

GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN COUNCIL



PARISH PERFORMANCE PLAN

2010 - 2011

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1. Introduction by the Mayor

Within this document we aim to inform you about the Town Council activities, what we said we would do and what we actually did. It will, hopefully, help you understand what Great Aycliffe Town Council is doing for you and the Great Aycliffe area.

The Parish Performance Plan is an important strategic document that the Town Council produces each year as part of our aim to deliver quality services for the residents of Great Aycliffe.

Through our satisfaction surveys, open days, attending community events, the youth council and the customer panel we aim to take into account your views and act upon your priorities in order to improve our services.

The Town Council endeavours to rise to all challenges whilst focussing on the community's needs and continuing to improve our services. Although best value is no longer a statutory duty, the Council is committed to providing value for money in the services we deliver. We ensure our arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public resources are sound and our finances are in good order to ensure that we provide value for money for our residents.

The first few pages of this document are intended to provide a brief summary of some key targets from the past year, a snapshot of the year to come and an overview of financial information.

Some key things we did last year

- ✓ Delivered a 1% reduction on the Town Council portion of the 2010/2011 Council Tax.
- ✓ The Town Council achieved £263,587 savings across all service areas.
- ✓ A park patrol service, to improve security and reduce anti-social behaviour at the parks and play areas, has been in place since January 2010.
- ✓ Re-opened the toilets at St. Oswald's Park and started to refurbish them.
- ✓ Purchased a Geographical Information System (GIS) to plot all council owned land and property.
- ✓ Undertook a large amount of work at both Stephenson Way, including the refurbishment of public toilets, and West Cemeteries to provide a peaceful environment.
- ✓ Improved security at the Clarence Chare and St Oswald's allotment sites and St. Oswald's Park by installing new fencing.
- ✓ The Environment Officer undertook 67 school activities and 43 public and community events.
- ✓ Awarded £1,460 in grants to 8 organisations and a capital grant of £10,000 to MIND.
- ✓ Sheila's Garden and picnic area at St. Oswald's Park



Councillor Mrs Mary Dalton

Some key targets for this year

Following the annual review of the Town Council aims and targets, and including recommendations from the residents of Great Aycliffe, some of our key targets for 2010/2011 are:

- ✓ Refurbish School Aycliffe Play Area.
- ✓ Investigate options for a redevelopment in the Horndale Park area.
- ✓ Map the council owned land and property onto the Geographical Information System.
- ✓ Improve communication and publish specific information newsletters for the parks, play areas, open spaces and other council services.
- ✓ Open additional allotments at St Oswald's allotment site (pending planning permission).
- ✓ Undertake various improvements and publicise the Great Aycliffe Way.
- ✓ Undertake a dog fouling and litter awareness campaign.
- ✓ Undertake 40 public environmental events.
- ✓ Undertaken 60 school environmental engagements.

Council Finances

A sound financial standing is a key element in demonstrating value for money to the council tax payers of Great Aycliffe.

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 has achieved this since 2006 and received a clean bill of health again last year. A copy of the most recent Audit Letter can be found at Appendix 6 within this document.

The 2009 satisfaction survey saw an excellent response from the tax payers of Great Aycliffe with 72% of respondents believing that the Town Council Tax represented value for money. This shows a 9% improvement on the 2007 satisfaction survey.

An overview of the Council's finances is included in Section 17 of the Parish Performance Plan on pages 33 . 35.

How much do the Council's Services cost YOU?

The following table shows how much the Council's many services will cost you, the Council taxpayer, in 2010/2011, **per week**, based on the Band A Council Tax:-

Environment and Grounds Maintenance	42p
Corporate Management	41p
Sports Complex	37p
Parks and Play Areas	35p
Administration and Council Offices	17p
Financial Management	17p
Civic Costs and Councillors	12p
Contingency Sum / Contribution to Reserves	10p
Aycliffe Show	10p
Senior Citizens Trips	9p
Golf Course and Driving Range	8p
Pre Schools	6p
Public Seating, Lighting and Bus Shelters	4p
CCTV Cameras	3p
Cemeteries	2p
Football Pitches	2p
Fun in the Parks	2p
Fireworks Display	2p
Allotments	1p
Santa Tours and Christmas Lights	1p
Other Special Events	1p



Total Cost per Tax Payer **per WEEK** for Great Aycliffe
Town Council Services **£2.62**

Total Cost per Taxpayer **per YEAR** for Great Aycliffe Town
Council Services **£136.07**



2. 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

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.

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

- ◆ Town Council Offices
- ◆ Newton Aycliffe Library
- ◆ Oakleaf Sports Complex
- ◆ Aycliffe Village Hall
- ◆ And the Council's website . www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Copies have also been sent 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.

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 an alternative format copy by contacting Great Aycliffe Town Council on 01325 300700.

4. Introduction to Great Aycliffe

Great Aycliffe comprises the town of Newton Aycliffe and the villages of Aycliffe and School Aycliffe. The population of Great Aycliffe is approximately 26,500. (Sedgefield Borough Council, regeneration statistics 2007)

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mining industry dominated Durham. 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 ~~A~~Aycliffe Angels or the ~~an~~anaries 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.

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 voluntary groups, clubs and societies active in the area. A large range of play and leisure facilities are provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council and Durham County Council.

Housing conditions are generally above average. Significant levels of new house building mean that Aycliffe can offer a wide 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 chain stores, with individual retail outlets in neighbourhood areas. The redevelopment of the town centre commenced in January 2009. A wider range of shopping facilities is available in Darlington, Bishop Auckland and Durham.

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 North East is continuing its 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.

We are aware of the importance of the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Great Aycliffe area. We are endeavouring to work with the new Durham County Council to ensure the best results for Great Aycliffe residents.

5. Relationship with Durham County Council

Local government in England and Wales is provided by a network of primary and secondary councils. The primary council serving the Great Aycliffe area is Durham County Council. Sedgfield Borough Council was dissolved in April 2009 and became part of the new Durham County Council Unitary Authority.

Great Aycliffe is constituted as a town 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, waste collection, leisure and local planning.

Housing in the Great Aycliffe area is provided by Sedgefield Borough Homes a not for profit housing association which was set up on 27th February 2009, as well as a number of registered social landlords and private houses.

The Town Council **DOES NOT**:

- ✗ 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

The Town Council is **not responsible** for the Town Centre, which is in private ownership.

