Update kitchen and toilet facilities at St Oswald's

## 19.16 General

Following the setting up of the Strategy Customer Panel the following amendments to the aims and targets have been made and agreed.

One Aim has been deleted from corporate list – (Aim 6 – To provide facilities for burials) this will be inserted into the Works Section Service Plan. Aim 7 has now become Aim 6, Aim 8 has now become Aim 7 and Aim 9 has now become Aim 8.

A number of targets will be removed until 2009 when, following the setting up of the new Unitary Authority, they will be reviewed. These have been detailed in Appendix 1.

A number of targets have been moved to service plans. These have also been detailed in Appendix 1.

## **20. Representation**

The Council nominate representatives annually to the following outside bodies. The representatives for 2008/09 are:

- a) Aycliffe Learning Town Partnership  
Town Clerk, Councillor Mrs. HJ Hutchinson.
- b) Great Aycliffe Village Hall Association  
1 Vacancy
- c) Durham County Association of Local Councils  
Town Clerk, Councillor RS Fleming and JD Clare.
- d) Citizens' Advice Bureau  
Councillor Mrs I Hewitson.
- e) Agnew Community Association  
Councillors Mrs S Haigh + 1 Vacancy
- f) Woodham Village Community Association  
2 Vacancies
- g) Sedgefield District Local Councils' Committee  
Councillors RS Fleming and JD Clare.
- h) Sedgefield Borough Parish Relations Working Party  
Councillors RS Fleming and JD Clare.
- i) Town Centre Forum  
Councillors Mrs D Bowman and B. Hall and the Town Clerk.
- j) Sedgefield Countryside Volunteers  
Councillors V Crosby, I Gray and A Warburton.
- k) Larger Local Councils' Forum  
Councillors RS Fleming, B Blenkinsopp, Mrs D Bowman, Mrs J Gray, Mrs SJ Iveson and the Town Clerk.
- l) Greenfield Arts Management Group  
Councillors Mr. D Bowman, V Crosby and B Haigh.
- m) Normandy Veterans' Association  
Councillor Mrs M Dalton.

- n) Woodham Community Technology College Forum  
Councillors G.C. Gray and Mrs VM Raw.
- o) Youth Centre  
Councillor Miss ME Atkinson.
- p) Area 5 Forum  
Councillors Mrs BA Clare, Mrs M Dalton, Mrs VM Raw and B Hall.

The Council is a founder member of the Larger Local Councils' Forum, a body whose membership comprises some of the larger town councils in County Durham.

In recent years, the Government has placed great emphasis on local authorities working together in partnership with other service providers, eg police, fire, health, the private sector and voluntary and community organisations. The Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership provides a forum for co-ordination of major services within the Sedgefield area and is co-ordinated by Sedgefield Borough Council on behalf of all partners.

We are aware of the importance for the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Town Council's area. We are endeavouring to work with the new unitary authority to ensure representation for Great Aycliffe on work streams that may affect us such as the Local Strategic Partnership and the Children's Board and seeking to achieve that representation will continue to be a target for the Council this year.

## **21. A Financial Overview**

### **21.1 2008/2009 Budget**

The Town Council agreed its Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2008/2009 in January 2008. The Council's spending plans for 2008/2009 can be summarised as follows:-

|                                                     |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Total Revenue Cost of running Town Council Services | £ 2,513,150        |
| Capital Works to Council and Community Assets       | £ 282,000          |
| <b>Total Gross Spending / Budget</b>                | <b>£ 2,795,150</b> |
| Less County Council Funding for Pre-Schools         | (£ 132,800)        |
| Less Fees and Charges for Services                  | (£ 778,575)        |
| Less Investment Income                              | (£ 25,000)         |
| Less Use of Council Balances (Capital Works)        | (£ 282,000)        |
| <b>Net Budget/Precept</b>                           | <b>£ 1,576,775</b> |

