



# Great Aycliffe Town Council

Council Offices - School Aycliffe Lane - Newton Aycliffe - Co. Durham DL5 6QF

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8th March 2013

## TOWN COUNCIL ONCE AGAIN FREEZES THE COUNCIL TAX

### What do you get for your Council Tax?

For the fourth year running Great Aycliffe Town Council WILL NOT be increasing the Town Council portion of your council tax bill.

What does this mean for you? The current Town Council tax for a Band A property in Great Aycliffe is £136 per year. Had the council tax risen in line with inflation over the last 6 years you would be paying more than £20 per year extra on your bill.

For just £2.61 a week (less than the price of 4 pints of milk and a loaf of bread) you receive all of the Great Aycliffe Town Council services detailed in this Newsletter

#### Services provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council:

Management of Great Aycliffe Way, Woodham Burn, woodlands and nature areas  
*Oakleaf Sports Complex – indoor bowls, sports hall, squash courts, bar and catering, children's holidays courses*

Oakleaf Golf Complex consisting of an 18-hole golf course and 18-bay floodlit driving range

*Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery*

Aycliffe Angels Memorial Garden – provision and maintenance

*2 pre-school learning centres – with 'good' Ofsted rating*

5 allotment sites with 9 pigeon and 5 poultry facilities

*11 parks and play areas at various locations*

6 football pitches, mini-soccer and six-a-side pitches

*Bus shelters with litter bins in various locations*

A lorry park at School Aycliffe

#### Special events:

- Great Aycliffe Show
- Senior Citizens' Excursions – approximately 1600 participants
- Fun-in-the-Parks
- Christmas lighting
- Santa Tours – several routes, with volunteer Santas
- Children's Santa letters forwarded to the North Pole
- Fireworks Display

Grounds maintenance and environmental management

Planning consultation

Liaison with principal authorities and other partner organisations

#### Community Consultation

Extensive consultation and community engagement with the Youth Council, Customer Panel and attending community events across the town ensures that the Town Council provides the services that the residents want and we prioritise our spending, and savings, to reflect your priorities.

The Environment and Activities for Young People are always the top two priorities for investment whilst civic events and the golf course are the areas most often highlighted to make savings.

### The present Council in its six year term of office has also achieved the following:

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

As part of our commitment to the improvement of green spaces in Great Aycliffe we appointed an Environment Officer and redeveloped the old Pre-School building at Moore Lane to provide an Environmental Centre. In addition, a Town Pride Team has been employed to keep our areas clean and tidy.

The Environment Officer works with all the Primary Schools in Great Aycliffe, as well as a number of other organisations such as Durham County Council Streetscene, the Probation Service and Litterfree Durham to name just a few.

The Town Pride Team, Environment Officer and Aycliffe Youth Council, in conjunction with all the Primary Schools and a few dedicated volunteers, undertake a Town Pride Environment Week each year which consists of a number of litter picks across the Town.

The Environment Officer also holds a wide range of school holiday fun including organised walks, creepy crawly events, making holiday garlands, making art using recycled materials.





## KEEPING AYCLIFFE GREEN

A serious issue and major achievement for the Town Council was to secure the protection of the 'greens' of Newton Aycliffe from future housing development and retain the traditional appearance of the older parts of the town.

In addition, we have taken over the running of a number of 'green' areas from Durham County Council. For example, the Town Council is now responsible for the general maintenance for the whole of the Great Aycliffe Way and Byerley Park Nature Reserve.

Did you know that the Town Council works in conjunction with Durham County Council through a Winter Maintenance Agreement to clear certain key footpaths of snow? We are actively engaged in partnership working and try to work with as many partners as possible to provide the best services and facilities for Great Aycliffe.



## EFFICIENCIES, SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT

Constant monitoring of spending by Officers and Members, and streamlining of services throughout the six years of the Council, have delivered significant savings against the Council's Revenue Budget.

These savings, together with external grant funding received, have allowed Council Balances and Reserves to be built up, which have been reinvested in the Revenue Budget in line with community priorities – enabling nearly £2 million of capital investment in community assets such as multi-use games areas, play areas, improvement of parks, additional allotments, disabled access works, and numerous environmental initiatives.