6. Services Provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council

The Parish Performance Plan is a corporate strategic document for the whole of the Town Council. However, it will also be used as the Corporate Service Plan.

We do:

- ✓ Run the Oakleaf Sports Complex - indoor bowls, sports hall, squash courts, bar and catering, children's holidays courses, indoor/outdoor sports coaching
- ✓ Run the Oakleaf Golf Complex . 18 hole golf course and an 18 bay floodlit driving range
- ✓ Manage Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery and provide grounds maintenance and burial service at St Andrew's Churchyard

- ✓ Manage 8 parks, all with play equipment

Town Park	West Park
Moore Lane Park	Aycliffe Village
Simpasture Park	Byerley Park
St Oswald's Park	Woodham Park
- ✓ Additional play areas at Scott Place, School Aycliffe, Oakleaf Complex and Horndale
- ✓ 6 football pitches, Mini-soccer and six-a-side pitches
- ✓ Run 2 pre-school play settings . with good Ofsted ratings
- ✓ Provide and manage a wide range of special community events . Great Aycliffe Show, Fun-in-the-Parks, Santa Tours, Firework Display, Senior Citizens Excursions, Christmas Lights
- ✓ Assist and support other event organisers . 10k race, 3k Fun Run, Remembrance Parade, Junior Cross Country, Annual Indoor Bowls Competition and Community Enhancement Awards
- ✓ A range of civic events
- ✓ Aycliffe Angels Memorial Garden . provision and maintenance
- ✓ Maintenance of war memorial and flagpole
- ✓ 5 allotment sites with pigeon and poultry facilities
- ✓ Provide an environmental centre at Moore Lane
- ✓ Encourage interest in the environment of Great Aycliffe through the Environment Officer who works with the community and schools
- ✓ A Civic Pride Team
- ✓ Comment on planning applications
- ✓ Market administration
- ✓ Public seats in many locations
- ✓ Bus shelters with litter bins (not the ones with adverts)
- ✓ Grounds maintenance and environmental management

North Agnew Plantation	Cobblers Hall Plantation
Woodham Burn	Simpasture Railway Walk
Great Aycliffe Way	Millfields/Bickford Terrace
Butterfly Meadow at Rail Halt	School Aycliffe Wetlands
Aycliffe Village Greens . custodians and maintenance	
- ✓ Youth Council

- ✓ Lorry park
- ✓ Crime prevention . the Council pays for some CCTV cameras and employs a team of Park Patrol Services
- ✓ Community Empowerment . Customer Panel, Consultation and Open Days
- ✓ Grants . small grants to local voluntary organisations

Great Aycliffe Town Council works with other Town Councils in the area to bring together local neighbourhood councils to share good practice, developing a strong voice for the local council sector in Durham.

7. The Civic Year

Councillor Mrs. Mary Dalton was elected as Mayor of Great Aycliffe in May 2009 and her term of office lasted until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2010.



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 183 engagements. The Mayor was escorted by her husband Reg Dalton until his sudden death in December 2009, when her son Michael took over as consort.

The Mayor raised £7693.50 for her nominated charities in her year of office. This was split between the North East Army Benevolent Fund and the following local charities.

- ◆ Newton Aycliffe Rotary Club
- ◆ Friends of Senior Citizens
- ◆ The Mobility Club

- ◆ Newton Aycliffe Brownies, Guides, Rainbows and Senior Section
- ◆ ACLE Scouts, Cubs, Senior Scouts and Beavers
- ◆ 1st Aycliffe Baden Powell Scout Group
- ◆ 1st Newton Aycliffe Scout Association

8. Election of Mayor

The Council elects a Town Mayor annually from amongst its members and the Mayor for 2010/11 is Councillor Mrs Dorothy Bowman, her consort will be Richard Chester. The Mayor has chosen Domestic Violence and Breast Cancer as her charities for her term of office.



9. The Council, its Members and Establishment

9.1 The Council

Great Aycliffe Town Council is one of the largest Town Councils in the country, employing 75 full and part-time staff, with a planned revenue budget of £1,623,000 in 2009/10.

9.2 Members

The Council has a membership of 30, which is made up of 17 Labour, 11 Independent and 2 Liberal Democrat Councillors.

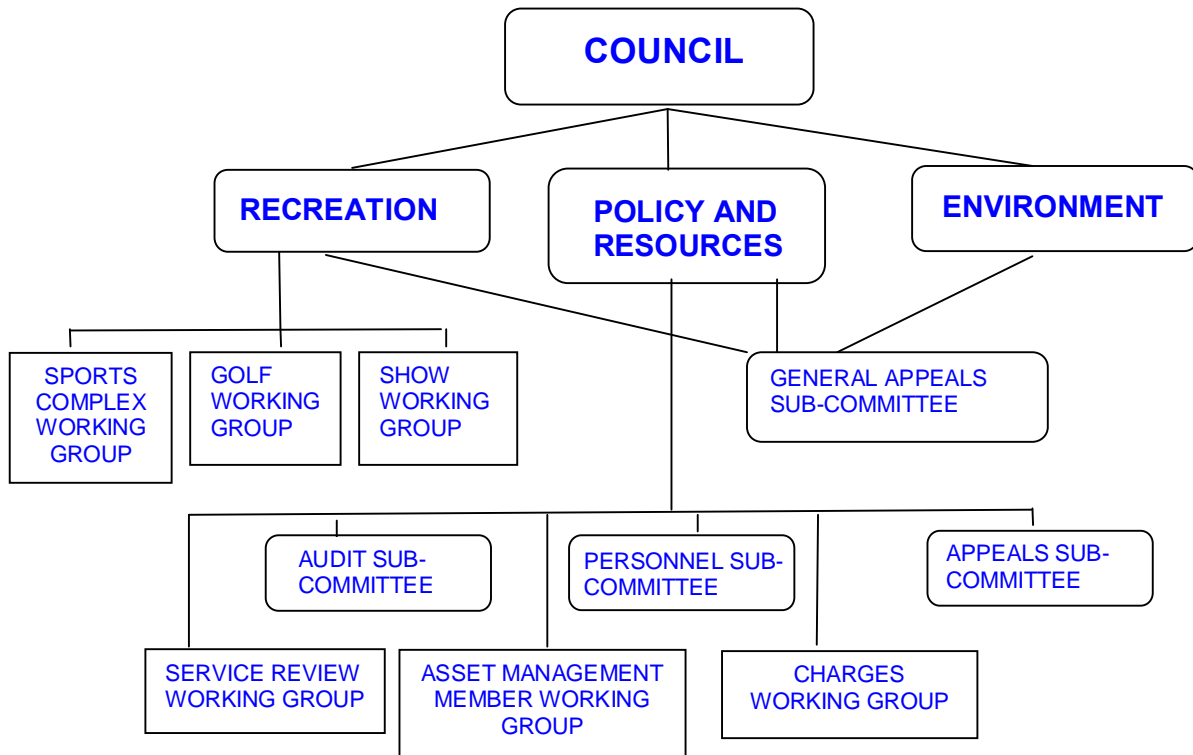
The area represented by the Town Council is divided into eight wards.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| ◆ Byerley Park, Horndale and Cobblers Hall | 6 members |
| ◆ Shafto/St Marys | 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.