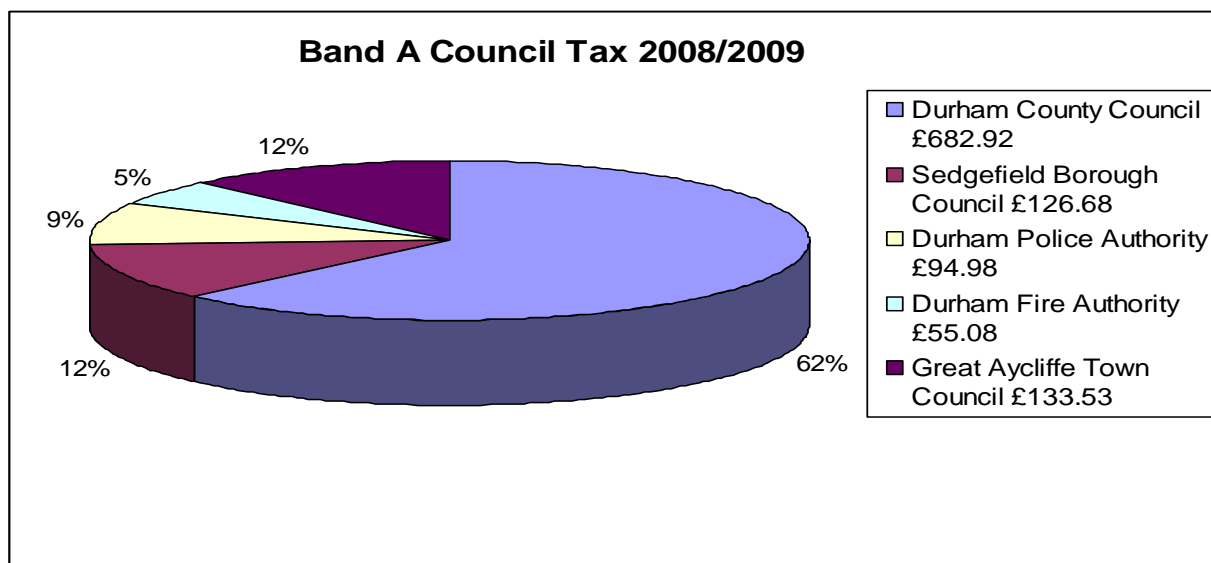
The Town Council's Precept is set based on the net cost of running the Council's services and is the amount that we ask from the Borough Council, as the Council Tax Billing Authority, to collect for us from the Council taxpayers of Great Aycliffe to fund all of the services we provide.

The detailed Budgets for 2008/2009 can be viewed in the Council's Budget document which is available at the Council Offices or on the Council's website. The Budgets are broken down by Committee area and by each individual service area that the Council provides.

## 21.2 2008/2009 Council Tax

As detailed above, the our 2008/2009 Precept is **£1,576,775** which equates to a Band D Council Tax of £200.30. However a significant proportion of properties in the Great Aycliffe area fall within **Council Tax Band A**, for which the Town Council element of the Council Tax bill is **£133.53 or £2.57 a week**.

The **overall Council Tax** figure for 2008/2009 for **Band A** properties in the Great Aycliffe area is **£1,093.19**. The following illustration demonstrates what proportion of that sum goes to the local authorities providing services in Great Aycliffe:-



Looking at the above graph, it would appear that Sedgefield Borough Council provides all of its services at a lower cost than the Town Council.

However, it is important to note that Sedgefield Borough Council's Precept is set after deducting Government Grant support of more than £10 million, which significantly offsets the cost of the services that it provides.

Great Aycliffe Town Council will not receive any grant support from the Government in 2008/2009.

The Town Council also receives Council Tax only from those properties in the Great Aycliffe area, whereas the Borough Council receives Council Tax from all properties in the Borough.

## 21.3 Medium Term Financial Plan

A Medium Term Financial Plan was approved by the Council last year and sets out the Council's financial strategy for the next 3 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan provides the link between our aims, targets and priorities set out in this Parish Performance Plan and the resources that will be available to fund them i.e. the Annual Budget.

## **21.4 2007/2008 Spending**

The financial position and spending of the Council is continuously monitored and is reported to the Policy & Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

This prudent management of the Council's spending was demonstrated in 2007/2008, when the Council achieved a saving of £293,687 on its Revenue Budget.

This money has now been set aside in the Council's balances to meet future spending commitments and to provide further investment in Council and community assets for the benefit of the tax payers of Great Aycliffe.

