

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, 20th MAY 2015** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs. M. Dalton (Chairman / Mayor)
and there were 14 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 Mrs. W. Hillary, seconded by Mr. J. Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on the 21st May 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

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

During 2014/15 – 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 Council have agreed to review the Council's Targets and Policies by the newly appointed Review Sub-Committee.

Environment

The Environment in which we live is very important. The Council's Environment Officer, Steve Cooper, through the Environment Centre and our various nature areas offers an education service to local schools and residents along with a programme of Environmental themed events.

Our Environment Officer and Town Pride Team have been striving to improve the towns environment. The following projects have been achieved:

- Maintaining and enhancing the towns natural green areas.
- 41 public countryside events have taken place. Activities have included pond dipping, nature walks, bird box making, rubber duck racing through the Burn and various themed arts events.
- 32 environmental workshops have taken place with local school groups. All schools within the parish have been included.

- An Environment Week was organised with the assistance of the Youth Council. This involved visiting every primary school in the town, giving them an interactive presentation on litter and then giving them the chance to do a litter pick in their local community.
- Licence agreement with Durham County Council to operate and maintain areas of land and woodland which form part of the Great Aycliffe Way.
- Facitate and support Friends of Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve and the Friends of West Park.
- Allotments are provided at:-
 - Clarence Chare
 - Finchale Road
 - St. Oswald's
 - Aycliffe Village
 - Byerley Park

The total number of allotments rented out by the Council is 212 with a further 5 poultry and 9 Pigeon Loft sites.

Cemeteries

The Council provides two cemeteries and undertakes the burial function at St. Andrew's Church, Aycliffe Village.

Leisure

As well as leisure facilities, such as Parks, Golf Course / Driving Rang, Play Areas and the Sports Complex, the Council also continues to provide a series of annual leisure events:

- Great Aycliffe Show – this has now been replaced by a 10 day Festival which will take place in July 2015.
- Senior Citizens Excursions
- Firework Display - which had been reinstated and proved popular, the event was only open to parish residents and was well supported.
- A series of Fun in the Parks events
- Santa Tours and Letters

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

Oak Leaf Sports Complex

- The bowls has gone from strength to strength with usage exceeding its target; this is in part due to regular promotions including Bowls drop in sessions which have generated a lot of interest with a wide age range, beginner's league proving a success and regular jumbles session throughout the summer months.
- The Great Aycliffe Indoor Bowls Club did well again this year, the men's interclub team won promotion to division 1 and Great Aycliffe Bowls Club progressed further than ever before in the National Top Club competition overcoming stiff opposition in Harrogate beating two of the top clubs in the competition.

- Promotions with the Bar/catering continue to prove popular, with meals from around the world including Curry nights, American Burger deals and Italian Pizza. Other promotions include Festive Sunday Lunches, Children's Christmas Party, Mother's and Father's day Lunches. We have also linked promotions to sports this year with a badminton family meal deal offer proving to be popular with five new families participating regularly in badminton.
- The on-going issues with the bar roof leaking were addressed during 2014 with the tiled roof being replaced with mineral felt covering, over a new insulation layer to improve energy conservation.
- On the 17th April 2015 Great Aycliffe hosted another successful go run for fun event, more than 400 young people took part in the event which is designed to encourage participation in running. Olympian Chris Tomlinson started the mile fun run along with the Mayor of Great Aycliffe Town Council. All those who attended had a wonderful time.

Partnership Working

The Council continues to further explore partnership working / joint procurement with Durham County Council.

The Council has worked with Horndale Residents Association and completed a project to provide a Multi Use Games Unit at Horndale Park. We have been involved with the Friends of West Park Group looking at ideas for improving West Park including play areas, seats, litter bins and rose beds.

Youth Council

The Council continues to support the Youth Council with Officer assistance and a financial sum that enables the Youth Council to give grants, subject to approval by the Council, to organisations or individuals connected with children and young people.

The Youth Council have been working hard to organise an amazing event to start the Aycliffe Festival with a 'bang'. Full STEM Ahead, (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, your FAST TRACK to the Future) is aiming to show school children and the community the wealth of STEM related organisation in and around Aycliffe in the hope that young people will be encouraged to study STEM subjects at higher levels. It hopes to show that STEM it not just about boring, hard classroom work but it can be fun and - it pays well. They have a number of activities already confirmed John Kilcoyne (the man in the shed and Braniac from TV whom some of you may have heard of) will be hosting two of his science shows, there will be robots an F1 challenge, some exciting sports challenges and a mock exploding device.

The Youth Council have also undertaken a consultation on a BXM / Scooter facility at Horndale Park.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by Durham County Council in February 2013. Consultation began in June 2014 where 15000 questionnaires were circulated across the Town. Residents said the priorities for the plan should be Retail, Environment and protecting our important greens from development and older person's accommodation. Working groups have been established to address the issues and consider the options. The plan has recently received a grant for £7,521. This will fund planning expertise, publicity costs and Soft Market Testing which aims to contact retailers to determine if retailers would be interested in investing in Aycliffe. The issues and

options paper where residents get to vote on their preferred option is expected to be complete in the next few months. The Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan should go to a referendum by May 2016.

Council Grants / Donations

The Council considered applications for Grants and the following were agreed and paid out over the year 2014/15.

• Oakleaf Golf Club Junior Team	£300
• Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society	£100
• Neville Community Centre	£ 20
• Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe	£100
• Get Kids Going	£ 50
• The Soccer Factory	£125
• Kate Avery	£200
• Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe	£ 20
• Oakleaf Golf Club	£ 20
• Great Aycliffe Cancer Support	£200
• Lifeline Community Action	£300
• Holocaust memorial Event	£100
• Durham County School Benevolent Fund	£100
• Education Centre for Children with Down Syndrome	£200
• St. Clare's Foodbank	£1,000

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.

The Council has also provided £40,000 funding for new junior play equipment at West Park and is working with the Friends of West Park to provide a toddler play area.

Some play units will also be changed at Horndale and the Sports Complex play areas.

The Council has also allocated £25,000 to provide a Multi-Use Games Unit at Moore Lane Park subject to a successful match funding bid.

Council Finances

The 2014/15 financial year has been another successful one for the Council.

The Council received another clean bill of health from its external auditors, generated a surplus of more than £235,000 on its Revenue Budget, made capital investment of nearly £200,000 in community assets, and increased its Balances and Reserves to £1.1 million at the end of the year.

This means that the Council starts the new year in a healthy financial position.

This will be important as the Council faces some significant financial challenges over the next few years including cuts to the Council Tax Support Grant funding, the increasing pressure in paying staff a living wage, and the likelihood of a limit being put in place on council tax increases.

The Council is in the process of updating its Medium Term Financial Plan which aims to put in place a strategy to meet these challenges, protect and maintain services and keep council tax increases as low as possible over the next five years.

While the Council is starting from a relatively strong financial position, the process of achieving a balanced Revenue Budget is likely to become increasingly difficult, which balances and reserves are likely to fall substantially.

The forthcoming Medium Term Financial Plan will provide more information on the future outlook for the Council and further information on the Council finances is 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, 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.