9.3 Committee Structure

The Council originally considered its Constitution in 2005/06. The Constitution was reviewed, updated and adopted in May 2009 with a further review in May 2010. The Constitution is reviewed annually to ensure it is still relevant and fit for purpose for the Town Council.



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 Sedgefield Borough Council, as was, in April 2005, the level of remuneration is currently set at £1,059.60 per annum for each member of the Town Council. This amount has not increased since that date. An independent remuneration panel at Durham County Council is currently reviewing town and parish allowances.

9.4 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 2010/11 is set out in the Council's newsletter.

Members for the various sub-committees, working groups and representatives on outside bodies are also appointed at the Council's Annual General Meeting.

9.5 Public Participation

Meetings of the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees are normally open to the public. Notices are placed in the press and on local notice boards informing the public of the dates and times. Agendas and reports are made available on the Friday afternoon preceding the meeting. The public entrance to the council chamber will be open 30 minutes prior to the time of the meeting.

With the exception of the Annual and Extraordinary Council meetings, a period of up to 20 minutes has been set aside at each Council or Committee Meeting for any elector within the parish to question appropriate members of the Council.

Oral questions may be asked at the meeting which relate to an agenda item of that meeting.

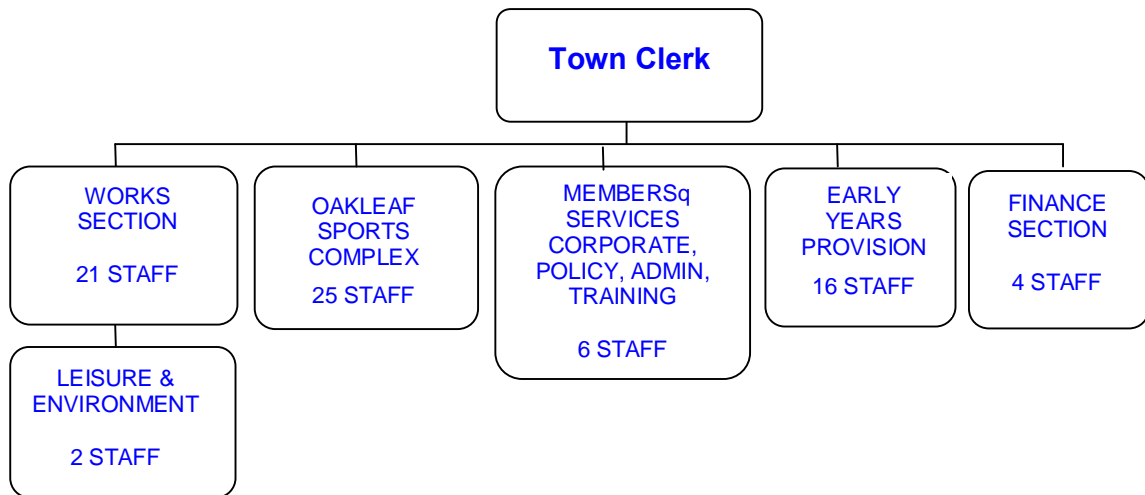
If you wish to ask something which is not on the agenda written questions must be received by the Town Clerk at least 5 clear days prior to the meeting.

Questions shall relate to the powers and duties of the Council or affect the Parish in some way.

Questions will not be received by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances, which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister, or where the issue it concerns has been the subject of a decision of the Council in the last six months.

9.6 The Council's Establishment

The Council employs 44 full-time and 31 part-time employees.



9.7 The Senior Officers within the Council are:

Town Clerk	Andrew Bailey	info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Corporate & Policy Officer	Christine Walton	christine.walton@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Finance Manager	Dan Austin	daniel.austin@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Works Manager	Don Thompson	info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Complex Manager	Derek Snowball	derek.snowball@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Early Years Officer	Jackie Swainston	Jackie.swainston@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Senior Admin Officer	Christine Ryder	christine.ryder@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Environment Officer	Steven Cooper	steven.cooper@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

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 such as IT.

10. Target Setting

To maintain Quality Parish Council Status, there is an increased emphasis on reviewing our progress and performance. In response, progress on Council targets is discussed at Performance Management Group, which all service managers attend. A report is given to the Council on a quarterly basis and the Customer Panel on a six monthly 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 a number of strategic aims which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are still appropriate for the work and the people of Great Aycliffe.

The eight strategic aims are:-

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 help and encourage partnership working to improve the services and facilities for the residents of Great Aycliffe.**
7. **To encourage the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in local democracy.**
8. **To research information and make the case for Great Aycliffe.**

To ensure that the aims are met, the Council set a series of targets under each aim.

Every effort is made to ensure aims and targets are closely linked to medium term financial planning and budget setting process and within the context of the Council's Asset Management Plan. It is acknowledged, however, that some work matters and capital projects are generated from other areas as and when funding becomes available.

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 Parish Performance Plan is therefore only a guide for the Council in deciding on spending priorities in future years and guides the medium term financial planning for the Council.

11. Council Targets 2009/10

As detailed in the Mayor's foreword, targets are chosen from our satisfaction surveys, open days, attending community events, the youth council and the customer panel. We aim to take into account your views and act upon your priorities in order to improve our services for the people of Great Aycliffe.

We also strive to take into account the wider government agendas where possible such as the Area Action Partnership and the general health improvement agenda.

The successful introduction of a comprehensive performance management framework a number of years ago ensures a consistent approach to performance management is applied 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.