## **21.5 Annual Audit Report**

The Council is subject to an annual external inspection by the Audit Commission and the overall opinion on the overall financial standing of the Council is set out in an Annual Audit Letter.

The Audit Commission looked at four main areas in 2006/2007:-

1. Statement of Accounts
2. Best Value Performance Plan
3. Statement of Internal Control
4. Use of Resources (also known as the Value for Money)

The Council has received an "unqualified" audit opinion in all of these areas.

What this means in practice is that our Accounts present fairly the financial position of the Authority, our Best Value Performance Plan is good, our arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public resources are sound, our finances are in good order and that we provide value for money to the community.

So all in all, it was a very good Annual Report with some very good progress made by the Council over the course of the last financial year.

The 2007/2008 Audit Letter is due to be received in October or November 2008, following the completion of the Audit of the 2007/2008 Statement of Accounts.

The Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter to Great Aycliffe Town Council for 2006/2007 is attached as Appendix 7. and the 2006/2007 Statement of Accounts is available to view at the Council Offices or on the Council's website. ([www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk](http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk)).

## **APPENDIX 1**

## Aims and Targets 2007/08

### AIM 1 "TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL"

#### TARGETS

- 1) To develop and agree a new Constitution for Great Aycliffe Town Council by 31 May 2008.

On hold due to the Local Government Re-organisation. This target will be removed the 2008/09 plan and will be reviewed in 2009.

- 2) To provide training for all Council Members on the new Constitution prior to introduction of the Constitution.

On hold due to the Local Government Re-organisation. This target will be removed the 2008/09 plan and will be reviewed in 2009.

- 3) To provide training for all staff on the new Constitution prior to introduction of the Constitution.

On hold due to the Local Government Re-organisation. This target will be removed the 2008/09 plan and will be reviewed in 2009.

- 4) Develop an Aycliffe Citizens Charter. Setting out the responsibilities of the Town Council and the level of service they can expect to receive. Including a list of who provides what within the Town.

On hold due to the Local Government Re-organisation. This target will be removed the 2008/09 plan and will be reviewed in 2009.

- 5) Complete all staff training identified by the appraisal process by March 2008.

Some appraisals are still outstanding. However, the appraisal process has been reviewed. It will now be called the Personal Development Review.

- 6) Agree a programme of training for Members and complete the agreed training by March 2008.

Members have identified their training needs and a programme of training events have been identified with some training now complete

- 7) Complete the review of the records management system to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

This was not complete due to workload and new guidance being published.

- 8) Combine the BVPP and Parish Plan into one strategic document.

Complete

- 9) Ensure a presence is available through a One Stop Shop in the proposed new library in the Town Centre.

On hold due to the Local Government Re-organisation. This target will be removed the 2008/09 plan and will be reviewed in 2009.

- 10) Develop and encourage a Youth Council or similar forum.

A Youth Council Working Group has been established. An Agenda Day has been held with the findings being reported to committee by the young people. This target will be retained and is ongoing.

- 11) Undertake a citizen satisfaction survey by December 2007.

Complete

## **AIM 2 "TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER"**

### **TARGETS**

- 12) To produce an annual statement of accounts by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007 without external audit qualification.

Achieved

- 13) Complete any Government returns electronically by the relevant deadline.

Complete

- 14) Complete consideration of new office accommodation and develop proposals.

Complete

- 15) Finalise implementation issues re: computerised ordering system linked to stock control.

Complete

- 16) Develop an action plan, linked to the budget, for the implementation of repairs and DDA compliant work as part of the delivery of the Asset Management Plan.

An action plan has been developed and is linked to the budget. Works will be ongoing over the next 10 years.

- 17) Develop a Finance Business Plan by September 2007.

Complete

18) Produce a Medium Term Financial Strategy by June 2007.

Complete

19) Undertake a review of all council risks every March.

Complete

20) Budget/Precepts approved by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008.

Complete and approved

**AIM 3 "TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES"**

**TARGETS**

21) Work with SBC/DCC and any other external bodies to consider the development of a community taxi service, utilising the Transport Innovation Fund.

On hold due to the Local Government Re-organisation. This target will be removed the 2008/09 plan and will be reviewed in 2009.