### Some key investments over the last 6 years:

- ✓ We have employed an Environment Officer, 2 Town Pride Team Officers and 3 Park Patrol Officers
- ✓ Most of the play areas – Town Park; Simpasture Park; St Oswald's Park; Byerley Park; School Aycliffe Play Area; Woodham Park and Horndale Park have had significant updating and refurbishment
- ✓ A new BMX Track has been installed at Woodham Park
- ✓ An additional skate board area has been installed at the Town Park along with a toddler play area and sand play
- ✓ Outdoor fitness equipment has been installed at West Park
- ✓ Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) have been installed at Woodham and Simpasture Parks
- ✓ A formal garden has been created at St Oswald's Park
- ✓ The area where the Great Aycliffe Show is held has been improved with upgrading to a tarmac running track
- ✓ We have provided additional Fun-in-the-Park events



- ✓ The Moore Lane football changing rooms as well as the old pre-school building have been refurbished
- ✓ A new wood has been created and named 'Jubilee Wood' to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012
- ✓ A huge amount of asset management has been undertaken to keep our facilities safe, watertight and accessible has been undertaken
- ✓ Many energy saving measures have been installed in our buildings including solar panels, cavity wall and loft insulation as well as energy efficient lighting
- ✓ We have provided notice boards in various locations and improved our website to keep you informed about what is happening
- ✓ 63 additional allotment plots have been made available providing 205 plots in total



✓ We have created a Customer Panel which is regularly consulted and a wide range of issues including the budget

✓ We have created a Youth Council and provided them with their own budget

A typical investment and improvement programme can be seen in these before and after pictures. School Aycliffe play area was improved in consultation with the young people, who chose most of the equipment to be installed.



The skate board area within the Town Park is a great example of investment and partnership working.

This extremely popular facility has had the number of ramps and jumps doubled making this a great facility to hold competitions.



## LEISURE AND PLEASURE ...

Many facilities at the Oakleaf Sports Complex have been refurbished and revitalised in recent years, including access for as many members of the community as possible. A whole range of additional activities for all age groups have been established.

Did you know the Oakleaf has the following?

- ✓ Indoor Bowls drop-in
  - ✓ Indoor flying club
  - ✓ Holiday programme for 4-7 year olds
  - ✓ Female Sports Development
  - ✓ Children's parties
  - ✓ Table tennis coaching
  - ✓ Oaklife for the over 50's
- as well as a full range of sporting facilities.

Are you aware the Town Council continue to provide a wide range of special events such as Fun-in-the-Parks, the Great Aycliffe Show, Firework Display, Senior Citizens' Trips, Santa letters and the Santa Tours on Christmas Eve?



## Helping to Keep Aycliffe Tidy, Clean and Safe

As part of our investment and taking into account residents' views we appointed a Park Patrol Team. The 3 Officers patrol the parks and other Town Council facilities and are now able to provide weekend patrols. They also work very closely with the local Police Teams.

The Town Council also ensures we have a Police Authority liaison and representation on consultative committees.

We actively encourage responsible dog ownership by providing FREE dog poo bags.



## Pre-School Centres

We have re-aligned and improved our Pre-School provision to ensure our young children are prepared for school and starting to raise their aims and aspirations from a very early age. Woodham Burn and St. Oswald's Pre-Schools both achieved an Ofsted 'GOOD' rating at their last inspection with some areas achieving 'outstanding'.



## And Finally .....

To ensure that the Council's systems and services are operating efficiently and effectively and that all necessary checks and balances are in place the Council employs an Internal Auditor who prepares quarterly reports and provides recommendations for improvements to the Council.

In addition an external independent body, the Audit Commission undertakes a full review of the Council's finances every year. For the last six years the Council has received a clean bill of health from the Audit Commission. This means that the Council's financial management and governance arrangements are sound, its accounts are good and it is verified as providing 'value for money' to the local community.

Councillor R. S. Fleming, Leader of the Council and Independent Leader, Councillor B. Curtis would like to commend all of the Town Council Staff for their enthusiasm and hard work over the last 6 years.



## Giving Nature a Helping Hand

The parish of Great Aycliffe has a rich variety of habitats such as woodlands, wildflower meadows and wetlands that support a wealth of wildlife. We are lucky enough to have species such as Great Crested Newts, Water Voles, Kingfishers and uncommon wildflowers such as Ragged Robin and various orchids such as the Bee Orchid right on our doorstep.

Unfortunately species such as these are under threat on both a local and global scale from the effects of habitat loss, climate change and pollution. There are ways in which we can all help to reduce these pressures – one of these is through conservation.