The targets set out for the last financial year, under each aim, are attached as Appendix 1, including a statement of progress achieved against each target.

12. Council Targets 2010/11

The large satisfaction survey exercise undertaken in April 2009, covering the whole of the Great Aycliffe area, helped prioritise the targets for 2009/10 and continues to do so for 2010/2011. The Council's budgets were developed in line with these targets and the survey results which identified the customers' needs. In addition, Members, the Customer Panel and Youth Council have also been consulted and an annual budget consultation is also held.

The Area Action Partnership has been in place since April 2009. The Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership (GAMP). The Town Council makes every effort to play a significant role within this group and wherever possible reflect the wider needs of the area.

At the first meeting of GAMP a number of priorities for the area were set. The top three were:

1. Environmental concerns and street cleansing
2. Support to the community and voluntary sector
3. Activities for young people

The Town Council aims do reflect these areas and we are confident we will be able to deliver targets in line with most of the above.

It is worth noting, once again, that the Town Centre is in private ownership and is **NOT** the responsibility of the Town Council. The Town Council has limited input into any meetings or progress made in this area although we strive to have a larger impact.

The list of targets for 2010/11 is attached as Appendix 2.

13. 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 and action plans 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.

13.1 Corporate Services/Personnel

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

This service area is responsible for the implementation of 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 issues
- ◆ To provide advice in relation to training requirements for members and employees.

13.2 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 all financial aspects of the Council business.

The objectives of this service area are:

- ◆ To ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs
- ◆ Managing and developing the Council's accounting systems, records, financial accounting policies and procedures
- ◆ Providing financial information to members and officers and advising on the correct financial position
- ◆ 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 treasury management 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 (creditors and debtors)
- ◆ Prepare the Council's Statutory Statement of Accounts
- ◆ Prepare the Council's Annual Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan
- ◆ Monitor and control spending via an effective budgetary control system
- ◆ Income collection and banking
- ◆ Financial advice and training
- ◆ Insurance arrangements.

13.3 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.

13.4 Administration

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

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.

13.5 Pre-School Learning Centres

The Council's aim is to provide a high quality service, where every child feels safe, is happy and has fun, in safe and secure learning environments in two locations within its administrative area.

Our standards are high and each Pre-school has received a successful inspection from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), each receiving a good grading at their last inspection.

To enable us to develop and maintain these standards we have an excellent ratio of well-trained and motivated staff, who work with the children on a daily basis.

The work of the Pre-schools is managed by the Council's Early Years Officer, who ensures the smooth running of the Pre-Schools in accordance with Council Policy and current legislation.

The continual training of the staff is vital to the operation of the Pre-Schools, and the Council ensures that sufficient resources are available to ensure that high standards continue to be achieved.

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

- ◆ To ensure the Pre-schools are fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children, particularly those that arise from their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability.
- ◆ To ensure that quality learning experiences are provided for the children, appropriate to their stage of development
- ◆ To provide the Early Years Foundation Stage and meet the Welfare Requirements
- ◆ To ensure that the current high standards within the Pre-schools are developed further
- ◆ To ensure that appropriate training is provided for all staff in all aspects for the provision of the service
- ◆ 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.

13.6 Works and Environment Section

The Works and Environment 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.

The Works and Environment Section 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 patrol 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.

13.7 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 | ◆ Moore Lane |
| ◆ Woodham | ◆ West Park |
| ◆ St Oswald | ◆ Horndale |
| ◆ Simpasture | ◆ 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 **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.

13.8 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
- ◆ Simpasture Park
- ◆ Moore Lane Park

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

Our seasonal charges for the pitches range from £240 to £440, 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.

13.9 Outside Events

The Council organises several events each year for its community. This service continues to be popular, with many residents enjoying the various events throughout the year.

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
- ◆ 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.

13.10 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 163 allotments and fees range from £22 to £34 for a 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 and again in February 2010, 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, ensures 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 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.

13.11 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.

13.12 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 Adshel 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. Although, Durham County Council are responsible for the emptying of all dog bins.

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.

13.13 Environment

The Environmental Officer helps raise environmental awareness within the Great Aycliffe area and two multi skilled Town Pride operatives enable the Town Council to deal with urgent and environmental issues.

In addition, the Environmental 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 Environmental Officer is also responsible for the Environmental (Eco) Centre based in Moore Lane Pavilion.

The **objectives** of this service are:

- ◆ To create a greater understanding of the natural environment around Great Aycliffe
- ◆ To provide opportunities for members of the public to become more involved in their towns practical environmental management
- ◆ To develop and maintain strategic environmental policies for Great Aycliffe Town Council
- ◆ To identify suitable conservation and environmental works for the Town Pride Team and Volunteers on natural green areas.

13.14 Sports Complex

The Oak Leaf Sports Complex is a family friendly facility, 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, supported by a pool of casual staff.

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
- ◆ 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.

13.15 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 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 **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 provide a warden service for the Course
- ◆ 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.

13.16 Capital Projects

The Council reviews annually its programme of proposed capital projects i.e. significant one off 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 which resulted in the development of a 10 year Asset Management Plan. Work on this 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.

All of these actions are subject to continuous monitoring by the Performance Management Group, with any problems identified by that group being notified to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Medium Term Financial Plan originally approved by the Council in 2007, is updated annually. It sets out capital investment priorities and plans for the next three years, with clear links to the Parish Performance and Asset Management Plans. The capital programme position of the Council is also monitored on a regular basis and discussed at the Policy & Resources Committee.

The main capital works undertaken in 2009/2010 are listed below:

Sports Complex . DDA automated main entrance doors, DDA adaptation to indoor bowls green, alarm system upgrade, emergency lighting system renewed and installation of CCTV.

St Oswalds Park . Ladies toilets refurbished, park exterior fence replaced, formal garden constructed and picnic tables have been provided.

Council Offices . Internal refurbishment and replacement of toilets.

Golf Complex . New shop fittings installed, access and fencing improvements, floodlight replacement to range canopy, green rollers and CCTV installed.

Play areas . A number of safety surfaces have been repaired.

Full details are provided in the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts.

14. Value for Money

Although the previous best value 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 and providing value for money to the local tax payers.

The Town Council consults its community on a regular basis from a town wide satisfaction survey undertaken every three years to consult on specific projects and the annual budget consultation. It undertakes an annual review of its functions, measures 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 service reviews which have member involvement.

