

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TOWN MEETING** for the Parish of Great Aycliffe, held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 24th MAY 2017** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs. W.P. Hillary (Chairman / Mayor)
and there were 20 Electors present.

SILENCE

Two minutes silence was observed as a mark of respect for the victims at Manchester Arena.

The Chairman (Mayor) of the Council opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting. The Mayor read out a statement of how the meeting would proceed and possible involvement by members of the electorate.

1. **NOTICE OF MEETING**

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

2. **MINUTES**

It was proposed by W.M. Blenkinsopp, seconded by M. Iveson and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on the 18th May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman / Mayor.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mayor gave the following verbal report from the past year:-

During 2016/17 – the Council has continued to provide services to residents of Great Aycliffe. The coming year and years to come will be challenging due to decreases in finance available. The Council will need to review what services it currently offers and how they are delivered.

Environment

The Town Council continues to:

- Deliver a comprehensive programme of activities for schools, community groups and public events during school holidays.
- Deliver Environment Week, which involves visiting all 10 primary schools in the town, giving them an interactive presentation on litter and then giving them the chance to take part in a litter pick in their local community.
- Facilitate community groups such as local scout, guides and Friends of Byerley Park and West Park.
- Deliver a licence agreement with Durham County Council to operate and maintain areas of land and woodland which form part of the Great Aycliffe Way.
- Provide over 200 allotment sites, including provision for pigeons and hens poultry. These sites are located at:

- Clarence Chare
 - Finchale Road
 - St. Oswalds
 - Aycliffe Village and
 - Byerley Park
- Provide and maintain 2 cemeteries at West Cemetery and Stephenson Way, and a burial service for St. Andrews Church in Aycliffe Village.

Leisure

Leisure facilities have formed a major part of the Councils provision over the years, this has continued in recent times with a high standard of maintenance and ongoing development of:

- 8 very different parks, all with their own character. These are found around the town at:
 - Moore Lane
 - St. Oswalds
 - Town Park
 - Horndale
 - Simpasture Park
 - West Park
 - Byerley Park and
 - Woodham
- As well as on the parks mentioned above, modern and well maintained play areas are located at:
 - Oakleaf Sports Complex
 - School Aycliffe
 - Aycliffe Village and
 - Scott Place
- New facilities including a junior play area at West Park and a Scoot track at Horndale have now been completed.
- A challenging well-manicured 18 hole golf course.
- An 18 bay flood lit golf driving range.
- A Sports Complex providing a sports hall, 4 squash courts, indoor bowls, function room and a bar and catering service. The Sports Complex is home to Great Aycliffe Indoor Bowls Club and Aycliffe Squash Club.
 - The Sports Complex also provides a number of activity sessions for both adults and children.
- Provides 6 football pitches and changing facilities at 3 sites:
 - Sports Complex
 - Simpasture and
 - Moore Lane

The Park Patrol Service is also a key service which provides an out of hour's service to monitor and safeguard the Council's assets and its users.

The Council also continue to provide a series of annual leisure events such as:

- Festival Programme of events
- Senior Citizen Excursions
- Fireworks display
- Fun in the Parks
- Santa Tours and letters

The Council also supports events run by local organisations such as the 10K Fun Run.

Play

In 2016 – 2017 replacement play units at Horndale Park and the Oakleaf Sports Complex play areas have been installed. An ongoing programme of safety surface repairs has continued to ensure play areas are safe for use.

Pre-School Learning Centre

The Council provides a Pre-School Learning Centre located in St. Oswald's Park which is currently registered for 30 places.

The Council has invested in improving the outdoor area and facilities to provide a more learning opportunities. A larger sand pit has been built, play huts and garden planting area provided.

A programme of training and support for staff has been undertaken to ensure that the best service to children is provided.

Future Developments 2017 – 2018

The Council continues to invest in play provision.

A project is also underway to provide a new play area to be sited below Eade Close and next to Burn Lane. The Town Council has allocated £75,000 for the project with match funding sought from Durham County Council providing a total of £155,000.

Youth Council

The Youth Council have considered a number of grants and have awarded a total sum of £800. Two young ladies were supported to enable them to attend a dance competition which was held in Hollywood. 4 members of Sedgefield Water Polo Team were supported to attend a water polo tournament. 4 young people have been supported to attend Camp Cody in America which will provide leadership and engagement skills.

The highlight of the year was presenting a wreath from the Youth Council at Remembrance Day.

The young people are currently investigating volunteer opportunities to read to the young people at the Library and visit some of our care homes to spend time with residents who do not get any visitors.

Neighbourhood Plan

On June 22 you will be able to vote on the neighbourhood plan. This will be the first referendum in County Durham for neighbourhood plans and our policy on 'Housing for Older People' will be the first in the County if the plan receives a yes vote.

This has been a long hard process but has certainly been worth it. The policies contained within the document are already being used for planning purposes. But it still needs to be approved at referendum please spread the word and encourage everyone to vote on June 22.

Council Grants / Donations

The Council considered applications for Grants and the following were agreed and paid out over the year 2016/17.

• Oakleaf Golf Section	300
• County Durham School Benevolent Fund	200
• Learning Library	200
• Oakleaf Golf Club -	50
• Rotary Club – Model Railway Exhibition	100
• Rotary Club – Sponsored Community Jaunt	100
• Woodham Village Association	600
• Great North Air Ambulance	200
• Durham Cathedral – Holocaust Memorial	200
• Great North Childrens Hospital	64
• Durham Cathedral	250
• Newton Aycliffe Sports Club	500

Capital Works

The Council has continued to develop its Asset Management Plan in order to keep the Council's buildings and assets up to a required standard.

A replacement programme of Council works department vehicles to ensure vehicles and machinery are available to undertake services.

Newsletter

The Council produces four newsletters each year in order to keep the public advised of current activities, services and events. The newsletter gives information on the Council's budgets and annual report.

Council Finances

The 2016/17 year has seen further improvement in the Council's already sound financial situation.

The Council received yet another clean bill of health from its external auditors, made savings of more than £200,000 on its Revenue Budget, invested more than £200,000 in Council and community assets, and increased its balances and reserves to £1.1 million.

This all means that the Council is beginning the new financial year in good financial health and has a strong foundation on which to build as it looks ahead to what is likely to be a challenging future.

The Council faces some significant financial challenges in the medium term, with the biggest risks being the ongoing cuts that are being made to the Council Tax Support Grant funding on which the Council is reliant, the ongoing increases to the National Living Wage which is putting pressure on the Council's pay bill, and the threat of a limit being placed on the council tax increases of larger town councils.

So while the Council is starting from a strong financial position, in the longer term the process of achieving a balanced Revenue Budget is likely to become increasingly difficult, while balances and reserves will undoubtedly fall as capital investment requirements are funded.

The Council is currently in the process of updating its Medium Term Financial Plan, which aims to put in place a strategy to manage the financial impact of the challenges faced, protect services, maintain balances and reserves and keep council tax increases as low as possible over the next few years.

Further information on the Council finances is set out in the Annual Financial Report which has been produced for this Parish Meeting.

4. **QUESTIONS**

The Chairman / Mayor had not received any prior notices of questions on the official sheets, however, she did ask if any electors in attendance had anything they wished to raise or question before closing the meeting.

There were no questions or issues raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

CHAIRMAN.