22) Investigate the possibility of providing small local parks and increase early years equipment alongside existing facilities.

2 LIP bids have been developed to provide additional or improved play facilities at Simpasure Park and St. Oswald's. In addition Members have pooled resources to provide new facilities at Woodham, Horndale and St. Oswald's.

23) Provide additional park benches in appropriate locations.

Ongoing. Target to be removed.

24) Complete a programme of day trips for pensioners by July 2007.

Complete

25) Review the dates of the Aycliffe Show and consider changing to June to fit into the schools national curriculum.

Show working group reviewed the date of the Aycliffe show and it was agreed to keep it to the bank holiday weekend in August.

26) Run the annual Aycliffe Show at the agreed date (see above).

Complete

27) Provide a firework display in November.

Complete

28) Provide Halloween in the Park at minimal cost to the Council.

The event is no longer run. Delete target.

29) Provide Fun-in-the-Parks throughout July and August.

Complete

30) Provide a Christmas lights display at agreed locations in the town in December.

Complete

31) Provide Santa Tours on Christmas Eve.

Complete

32) Provide a joint annual pre-school outing.

The pre-schools have considered this and it is not feasible to provide a joint outing with all the pre-schools taking part. Each centre will continue to provide outings.

33) Work with partners to review the provision and operation of football pitches, to improve facilities, taking into account the Sedgefield Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy.

Currently working with SBC to improve and provide additional pitches at Horndale Park (as part of a larger regeneration scheme).

#### **AIM 4 "TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE"**

##### **TARGETS**

34) Produce a Business Plan and Action Plan for pre-school development by the end of August 2007, taking into account the Parish Plan recommendations.

Pre-schools are working towards the early years foundation stage. Business plans to be developed following the corporate template.

35) Approve financial commitment to the action plan for pre-school development in time for the setting of the Precept.

Budgets developed and approved. Improvement works at St. Oswald's complete.

36) Investigate the need for extended opening hours at early years settings. If required extend the opening hours.

Ongoing.

**AIM 5 "TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES"**

**TARGETS**

- 37) Assist any interested parties in the development of a 'People's Day'.

A Family Fun Day was held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February with support from external agencies. The event was a great success with over 300 people attending on the day. Complete.

- 38) Review proposals for the upkeep of and improvements to the Great Aycliffe Way.

Work almost complete.

- 39) Promote and hold an environment awareness day in conjunction with SBC/DCC and other partners.

On hold pending the outcome of LGR. To be reviewed when setting new targets.

Remove until 2009

- 40) Review the Clean Neighbourhoods Act and consider the appointment of anti-litter wardens; a chewing gum squad and dog wardens.

On hold pending the outcome of LGR. To be reviewed when setting new targets.

Remove until 2009

**AIM 6 "TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR BURIALS"**

**TARGET**

- 41) Provide and maintain appropriate burial facilities and services.

Ongoing – this aim is to be removed from the corporate list and moved to the Works Section Service Plan.

**AIM 7 "TO INFLUENCE THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHERS IN PARTNERSHIP"**

**TARGETS**

- 42) Participate in LSM through membership of SDLCC.

Ongoing. Target to be deleted.

- 43) Continue to work with the town councils in County Durham.

Ongoing. Target to be deleted.

44) To continue membership of the Larger Local Councils' Forum.

Ongoing – Target to be deleted.

45) To continue membership of the Borough/Parish Liaison Committee.

Ongoing – Target to be deleted.

46) Increase liaison via the Town Centre Forum with owners, developers and other public bodies to take forward the ideas from the Parish Plan including - the use of artwork, provision of a bandstand, improved car parking and graffiti.

The Town Clerk attends the re-development meetings.

47) Participate in the Sedgefield Local Development Framework.

Ongoing – Target to be deleted.

48) Participate in the Aycliffe School Clusters Group.

No further meetings have been held or are planned. Target to be deleted.

**AIM 8 "TO DELIVER SERVICES FOR PARTNERS WHERE THAT WOULD PROVIDE ADDED VALUE"**

**TARGET**

49) Prepare budget plans by January 2008 for the delivery of all services, including any new or reduction of services.

Complete.