The Service Review Working Group is charged with the following responsibilities:

- ◆ To undertake reviews of services as determined by the Council from time to time
- ◆ To consider and make recommendations to the appropriate committee regarding all aspects of value for money for that service.

15. Consultation

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 continue to publish a quarterly newsletter.

Surveys are undertaken each year for

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

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

A Strategy Customer Panel was set up following the satisfaction survey undertaken in August 2007. This panel has been involved in the setting of council targets and is consulted on a range of matters including the budget setting process and the annual budget consultation.

A Youth Council was set up in November 2008 who is also consulted on a range of matters. In addition the Youth Council has been given a devolved budget to help deliver specific projects highlighted by the young people of the Great Aycliffe area.

The Town Council attends community events to highlight the services it provides and gather residents view.

15.1 Satisfaction Survey Findings

In August 2007 and again in April 2009 a Great Aycliffe satisfaction survey was undertaken by the Town Council. A Best Value Grant received from Central Government covered all the financial costs for both surveys.

The survey showed:-

Overall Value for Money

	2007	2009	Difference
Do the council provide value for money for its services?	% 63	% 72	% +9

Overall Satisfaction with Council Performance

	2007	2009	Difference
	%	%	%
Are you satisfied with the overall performance of the Town Council?	67	72	+5

Living in Great Aycliffe

	2007	2009	Difference
	%	%	%
Great Aycliffe is a pleasant place to live	76	79	+3

Keeping you informed

	2007	2009	Difference
	Very Well & Fairly Well	Very Well & Fairly Well	
	%	%	%
Involved in local decision making	42	56	+14
How to complain to the Council	54	63	+9
What the Council spends money on	65	69	+4
How well the council is performing	59	60	+1
Overall, keeping you informed	65	71	+6

15.2 Comments from Residents

Detailed below is progress on specific comments made by residents during the 2009 satisfaction surveys and other consultation and community events attended.

In addition to the items set out previously and the targets in Appendix 2, the following requests have/are being addressed.

You asked for	We have
A new play area at School Aycliffe	Undertaken a consultation and will be replacing the play area during 2010
Security or CCTV to covered all parks rather than just the Town Park	Employed a team of Park Wardens which will patrol all Town Council parks, play areas
Things for teenagers to do	* Provided a youth shelter at Horndale park * Purchased 12 portable dance mats Both with funding from the AAP
Improve Great Aycliffe Way	Improvements to Great Aycliffe Way are being undertaken throughout 2010
Improve the Oakleaf Sports Complex	Disabled access improvements have been undertaken and bowls hall carpet has been replaced
Save tax payers money	All savings have been re-invested

Improve advertising of facilities	More Town Council newsletters will be published and leaflets advertising our facilities will also be published
More allotments	Planning permission is being sought to provide additional allotments at St Oswalds Park

16. Representation

The Council nominates representatives annually to the following outside bodies. The representatives for 2010/11 are:

- a) Aycliffe Youth Council
Councillors V Crosby, A Warburton and the Corporate and Policy Officer.
- b) County Durham Association of Local Councils
Councillors RS Fleming (Leader), JD Clare (Deputy Leader) and the Town Clerk.
- c) Citizens Advice Bureau
Councillor M Iveson with B Hall as reserve.
- d) Agnew Community Association
Councillors K. Henderson and Mrs B Clare
- e) Woodham Village Community Association
Councillors Mrs J Gray and K Henderson
- f) Great Aycliffe and Middridge A.A.P. Local Councils Committee
Councillors RS Fleming and B Hall and the Town Clerk.
- g) Durham Countryside Volunteers
Councillors V Crosby, I Gray and A Warburton.
- h) Larger Local Councils Forum
Councillors RS Fleming, B Hall and the Town Clerk.
- i) Greenfield Lifelong Learning Committee
Councillors V Crosby, Mrs D Bowman and RS Fleming.
- j) Normandy Veterans Association
Councillor Mrs M Dalton.
- k) Woodham Community Technology College Forum Meeting
Councillors Mrs D Bowman and Mrs VM Raw.
- l) Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre
Councillor V Crosby
- m) Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society
Councillors I Gray and B. Haigh

17. A Financial Overview

17.1 2010/2011 Budget

The Town Council agreed its Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2010/2011 in January 2010. The Council's spending plans for 2010/2011 can be summarised as follows:-

Service Area	2010/2011 Budget £
Members and Civic Expenses	76,500
Corporate and Democratic Management	468,050
Capital Financing Charges	46,000
Pre Schools	218,750
Community Events	161,100
Sports Complex	686,550
Golf Course and Driving Range	244,700
Parks, Sports Pitches and Play Areas	232,800
Environment, Works and Street Equipment	283,650
Cemeteries	66,050
Allotments	19,100
Contingency Sum	15,000
Total Cost of Running Town Council Services	2,518,250
Major Capital Works to Council Assets	311,500
Contribution to Capital Reserves	50,000
Total Planned Spending	2,879,750
Less Income	
County Council Funding for Pre-Schools	(175,000)
Double Taxation Grant (Cemeteries and Allotments)	(38,500)
Sports Complex Fees and Charges	(456,000)
Golf Course and Driving Range Fees and Charges	(197,400)
Cemeteries and Allotments Fees and Charges	(29,650)
Other Income	(43,700)
Investment Income	(5,000)
Total Income	(945,250)
Less Use of Council Balances to fund Capital Works	(311,500)
Net Budget / Council Precept	1,623,000

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 County Council, as the Council Tax Billing Authority, to collect for us from the Council taxpayers of Great Aycliffe in order to fund all of the services we provide.

The 2010/2011 Budget document can be viewed 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.

17.2 2010/2011 Council Tax

The Town Council only receives Council Tax from those properties in the Great Aycliffe area to fund services provided specifically within the town.

As detailed above, the **Council's 2010/2011 Precept is £1,623,000** which equates to a **Band D Council Tax of £204.10**.