It's official that nature conservation work is good for you. Research carried out by Oxford Brookes University has shown that planting trees, erecting fences, clearing out ponds and controlling wayward vegetation can use up as many calories as a step aerobics class, as well as, helping your local environment. Not only is the great outdoors a great place to get fit, it's also a great place to relax. Just being out in the countryside can help to reduce stress levels and combined with the physical health benefits of exercise, conservation work is a great tonic and you can have a real impact on Aycliffe's wildlife.

Great Aycliffe Town Council operate a twice weekly conservation volunteer programme which gives local residents the opportunity to get involved with site improvement works that while directly benefitting nature will also give the participants an opportunity to improve their own health and meet new friends.

Great Aycliffe Town Council are constantly looking for new volunteers or groups who may wish to improve their local environment. No experience is necessary and tasks can be tailored to an individual's or group's own abilities and fitness.

To find out more please contact the Environment Officer on 07779 090 842 or e-mail [info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk](mailto:info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk)



## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DECISION NOTICE

The Town Council have received approval from Durham County Council to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan.

**Town & Country Planning England**

**The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012**

**Designation of Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Area**

**Applicant: Great Aycliffe Town Council**

On 14th February 2013 Durham County Council approved the above mentioned application in accordance with the boundaries specified on the plan below.



## MAYOR'S CHARITY CIVIC DINNER

The Annual Mayor's Charity Civic Dinner was hosted by the Mayor of Great Aycliffe, Councillor Val Raw, on Friday, 22nd February 2013 at Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre. The Mayor would like to thank her family, friends and fellow Councillors for the support she received.

A special thanks to Barclays Bank who match funded the evening's Raffle and Tombola with a total amount of £2,143 being raised for her two worthwhile charities, the Butterwick Hospice (Bishop Auckland) and Combat Stress.



**ak Leaf**  
SPORTS COMPLEX  
**01325 300600**  
[www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk](http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk)

## JUNIOR DROP IN SESSIONS

### FOOTBALL FUN

**Mondays 4.00pm - 5.00pm**  
for boys and girls aged 4 to 7 yrs  
Learn new skills!  
Only £1.00

### SQUASH COACHING

**Tuesdays from 4.15pm - 6.15pm**  
1 hour coaching and  
1 hour tournament  
For ages 8 to 15 years  
£2.40 members

## PASS - SATURDAY MORNING CLUB

**9.30am - 11.00am**  
For ages 8 to 15 years  
try golf, table tennis, basketball,  
badminton, squash, archery,  
football etc...  
Only £2.00

## OAKLIFE CLUB

Here at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex we have created a 'club' for the over 50's. Ideal for people with some time on their hands, who would like to feel a little fitter but the gym isn't for them.

### 8 WEEK ROTATING PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

14 Mar 2013	Dance Mats	Break	Team Games
21 Mar 2013	Volleyball	Break	Netball
28 Mar 2013	Badminton	Break	Squash
04 Apr 2013	Uni Hockey	Break	Target Bowls
11 Apr 2013	Bar Games	Break	Fitness

## Bowls Drop In

Once again during the summer we will be running the popular Bowls Drop in Session, at the Oak Leaf starting Wednesday 15th May 2013, 6.30pm 8.30pm for 12 weeks only £1 per session.

If you have never tried Indoor Bowls before, come along and have a go, don't worry help will be on hand to show you what to do.

You don't need a partner to play, so come along on your own or with friends have a game of bowls, and get yourself a cup of coffee or a drink from the bar, and meet some new people. All will be made welcome.

## PRE-SCHOOL LEARNING CENTRES



Children start to learn from the moment they are born, so why not bring your child along to one of our Pre-Schools to let them to continue their 'learning journey'. All children have access to interesting and challenging experiences, in safe and secure environments. With the help of enthusiastic and dedicated staff, they are able to develop the knowledge and skills that form a firm foundation on which to build for their future education.

St. Oswald's Pre-School is located in St. Oswald's Park, Wren Close (8.45am to 3.30pm) and Woodham Burn Pre-School is located in Woodham Burn Community School Primary School, Humphrey Close (8.45am to 3.15pm)



Open to all children from their 3rd birthday .

We provide full and part time places and will try to provide flexible hours to meet your individual needs.

**FREE** nursery funded places are available, the term after a child's 3rd birthday. We only charge **£3.00** for a 3 hour session if funding is not available. Hours in excess of the first 15 are just **£3.50** each.

We provide nursery education through the 'new' Early Years Foundation Stage, which came into effect in September 2012

Both Pre-Schools have received a 'good' grading from OFSTED.

For further information please call into the Pre-Schools (no appointment needed) or contact Jackie Swainston on 01325 319880



A quality service provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council