

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, 18th MAY 2016** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT Councillor J.P. Hillary (Chairman / Mayor)
and there were 18 Electors present.

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 J. Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on the 20th May 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

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

During 2015/16 – 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.

Parish Performance Plan

The Review Sub-Committee undertook a full update of the Parish Performance Plan as one of their first tasks. The document was taken apart, each chapter was reviewed and refreshed to make it 'fit for purpose'. It was re-ordered into clear sections and has been renamed – Town Council Service Delivery Plan.

The document still contains important information and aims and targets but some financial information has been removed as this is already included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Environment

The Environment is of great importance to the Town Council, to this end, the Works section has gone through a slight restructure recently with our Environment Officer becoming the Works and Environment Manager.

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 will be completed in the very near future.
- 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.

- Provide 6 football pitches and changing facilities at 3 sites,
 - Sports Complex,
 - Simpasture and
 - Moor 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
- Plus a special Queens Birthday celebration event taking place on Saturday 11th June at the Town Park.

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

Play

In 2015 – 2016 replacement play units at Horndale Park and the Oakleaf Sports Complex play areas have been installed. An ongoing programme of safety surface repairs has continue to ensure play areas are safe for use.

Future Developments 2016 – 2017

The Council continues to invest in play provision with new facilities planned for West Park and a Scoot Track at Horndale Park.

A project is also underway to take over a play area site for Durham County Council. This is 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.

Consultation is currently underway with both residents nearby, young people and the general community for Newton Aycliffe.

Youth Council

This year saw a record number of young people wishing to join Aycliffe Youth Council. There are currently 21 young people aged from 11 to 19. A number of grants have already been carefully considered by the Youth Councillors with great debates taking place prior to a final amount being agreed.

A play funded by the Youth Council, which tells the story of a little girl growing up with two brothers who die of the genetic disease Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy will be taking place on 5th July at Woodham Academy.

They are working with GoAhead Training to assist with a bigger and better STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) event as part of the Aycliffe Festival.

They have been consulted for the play equipment to be provided at West Park and are looking forward to assisting with a 'special guest' launch event.

Some of the youth councillors have helped with the preparation and consultation for the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan and are helping to promote, and take part in, the consultation for Cobblers Hall Park.

Neighbourhood Plan

The plan is finally written and is at the pre-submission consultation stage. This is an opportunity for residents to comment on the plan and its policies before being sent to Durham County Council for a further consultation and independent examination.

It has been satisfying to see that comments made by residents on the GreatAycliffeNP Facebook page and as part of the consultation are truly being reflected in the planning policies that have been written.

The pre-submission consultation finishes on Monday 6th June – PLEASE take the time to complete a questionnaire or send your comments to Christine Walton who is based here at the Town Council Offices. Any comments will be reviewed and amendments made to the plan if applicable.

Once Durham County Council have undertaken their consultation and the Independent Examiner is happy with the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan a referendum will be called. We anticipate this will be toward the end of this year, around November. Residents and businesses will be asked to simply vote 'YES' they agree to the plan or 'No' they do not. IF the plan is agreed it will then become a statutory planning document that developers must consider when submitting planning applications in the future.

Council Grants / Donations

The Council considered applications for Grants and the following were agreed and paid out over the year 2015/16.

• Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe	52.00
• Great North Air Ambulance	500.00
• Newton Aycliffe F.C.	300.00
• Aycliffe Village Hall Association	100.00
• Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe	100.00
• Aycliffe Village Local History Society	275.00
• Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe	52.00
• Bite the Ballot	200.00
• Shine Choir	300.00
• Great North Air Ambulance	200.00
• Durham Cathedral Fund	250.00
• St. Clare's Foodbank	500.00
• Mr. P. Billany	150.00

Capital Works

The Council has continued to develop its Asset Management Plan in order to keep the Councils 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.

Energy conservation measures have been investigated for the Council Offices and a display energy certificate and report commissioned.

Council Finances

The 2015/16 year has been another positive one for the Council finances.

The Council received another clean bill of health from its external auditors, generated a surplus of £186,000 on its Revenue Budget, invested more than £200,000 in Council and community assets, and maintained balances and reserves of £1 million.

This all means that the Council is starting the new-year in good financial health.

This will be important as the Council faces some significant financial challenges over the next few years including the ongoing cuts to the Council Tax Support Grant funding, the movement in the National Living Wage towards £9 per hour, and the possibility of a limit being put in place on the council tax increases of larger town councils.

So, while the Council is in a relatively strong financial position at the present time, in the longer term, the process of achieving a balanced Revenue Budget is likely to become increasingly difficult, while balances and reserves are likely to fall substantially.

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 these challenges, 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 was set out in the Annual Financial Report produced for this Parish Meeting.

Copies of the Financial Report were available for information.

4. **QUESTIONS**

The Mayor / Chairman had not received any prior notices of questions on the official sheets, however, he 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.