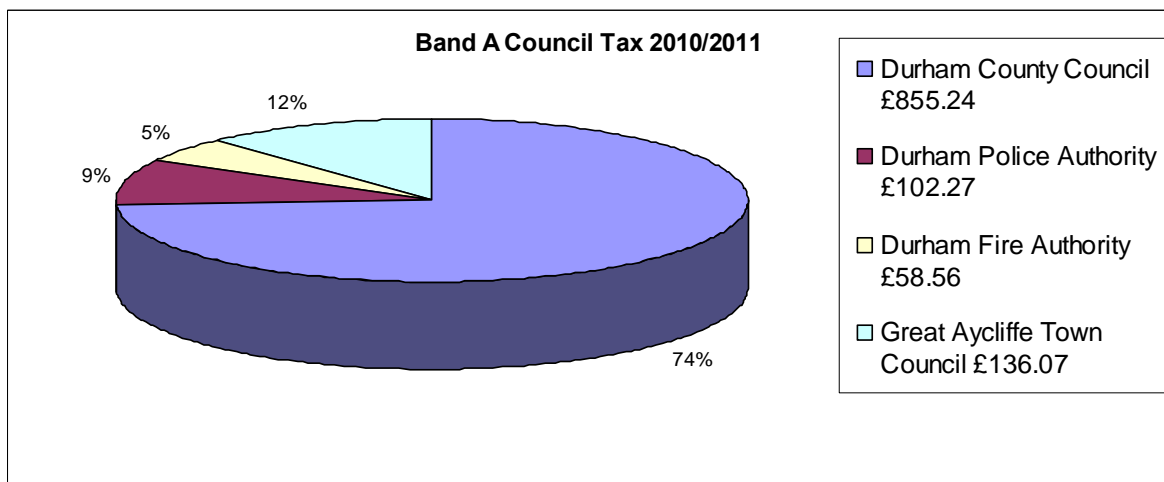
However a significant proportion of properties in the Great Aycliffe area fall within **Council Tax Band A**, for which the Town Council element of the Council Tax bill is **£136.07 or £2.62 a week**.

This represents a reduction of 1% on the 2010/2011 Council Tax.

The **overall Council Tax** figure for 2010/2011 for **Band A** properties in the Great Aycliffe area is **£1,152.14**.

The following illustration demonstrates that only **12p in every £1 of council tax comes to Great Aycliffe Town Council**.

The remainder of the council tax bill pays for services provided by the County Council such as education, social services and roads, as well as the Police and Fire Authorities.



17.3 Medium Term Financial Plan

The Council also has in place an approved Medium Term Financial Plan which sets out the Council's financial strategy for the next three years.

The Medium Term Financial Plan provides the link between our aims, targets and priorities as set out in this Parish Performance Plan and the resources that are likely to be available to fund them via the Annual Budget.

The Plan enables the Council to take a more strategic view towards the planning of its finances as well as planning and putting in place the resources to help the Council achieve its strategic aims and targets.

The Medium Term Financial Plan is based on the principles of efficiency and value for money, committing the Council to the achievement of year on year efficiency savings in order to keep future Precept and Council Tax increases to a minimum and ensuring that financial resources are invested in line with tax payers' priorities.

The Medium Term Financial Plan can be viewed at the Council Offices or on the Council's website.

17.4 2009/2010 Spending

The financial position and spending of the Council is continuously monitored and controlled in order to help achieve the best and most efficient use of public resources.

Progress on the Council's approved Budgets is reported to the Council's Policy & Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

This prudent management of the Council's spending was again demonstrated in 2009/2010, when the Council achieved a saving of £263,587 or 16% against its approved Revenue Budget.

These savings arose from limited use of the contingency sum, a lower than expected pay award, savings on staff cover and overtime costs, increased Pre School funding arising from numbers of children running at capacity levels, renegotiated gas and electricity contracts and general efficiency savings achieved in most budget areas.

These savings have now been set aside in the Council's earmarked reserves 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 over the next few years.

17.5 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 2008/2009:-

1. Statement of Accounts
2. Parish Performance Plan
3. Annual Governance Statement
4. Use of Resources Assessment (also known as the Value for Money Conclusion)

The Council has again received a clean bill of health on all aspects of the inspection.

This means that, in overall terms the Audit Commission considers that the Council's Accounts present fairly its financial position, its finances are in good order and its arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public money are sound and provide value for money to local tax payers.

The Audit Commission did note within their report a “*continuing trend of significant under spends against the revenue budget and increasing levels of reserves in recent years*” and that “*the Council needs to set realistic budgets, so that it can make informed decisions about its levels of spending and the level of precept that it raises from council tax payers*”.

The Audit Commission subsequently made some recommendations for improvements to the Council’s budget setting process that it feels will help to ensure “*improved budget planning that will make the Council better aware if there is potential for additional resources to be made available for investment in local services or the potential to reduce the precept raised from local tax payers*”.

These recommendations were as follows:-

1. *The annual budget should more clearly take account of the latest experience in the current financial year;*
2. *The incorporation of a contingency sum within the Revenue Budget needs to be reconsidered; however it would be appropriate to budget for a contribution to capital reserves, provided that this is based on future capital investment needs;*
3. *The budget needs to consider all options for financing capital expenditure, not just the option of financing capital expenditure from Council reserves.*

The Council welcomed these comments and recommendations, acknowledging that there is always room for improvement in its budget setting processes and the improvements have all been implemented in the setting of the 2010/2011 Budgets.

However, it is important to stress that the Council considers that it already has a realistic and transparent budget in place which not only provides the resources to deliver a range of important community services, but also enables it to be responsive to community concerns and enables it to build balances to allow investment in community assets.

The Council acknowledges that the level of savings made against the Revenue Budget over the last three years have been significant, and that this has allowed Council reserves to be built up to relatively high levels in recent years.

However, the Council’s balances and reserves are earmarked for capital investment commitments as set out in the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan and a significant proportion of the savings made have already been reinvested in community assets and facilities over the last five years.

The 2009/2010 Audit Letter is due to be received later in the year, following the completion of the 2009/2010 Audit.

The Audit Commission’s Annual Audit Letter to Great Aycliffe Town Council for 2008/2009 is attached as Appendix 6 and the 2008/2009 Statement of Accounts is available to view at the Council Offices or on the Council’s website. (www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk).