**AIM 9 "TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE"**

**TARGETS**

50) Participate in the Development Planning Framework Group, led by Sedgefield Borough Council.

Ongoing – Target to be deleted.

51) Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out by service or governance partners.

Comments made on the Regional Spatial Strategy; County Durham Economic Strategy; Windlestone Hall Draft Planning Guidance and other planning applications.

## **APPENDIX 2**

## **Aims and Targets 2008/09**

### **AIM 1 “TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL”**

#### **TARGETS**

- 1) Quarterly performance report to Policy & Resources Committee
- 2) Complete all staff training identified by the personal development review (PDR) process by October 2008.
- 3) Prepare an annual training list developed from the PDR and feed into the budget setting process
- 4) Prepare a Member and Town Clerk training programme to comply with guidance for Quality Status.
- 5) Deliver Member training and review completed post training evaluation forms.
- 6) Complete the review of the records management system to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 7) Develop and encourage a Youth Council or similar forum.

### **AIM 2 “TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL’S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER”**

#### **TARGETS**

- 8) To produce an annual statement of accounts by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008 without external audit qualification.
- 9) Complete any Government returns electronically by the relevant deadline.
- 10) Continue to deliver 2½ % efficiencies.
- 11) Complete office accommodation works.
- 12) Develop an action plan, linked to the budget, for the implementation of repairs and DDA compliant work as part of the delivery of the Asset Management Plan.
- 13) Undertake a review of all council risks every March.
- 14) Budget/Precepts approved by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

**AIM 3      “TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES”**

**TARGETS**

- 15) Undertake a Best Value Review of the Oakleaf Sports Complex.
- 16) Complete the installation of a DDA compliant lift and new access doors at the Oakleaf Sports Complex.
- 17) Continue the provision of small local parks and take into consideration users needs.
- 18) Complete a programme of day trips for pensioners by July 2008.
- 19) Run the annual Aycliffe Show.
- 20) Work with partners to review the provision and operation of environmental areas and all leisure facilities.
- 21) Deliver the Council’s programme of special events.

**AIM 4      “TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE”**

**TARGETS**

- 22) Investigate the need for extended opening hours at early years settings. If required extend the opening hours.
- 23) Implement the new Early Years Foundations Stage in all pre-school settings.
- 24) Provide adequate outdoor learning and storage facilities’ at all pre-school settings.
- 25) Achieve good Ofsted Inspection results (if undertaken)

**AIM 5      “TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES”**

**TARGETS**

- 26) Ensure the adequate provision and management of well maintained and accessible environmental areas, allotments, cemeteries, parks and play areas.

- 27) The Environmental Officer to work with local schools and community groups and provide an additional resource to the Works & Environment Section.
- 28) Provide new play area and revamp equipment at Simpasture Park, Woodham and Horndale.
- 29) Provide two new play areas, provision of a picnic area and new formal garden at St. Oswald's Park.
- 30) Review proposals for the upkeep and improvements to Great Aycliffe Way.

**AIM 6 "TO INFLUENCE THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHERS IN PARTNERSHIP"**

**TARGETS**

NO TARGETS WILL BE SET FOR THIS AIM FOR 2008/2009 UNTIL THE OUTCOME OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW IS KNOWN.

HOWEVER, WORK WILL CONTINUE ON EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS.

**AIM 7 "TO DELIVER SERVICES FOR PARTNERS WHERE THAT WOULD PROVIDE ADDED VALUE"**

**TARGET**

- 31) Successfully complete applications and bid for LIP funding for improvements to Simpasture Park; Moore Lane Pre-School Building and St. Oswald's Park.
- 32) Revamp the existing building at Moore Lane to be used for community and school groups and as a base for the Environmental Officer.
- 33) Prepare budget plans by January 2009 for the delivery of all services, including any new or reduction of services.

**AIM 8 "TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE"**

**TARGETS**

- 34) Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out by service or governance partners.
- 35) Undertake benchmarking and research where appropriate for new policies and procedures.

## **APPENDIX 3**

## Great Aycliffe Town Council – Future Actions

2008/09 Non-prioritised indicative list of projects currently under consideration, broken down by category.

These are the areas highlighted in the satisfaction survey which may have not been considered else where in this plan.

