

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, 2nd MAY 2012** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs. M. Dalton (Chairman / Mayor)
and there were 26 Electors present.

The Chairman (Mayor) of the Council opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting.

1. **NOTICE OF MEETING**

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

2. **MINUTES**

It was proposed by Mr. V. Crosby, seconded by Mr. B. Hall and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on the 4th May 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mayor gave information on achievements and activities which had taken place throughout the past year.

She spoke of the events which had been organised in the Mayoral year and the presentation of flowers on the occasions of Golden or Diamond Wedding Anniversaries.

The Mayor announced the charities which she had nominated to raise funds for during her year in office and that cheques would be presented at the Annual Council Meeting on the 9th May to:

A.B.F. The Soldiers Charity
Newton Aycliffe MIND
New Friends, New Places
Friends of Senior Citizens
1407 Newton Aycliffe Sqn. ATC
Church and Community Children's Choir

An amount of £6,357 had been raised, this included a substantial 'Match Funding' amount by Barclays Bank staff.

The Mayor spoke of the Neighbourhood Planning arrangements and that Officers would give a detailed presentation at Agenda Item No. 4.

Environmental themed activities supported by the Environment Officer had been given to local schools and residents.

The Environment Officer and Town Pride Team has been striving to improve the towns environment and the following projects had been achieved:

- Maintaining and enhancing the towns natural green area.
- Planting a new 2 hectare woodland in Woodham Burn to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.
- 40 public countryside events had taken place.
- 40 environmental workshops with local school groups had been carried out.
- 750 man hours of volunteers help had been given to improve the nature areas around the town.
- Weekly tasks were being undertaken by the Probation Service to improve the area.
- An Environment Week had been organised with the assistance of the Youth Council.
- An agreement to the transfer of Woodland in the Clarence Chare area had been entered into as part of the Council's commitment to protect green spaces.

Leisure Activities provided by the Council included:

Senior Citizens Excursions
 Great Aycliffe Show
 Firework Night
 A series of Fun in the Parks events
 Santa Tours and Letters

Support was also given to events run by local organisations.

Oakleaf Sports Complex

A number of refurbishment works and maintenance projects have been undertaken to keep the Sports Complex up to standard.

Sporting activities to engage with children and young people by the provision of sporting activities were ongoing in a bid to get young people active. School holiday programmes were continuing and 'Crafty Kids' sessions had been introduced, including 'mini' activities for the 4 – 7 year old age groups.

Clubs operating in the Complex are seeing increased memberships and success in competitions, especially the Bowls Club and Aycliffe Squash Club.

Heats of the County Schools Cross Country event was again held at the Sports Complex with over 500 primary school children joining in.

Information was given on capital works which had been carried out in order to keep the Council's buildings and assets up to a required standard. In addition the following capital projects had taken place:-

- Refurbishment of the Byerley Park Play area.
- Installation of a toddlers sand and play area in the Town Park.
- Development of an additional area at St. Oswald's Allotment Site to provide more full and half plots.

Partnership Working has been expanded with Durham County Council in regard to snow clearance, gritting and filling grip bins. This has resulted in a number of paths being cleared and salted.

A number of areas of land including nature areas and woodlands from Durham County Council have been adopted to help maintain and improve them. The Friends of Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve has been re-established.

Youth Council

The Council continue to support the Youth Council with officer assistance.

Council Finances

The Mayor asked the Town Council Finance Manager, Mr. Dan Austin, to give a brief overview of the Council's Finances.

A hand-out leaflet had been prepared of the Council's Finances for 2012/13.

Information was given on the current economic climate and how it would affect this Town Council in view of the recent Government spending cuts.

The Town Council is fortunate that we do not rely on support from Central Government to fund services that we provide. The major impact has been on Durham County Council and other public sector organisations in County Durham such as the Police and Fire Authorities and the Primary Care Trust.

The Council have been able to build up its balances and reserves allowing on-going investments in community assets and placing this Council in a relatively healthy financial position.

The Council had been able to freeze its proportion of the Council Tax and hoped this would make a small contribution towards easing the financial burden on local tax payers in these difficult times.

The Revenue Budget makes provision for new investments including setting aside resources for the Council to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish and to take over environmental areas and flower beds from Durham County Council.

One-off savings to the Revenue Budget had been achieved from the local government pay freeze in 2011/12, reduced employers' pension contributions and the income increases in the Pre-School funding.

The identification of savings against the Revenue Budget and budget reduction identified in many service areas means it is very much a case of business as usual for the Council with no changes to the level and quality of service provision that the local community is used to.

Capital investments in community assets for next year will be made via our Capital Programme.

This year saw play equipment replacement programme and upgrades to play areas. The creation of a new woodland to mark the Queen's Jubilee and the extension of St. Oswald's Allotments.

There is a planned maintenance to Council buildings and replacement of vehicles, machinery and equipment in line with the Council's Asset management Plan. Solar panels have been installed to the Council Office roof to generate significant returns to the Council.

The Council's Asset Management Plan will continue to provide various roofing works and refurbishment works to Moore Lane and Simpasture football changing rooms.

The Council proactively seeks out external grants and contributions to supplement investments and has already secured resources from the Great Aycliffe and Middridge Area Action partnership to improve the BMX track at Woodham and install fitness equipment in the West Park area.

The Annual Audit report has again given the Council a clean bill of health and confirmed that the Council finances are in good order and we provide value for money to the local community.

The Finance Manager gave information on how tax payers could get involved in the consultation process of any future spending by joining our Customer Panel.

Councillor Mrs. Mary Dalton thanked the Finance Officer for the excellent work he had carried out in connection with the Council's finances.

4. **PRESENTATION BY THE TOWN CLERK ON 'A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE'**

The Town Clerk provided information on the Localism Act and in particular Neighbourhood Plans. The talk explained what a Neighbourhood Plan provides (a supplementary Planning Document), the Town Council role, the role of the community, the process that is required to be undertaken to produce a plan and finally its adoption and future use to guide development in Great Aycliffe together with the County Durham Local Plan.

A question was asked as to whether or not the plan could be developed by an individual community within Great Aycliffe. It was explained that the Neighbourhood Plan would cover the whole of the parish boundaries of Aycliffe including communities contained within that area.

5. **QUESTIONS**

The Mayor / Chairman had not received any prior notices of questions to be asked at the Parish Meeting.

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

CHAIRMAN.