APPENDIX 1

AIMS AND TARGETS 2009/10

No	Target	Comments
AIM 1 – TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL		
1	The Town Clerk trained in the power of well being.	Complete.
2	At least 80% of Members are trained in the power of well being	Complete - 24 Members attended the training event.
3	Quarterly performance report to Policy & Resources Committee	Complete.
4	Complete all staff training identified by the Personal Development Review (PDR) process by October 2010	Some PDRs are still outstanding.
5	Prepare a training list, developed from the PDR process and feed into the budget setting process	In progress, pending completion of PDRs.
6	Prepare a Member and Town Clerk training programme to comply with guidance for Quality Status	Questionnaires completed, training courses sought.
7	Deliver Member training and review completed post training evaluation forms	In progress.
8	Undertake a review of all records and filing systems annually to comply with Freedom Of Information Act	Although this was scheduled to take place during the summer recess it is still outstanding.
9	Improve advertising of council facilities and services	Additional newsletters to be published with specific areas of interest highlighted.
10	Complete the electronic recording of appropriate historical archive documents	Complete.
AIM 2 – TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER		
11	Produce annual statement of accounts by 30.6.09 without external qualification	Complete - SOA produced and re-approved on 23 September. Audit complete with unqualified opinion.
12	Complete any Government returns electronically by the relevant deadline	Complete for this year - All delivered on time.
13	Continue to deliver 3% efficiencies.	Complete - Efficiency savings of 9.5% identified.
14	Implement any works highlighted in the Asset Management Plan, prioritised by Disability Discrimination Act compliance.	Complete - Capital programme budget and Medium Term Financial Plan provide details.
15	Undertake a review of all Council risks every March	Complete . In addition a review of the risk management process has been undertaken.

No	Target	Comments
16	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31 st January 2010	Complete.
17	Undertake an annual review of the Asset database/register	Asset register updated as part of year end accounts.
18	Undertake an annual review of the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for plant and machinery and build into the capital works programme as necessary	Complete schedules have been developed and updated as part of MTFP update in March/April 2010.
19	Undertake an energy assessment for Great Aycliffe Town Council Offices, with a view to this being expanded into all areas in the future.	New energy efficient heating system in place, thermostatic valves fitted, external lights on sensor.
20	Explore drainage option for wet areas at West Cemetery	Drainage works to R section completed. Other areas to be drained as/when required.
21	Open the toilets for limited hours at Stephenson Way Cemetery on a weekend (times to be agreed)	Complete and under review.
AIM 3 – TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES		
22	Complete the Best Value Review of the Oakleaf Sports Complex	Not complete and not on target. The next meeting is due to take place in April 2010.
23	Hold an open day at the Oakleaf Sports Complex	Complete.
24	Complete the programme of day trips for pensioners by July 2009	Complete.
25	Run the annual Aycliffe Show	Complete.
26	Work with partners to review the provision and operation of environmental areas and green spaces	Ongoing.
27	Deliver the Council's programme of special events	Complete.
28	Review the existing pricing at the Oakleaf Sports Complex and investigate the possibility of a junior reward card or scheme	Due to restructuring junior activities, this is no longer viable. Await outcome of new activities.
AIM 4 – TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE		
29	Investigate the need for extended opening hours at the Early Years settings. If required extend the opening hours.	Ongoing
30	Continue to develop the new Early Years Foundations Stage in all pre-school settings.	Complete

31	Provide adequate outdoor storage facilities at St. Oswald and Woodham Burn pre-school settings.	Complete.
32	Achieve successful Ofsted Inspection Results (if undertaken)	Inspection imminent at Woodham and St. Mary
AIM 5 – TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES		
33	Environmental Officer to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities	On-going. A number of initiatives and volunteering opportunities are available.
34	Working with the Youth Council, schools, community and voluntary groups hold a Town Pride Environment Day	Complete . a week long litter picking campaign was held with all bar 2 schools taking part.
35	Publicise environmental/green spaces in the Great Aycliffe area	On-going . summer 09 newsletter and brochure is due for publication
36	Publicise parks and play areas in Town Council ownership	Complete . summer 09 news letter
37	Complete the refurbishment at St. Oswald Park	Complete.
38	Open the public toilets at St. Oswald Park	Part Complete - The refurbishment of the male toilet facilities is still outstanding.
39	Investigate options for the provision of a town wide park ranger service	Complete . Park Patrol Service has been in place since Jan 10.
AIM 6 – HELP AND ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE		
40	Support and encourage Aycliffe Youth Council (AYC)	On-going.
41	Working with other groups to develop community activities to encourage pride in Great Aycliffe	On-going.
42	Hold a litter awareness campaign in partnership with Durham County Council, the Youth Council and any national initiatives	Complete.
43	Negotiate with Durham County Council to hold a high profile dog fouling campaign in the Great Aycliffe area	Complete . a 2 week campaign was undertaken in Nov 09, dog bags distributed from Council Offices & Eco Centre; press release re health hazards, prosecution and enforcement.

AIM 7 – ENGOURAGE THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY		
44	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 and citizens responsibilities.	No progress to date. This is likely to be very onerous and more likely suited to Durham County Council. More details about the Town Council will be included in the Parish Plan for Aycliffe.
45	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services	Complete - An open day was held at the sport complex in July and a general open day was held in November.
46	Promote the need to register to vote prior to any elections	Problems with the web site have delayed any information which we could make available on our website regarding the need to register to vote and information on elections.
AIM 8 – TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE		
47	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out	Consultations on The County Durham Local Plan; Contaminated Land Strategy and Planning Supplementary Guidance have all been undertaken since the last review.
48	Undertake benchmarking and research where appropriate for new policies and procedures	Ongoing. The Town Council is well ahead in most areas and well prepared and has policies in place for current needs.

APPENDIX 2

AIMS AND TARGETS 2010/2011

AIM 1 – TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL	
1	Publish a Parish Performance Plan by 30 th June
2	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Annual Governance Statement
3	Quarterly performance report to Policy & Resources Committee
4	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report to council
5	Review the personal development reviews to find a more user friendly approach
6	Prepare an annual training list, developed from the Personal Development Review, or replacement, process and feed into the budget setting process
7	Provide a Member and Town Clerk training programme to comply with guidance for Quality Status
8	Undertake a review of all records and filing systems annually to comply with Freedom Of Information Act
9	Improve advertising of council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication
AIM 2 – TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL’S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER	
10	Produce annual statement of accounts by 30.6.10
11	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the account by 30.9.10
12	Complete any Government returns electronically by the relevant deadline
13	Aim to deliver 3% efficiency savings.
14	Implement any works highlighted in the Asset Management Plan, prioritised by Disability Discrimination Act compliance.
15	Undertake a review of all Council risks every March and report to Council
16	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31 st January 2011
17	Map all council owned land, buildings and other assets onto the Geographical Information System
18	Undertake an annual update of the Asset Register
19	Undertake an annual review of the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for plant and machinery and build into the capital works programme as necessary
AIM 3 – TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
20	Complete the Best Value Review of the Oakleaf Sports Complex
21	Deliver 30 public countryside events
22	Deliver the Council’s programme of special events
23	Provide 2 training sessions on the new dance mat system (<i>‘train the trainer’</i> type sessions)