### **Category 1** (Short term target)

The project can show demonstrable linkage to the aims of the Council and/or can be shown by evidence to support the aspirations of service users. It can also be shown that failure to undertake the project will pose an immediate risk to the financial standing, statutory requirements or reputation of the Council, or pose a risk to service users

| Scheme Title                                                                             | Suggested Category | Description                                                                                                   | Potential Funding Sources                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Complete all identified DDA compliant works in accordance with the Asset Management Plan | 1                  | Modernise building facilities and provide additional working/ storage space. All buildings to comply with DDA | No external funding currently available.<br><br>Budget provision has been made. |

### **Category 2** (Medium term target)

The project can show demonstrable linkage to the aims of the Council and/or can be shown by evidence to support the aspirations of service users. It can also be shown that failure to undertake the project may in future pose a risk to the financial standing, statutory requirements or reputation of the Council or pose a risk to service users.

| Scheme Title                                                                   | Suggested Category | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Potential Funding Sources |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Develop relations with the bus service providers and request an annual meeting | 2                  | Bus services in general were cause for concern for the residents of Great Aycliffe. However the Town Council has no direct control over the services provided but will continue to try and influence anything affecting the Great Aycliffe area. | -                         |

**Category 3** (Medium to long term target)

The project can show demonstrable linkage to the aims of the Council and/or can be shown by evidence to support the aspirations of service users.

| <b>Scheme Title</b>                                        | <b>Suggested Category</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                | <b>Potential Funding Sources</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Aycliffe Nature Park                                       | 3                         | Improvements to the Nature Park and formalised management         | LIP                              |
| North Agnew Plantation<br>Bridleway/Woodham<br>Golf Course | 3                         | To obtain the woodland to enable management and public use/access | Woodland Grants                  |

## **APPENDIX 4**

## PEST ANALYSIS

| PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS        | POTENTIAL IMPACT                      | IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE                    |                                                |                                                 | ACTION                                                                                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                       | Type:                                         | Impact:                                        | Importance:                                     |                                                                                                  |
|                              | High<br>Medium<br>Low<br>Undetermined | Strength<br>Weakness<br>Opportunity<br>Threat | Increasing<br>Unchanged<br>Reducing<br>Unknown | Critical<br>Important<br>Unimportant<br>Unknown |                                                                                                  |
| <b>Political</b>             |                                       |                                               |                                                |                                                 |                                                                                                  |
| Local Government Review      | Undetermined                          | Opportunity                                   | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | Make case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity<br><br>Feed issues to CDALC for representation |
| Changes in Government policy | High                                  | Weak                                          | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | Keep up-to-date<br><br>Lobby via NALC                                                            |
| Regional Spatial Strategy    | Medium                                | Threat                                        | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Make comments                                                                                    |
| Audit Commission Inspections | Medium                                | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Comply with SORP<br>Best Value changes<br>Maintain internal control                              |
| Political balance of Council | High                                  | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Be apolitical<br>Work with all parties                                                           |
| Local Government elections   | High                                  | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Await outcome<br>Keep up-to-date with changes                                                    |
| Change in Government         | Medium                                | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Await outcome<br>React accordingly                                                               |
| Local Development Framework  | Medium                                | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Make comments                                                                                    |

| PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS     | POTENTIAL IMPACT                      | IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE                    |                                                |                                                 | ACTION                                             |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|                           |                                       | Type:                                         | Impact:                                        | Importance:                                     |                                                    |
|                           | High<br>Medium<br>Low<br>Undetermined | Strength<br>Weakness<br>Opportunity<br>Threat | Increasing<br>Unchanged<br>Reducing<br>Unknown | Critical<br>Important<br>Unimportant<br>Unknown |                                                    |
| <b>Economic</b>           |                                       |                                               |                                                |                                                 |                                                    |
| Tax Base                  | Medium                                | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Monitor                                            |
| Changes in interest rates | Medium                                | Weak                                          | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | Borrowing/repayments<br>Medium Term Financial Plan |
| Skills Shortages          | Medium                                | Threat                                        | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Monitor                                            |
| Inflation                 | Medium                                | Threat                                        | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | Efficiency savings<br>Precept rate                 |
| Levels of Employment      | Medium                                | Weak                                          | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | Monitor                                            |

| PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS                                                             | POTENTIAL IMPACT                      | IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE                    |                                                |                                                 | ACTION                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                   |                                       | Type:                                         | Impact:                                        | Importance:                                     |                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                                   | High<br>Medium<br>Low<br>Undetermined | Strength<br>Weakness<br>Opportunity<br>Threat | Increasing<br>Unchanged<br>Reducing<br>Unknown | Critical<br>Important<br>Unimportant<br>Unknown |                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Sociological</b>                                                               |                                       |                                               |                                                |                                                 |                                                                                                                                    |
| Access to services                                                                | Low                                   | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Develop partnerships<br>DDA work<br>Pricing policy<br>Marketing                                                                    |
| Social exclusion<br>Hard to reach groups<br>Equality and diversity<br>Deprivation | Low                                   | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Special events<br>Free taster sessions<br>Equal opportunities employer<br>Monitor service users<br>Satisfaction Survey<br>Be aware |
| Crime/Fear of Crime                                                               | Medium                                | Strength                                      | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | CCTV<br>Wardens                                                                                                                    |
| Ageing population                                                                 | Low                                   | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Provision of services - cost                                                                                                       |
| Poor educational attainment                                                       | Low                                   | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Be aware                                                                                                                           |
| Health/Obesity                                                                    | Medium                                | Opportunity                                   | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | Partnership working                                                                                                                |

| PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS          | POTENTIAL IMPACT                      | IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE                    |                                                |                                                 | ACTION                                                   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|                                |                                       | Type:                                         | Impact:                                        | Importance:                                     |                                                          |
|                                | High<br>Medium<br>Low<br>Undetermined | Strength<br>Weakness<br>Opportunity<br>Threat | Increasing<br>Unchanged<br>Reducing<br>Unknown | Critical<br>Important<br>Unimportant<br>Unknown |                                                          |
| <b>Technical</b>               |                                       |                                               |                                                |                                                 |                                                          |
| New Communication Technologies | Medium                                | Threat                                        | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Keep up-to-date                                          |
| Mechanical equipment           | Medium                                | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Risk management<br>Asset management                      |
| Environmental Impact           | High                                  | Opportunity                                   | Increasing                                     | Important                                       | Keep up-to-date with legislation<br>Monitor energy usage |
| Severe Weather                 | Low                                   | Weakness                                      | Unknown                                        | Important                                       | React accordingly                                        |

**APPENDIX 5**

## SWOT ANALYSIS

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRENGTH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Strong customer focus</li> <li>❖ Stable and committed workforce</li> <li>❖ Improved working relationships</li> <li>❖ Commitment to service</li> <li>❖ Clear focus on the way forward</li> <li>❖ Different skills</li> <li>❖ Performance management</li> <li>❖ Local employer</li> <li>❖ Sound finances</li> <li>❖ Risk management</li> <li>❖ Investment in people</li> <li>❖ Quality Council status</li> <li>❖ Adaptability</li> <li>❖ Health and Safety</li> </ul>                                                                   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEAKNESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Rate of change</li> <li>❖ Equalities understanding</li> <li>❖ Project planning</li> <li>❖ Lack of capacity and skills middle management</li> <li>❖ Time and capacity</li> <li>❖ Lack of specialist knowledge</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPPORTUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Increased efficiency in service delivery</li> <li>❖ Customer involvement at a deeper level</li> <li>❖ Need to increase and build morale through recognition of success</li> <li>❖ Strengthen aspirations</li> <li>❖ Improve management and skills</li> <li>❖ Develop appropriate strategy documents</li> <li>❖ Improve skills of existing staff/members</li> <li>❖ Strengthen working relationship between staff/members</li> <li>❖ Increased flexibility</li> <li>❖ Partnership working</li> </ul> <p>Local Government Review</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THREAT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Political changes</li> <li>❖ Crime and vandalism</li> <li>❖ Failure to retain staff</li> <li>❖ Staff recruitment</li> <li>❖ Staff motivation</li> <li>❖ Age of workforce</li> <li>❖ Best Value reviews</li> <li>❖ Unforeseen budget pressures</li> <li>❖ LGR - changes to service delivery</li> <li>❖ Partnership working</li> <li>❖ Industrial action</li> </ul> |

## **APPENDIX 6**

## MEMBER CONTACT DETAILS

Advice and information about our services can be obtained by telephoning 01325 300700 or visiting our website at [www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk](http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk).

There are 30 elected members who represent the 6 wards of the Town.  
L – Labour I - Independent

### **BYERLEY PARK, HORNDALE & COBBLERS HALL**

| <b>COUNCILLOR</b>          | <b>TELEPHONE (01325)</b>               | <b>EMAIL ADDRESS</b>           |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Mrs. D. Bowman - L</b>  | Home - 308094<br>Mobile - 07967901477  | dorothy@esdale62.wanadoo.co.uk |
| <b>I. Gray – L</b>         | Home - 313770                          |                                |
| <b>V. Crosby - L</b>       | Home - 315083<br>Mobile - 07905 738285 | vcrosby@sedgefield.gov.uk      |
| <b>B. Hall - L</b>         | Home - 314105<br>Mobile - 07899 721573 |                                |
| <b>Mrs I. Hewitson - I</b> | Home - 318763                          |                                |
| <b>Mrs A. Palmer - I</b>   | Home - 314739<br>Mobile - 07767 674844 |                                |

### **SHAFTO/ST MARYS**

|                          |                                        |                             |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>R. S. Fleming - L</b> | Home - 310025                          |                             |
| <b>B. Haigh - I</b>      | Home - 318645<br>Mobile - 07760 403992 |                             |
| <b>T. Hogan - I</b>      | Home - 313828<br>Mobile - 07901 552205 | terryhogan23@btinternet.com |

### **WOODHAM SOUTH**

|                          |                                        |                           |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>P. Gittins - I</b>    | Home - 317666<br>Mobile - 07831 269526 |                           |
| <b>W. Iveson - L</b>     | Home - 312490<br>Mobile - 07946 659663 | WilliamIveson@hotmail.com |
| <b>Mrs V. M. Raw - L</b> | Home - 311447<br>Mobile - 07804452865  |                           |

### **WOODHAM NORTH**

|                            |                                        |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Mrs B. A. Clare - L</b> | Home - 318333<br>Mobile - 07980 834977 | barbaraclare@aol.com |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|

| <b>COUNCILLOR</b>        | <b>TELEPHONE (01325)</b>               | <b>EMAIL ADDRESS</b>          |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>J. D. Clare - L</b>   | Home - 318333                          | jdc@johndclare.net            |
| <b>Mrs M. Dalton - L</b> | Home - 320499                          |                               |
| <b>Mrs J. Gray - L</b>   | Home - 313778                          |                               |
| <b>Mrs S. Haigh - I</b>  | Home - 318645<br>Mobile - 07867 788603 |                               |
| <b>K. Henderson - L</b>  | Home - 319542                          | keith.henderson@durham.gov.uk |

### **SIMPASTURE**

#### **VACANCY**

**A. Warburton - I** Home - 315182 pinkyna51@yahoo.co.uk

### **NEVILLE**

**P. Ducker - I** Mobile - 07950 351830

**G. R. Gray - L** Home - 304480  
Mobile - 07881 784299

**Mrs S. J. Iveson - L** Home - 01325 319759  
Mobile – 07882 842973

### **WEST**

**S. Bambridge - I** Home - 300632  
Mobile - 07958 694427 sparky-steve@hotmail.co.uk

**T.R. Bowman - I** Home - 308094  
Mobile - 07944 067396 dorothy@esdale62.wanadoo.co.uk

**B. Curtis - I** Home - 320291

**G.C. Gray - L** Home - 314934  
Mobile - 07711 159763

**Mrs H J Hutchinson - L** Home - 311023

**Mrs E. M. Paylor - L** Home - 313697  
e.paylor@sedgefield.gov.uk  
07979 727338

### **AYCLIFFE VILLAGE**

**B. Blenkinsopp - I** Home - 308057  
Mobile - 07772 921166 wblenkinsopp@sedgefield.gov.uk

# **APPENDIX 7**

## **Annual Audit Letter**