24	Work with community groups and voluntary organisations to provide at least 5 community dance sessions
25	Pursue the of opening additional allotments at St. Oswald's Park/allotments
26	Replace the Oakleaf Sports Complex heating system to be more efficient
AIM 4 – TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE	
27	Investigate the need for extended opening hours at the Early Years settings. If required extend the opening hours.
28	Achieve successful 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	
29	Environmental Officer to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities
30	Work with the Youth Council, schools, community and voluntary groups to hold a Town Pride Environment Day
31	Publicise environmental/green spaces in the Great Aycliffe area. Including the development and publication of a leaflet
32	Plant a hedgerow round the inner field boundary at Cobblers Hall Plantation
33	Publicise parks and play areas in Town Council ownership. Including the development of a leaflet
34	Complete the improvements to the Great Aycliffe Way
35	Develop and publish a Great Aycliffe Way leaflet to promote the walk
36	Refurbish School Aycliffe Play Area
37	Open the public toilets at St. Oswald's Park
38	Continue the replacement of dog waste bins at various town council owned locations
39	Consider the re-development/use of Horndale Park and football pitches
AIM 6 – TO HELP AND ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE	
40	Support and encourage Aycliffe Youth Council (AYC) by Organising the election process Holding at least 8 meetings a year Help organise at least 1 project per year
41	Working with other groups to develop community activities to encourage pride in Great Aycliffe
42	Hold a litter awareness campaign in partnership with Durham County Council, the Youth Council and any national initiatives

43	Negotiate with Durham County Council to hold a high profile dog fouling campaign in the Great Aycliffe area
44	Work with County Councillors for Aycliffe and Great Aycliffe and Midridge Partnership (GAMP) and Durham County Council to provide additional off-street parking
45	Work with County Councillors for Aycliffe and GAMP to access Neighbourhood Budgets for the benefit of Great Aycliffe residents
AIM 7 – TO ENCOURAGE THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY	
46	Hold at least 5 Customer Panel meetings with the residents of Great Aycliffe
47	Hold a budget setting consultation meeting with the Customer Panel
48	Hold a Parish Meeting
49	Hold an Allotment AGM
50	Hold 6 allotment representative meetings
51	Provide information about elections, the need to register to vote, how to become a Councillor etc on the Council's website
52	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services
AIM 8 – TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE	
53	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out
54	Undertake benchmarking and research where appropriate for new policies and procedures
55	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required

APPENDIX 3

PEST ANALYSIS

In analysing the macro-environment, it is important to identify external factors that might in turn affect a number of variables that are likely to influence the operation of the Council.

This PEST analysis is merely a framework that categorises issues as political, economic, social and technological forces.

This analysis is not a set of rigid compartments into which ideas need to be sorted it is best thought of as a set of information on what is happening externally that will or may affect the service.

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		Type:	Impact:	Importance:	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Political					
Unitary Council / AAP developments	Undetermined	Opportunity	Unknown	Important	Make case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity Feed issues to CDALC for representation
Changes in Government policy / legislation	High	Weak	Unknown	Important	Keep up-to-date Lobby via NALC
Audit Commission Inspections	Medium	Opportunity	Reducing	Important	Comply with FRISSE Maintain internal control Adhere to legislative requirements
Political balance of Council	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Be apolitical Work with all parties
Local Government elections	High	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Await outcome Keep up-to-date with changes
Change in Government	High	Weakness	Unknown	Important	Await outcome React accordingly

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		Type:	Impact:	Importance:	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Economic					
Tax Base	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Monitor
Changes in interest rates	High	Weak	Increasing	Important	Borrowing/repayments Loss on interest Medium Term Financial Plan
Skills Shortages	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Monitor
Inflation	Medium	Threat	Reducing	Important	Efficiency savings Precept rate
Levels of Employment	Medium	Weak	Unknown	Important	Monitor
Demand for Services	Medium	Threat	Reducing	Important	Monitor and offer promotions where possible
Lack of government grant funding/ limited fund raising ability	Low	Weakness	Unchanged	Important	Review Bid for funding whenever possible
Severe Weather	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	React accordingly

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		Type:	Impact:	Importance:	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Sociological					
Access to services	Low	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Develop partnerships DDA work Pricing policy Marketing
Social exclusion Hard to reach groups Equality and diversity Deprivation	Low	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Special events Free taster sessions Equal opportunities employer Monitor service users Satisfaction Survey Be aware
Crime/Fear of Crime	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	CCTV Wardens
Ageing population	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Provision of services - cost
Health/Obesity	High	Opportunity	Unknown	Important	Partnership working
Technical					
New Communication Technologies	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date
Mechanical equipment	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Risk management Asset management
Environmental Impact / Carbon Footprint	High	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date with legislation Monitor energy usage

APPENDIX 4

SWOT ANALYSIS

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

APPENDIX 5

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.

There are 30 elected members who represent the 6 wards of the Town.
L . Labour I . Independent LD . Liberal Democrat

BYERLEY PARK, HORNDAL & COBBLERS HALL

COUNCILLOR	TELEPHONE (01325)	EMAIL ADDRESS
Mrs. D. Bowman - L	Home - 308094 Mobile - 07967901477	dorothyeskdale62@talktalk.net
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B. Hall - L	Home - 314105 Mobile - 07899 721573	
Mrs I. Hewitson - I	Home - 318763	
Mrs A. Palmer - LD	Home - 317652	alison276@hotmail.co.uk

SHAFTO/ST MARYS

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T. Hogan - I	Home - 313828 Mobile - 07901 552205	terryhogan23@btinternet.com

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Mrs V. M. Raw - L	Home - 311447 Mobile - 07804452865	

WOODHAM NORTH

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Mrs S. Haigh - I	Home - 318645 Mobile - 07867 788603	
K. Henderson - L	Home - 319542	
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<u>AYCLIFFE VILLAGE</u>		
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APPENDIX 6

ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER