

Great Aycliffe Town Council

Parish Performance Plan 2013 - 2014



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1. Introduction by the Mayor

The Parish Plan aims to inform you about the Town Council activities, what we said we would do and what we actually did. You can find progress on our aims and targets in Appendix 1. It will help you understand what the Town Council is doing for you and the Great Aycliffe area.

The Parish Performance Plan is an important strategic document that the Town Council produces each year as part of our aim to deliver quality services for the residents of Great Aycliffe.

Changes in legislation to the way that Council Tax is calculated and paid resulted in an unexpected shortfall in the tax raising capacity of the Town Council of over £352,800.

Whilst this was partly offset by a Government Grant of £296,150, it still left the Council facing a net shortfall of £56,650 in the 2013/14 Revenue Budget.

This shortfall was met through a combination of further budget reductions, efficiency savings and deletion of vacant staffing posts. This has meant that the Town Council was able to fund the shortfall and froze the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax for a fourth year in a row.

It is important to stress that the savings required to balance the Revenue Budget were achieved without the need to make cuts to front line services or staffing levels, although, as highlighted above, vacant staffing posts did need to be deleted.

Times are hard for everyone and the Town Council endeavours to rise to all challenges whilst focussing on the community's needs and continuing to improve our services. Through our satisfaction surveys, open days, attending community events, the youth council and the customer panel we aim to take into account your views and act upon your priorities in order to improve our services

The first few pages of this document are intended to provide a brief summary of some key targets from the past year, a snapshot of the year to come and an overview of financial information.

However, the rest of the document provides some useful and detailed information regarding the Town Council and our services. Please take the time to read it and we look forward to receiving any view you may have on the plan. Section 2 provides details of how you may do this, should you wish.



Councillor
Mrs Barbara Clare

Some key things we did last year

- ✓ A major achievement last year in this current economic climate was once again not raising the Town Council portion of the Council Tax.

- ✓ Achieved £264,000 savings across all service areas which have been added to council balances, this will enable us to continue to deliver all of our services to you without the need to make cuts.
- ✓ Achieved a clean bill of health with our finances and received an unqualified audit.
- ✓ Installed an upgraded BMX track at Woodham Park.
- ✓ Expanded the skateboard area within the Town Park.
- ✓ Installed outdoor fitness equipment in West Park.
- ✓ Worked with a range of partners to deliver a variety of events and services.
- ✓ Finalised the licence agreement with Durham County Council which enabled the Town Council to manage and improve a number of areas of land.
- ✓ Entered into an agreement to undertake a limited snow clearing and gritting service on behalf of Durham County Council.
- ✓ Held 38 public environmental events, even with the bad weather we had.
- ✓ Held another successful Town Pride Environment Week, working with the Youth Council, local schools and volunteers.

Some key targets for this year

Following the annual review of the Town Council aims and targets, and including recommendations from the residents of Great Aycliffe, some of our key targets for 2013/2014 are:

- ✓ The Town Council has commenced work on the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan. This is a very important piece of work which will help the residents of Great Aycliffe plan for the future. **We will need your help to ensure the best plan possible is produced.**
- ✓ Improve our partnership working.
- ✓ Improve our community engagement and encourage more residents to become involved in local government.
- ✓ Continue to provide all existing services without the need to make cuts.
- ✓ Commence a review of all service areas to ensure value for money.
- ✓ We are aiming to have the lowest increase possible for the Town Council portion of the Council Tax.
- ✓ Undertake 40 public environmental events.
- ✓ Undertake 60 school environmental engagements.

Council Finances

The Council has a responsibility in law for ensuring that its financial management arrangements are sound, that it has an effective system of internal financial control, including the management of risk and the prevention and detection of fraud, and that it has put in place arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The key performance measure of the Council's financial standing is the annual external inspection by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission look at four main areas:-

1. Statement of Accounts
2. Parish Performance Plan
3. Annual Governance Statement
4. Value for Money (Use of Resources Assessment)

The overall opinion on the overall financial standing of the Council is set out in an Annual Audit Letter. The Council must obtain an 'unqualified' audit opinion within this letter in order to retain its Quality Council status.

The Council is pleased to report that it again received a clean bill of health on all aspects of the inspection last year. This means that the Audit Commission considers that:-

- ◆ the Council's Statement of Accounts presents fairly its financial position;
- ◆ it is well managed and governed with sound strategies, policies, procedures, systems and internal controls;
- ◆ our finances are in good order;
- ◆ we deliver economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public money;
- ◆ we deliver value for money services to the local community.

All in all, this was a very positive Audit Report for the Council and the Audit Commission commended the Council for the progress it has made over the last few years. This is an excellent achievement and has been achieved as a result of the hard work and commitment of all councilors, management and staff.

A copy of the 2011/12 Audit Letter can be found at Appendix 6 within this document.

An overview of the Council's finances is included in Section 17 of the Parish Performance Plan on pages 32 – 40.

2. Views on the Plan

The Town Council would welcome your views and comments on the Plan and these can be sent to:

Andrew Bailey, Town Clerk, Great Aycliffe Town Council, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham, DL5 6QF

Fax: (01325) 301053

E-mail: info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

The Council accepts full responsibility for its preparation and for the information contained in it. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is correct.

Copies of the Plan are available for public reference in the following locations:

- ◆ Town Council Offices
- ◆ Newton Aycliffe Library
- ◆ Oakleaf Sports Complex
- ◆ Aycliffe Village Hall
- ◆ And the Council's website – www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Copies have also been sent to Durham County Council and neighbouring Town and Parish Councils.

3. Equalities

Great Aycliffe Town Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability or geographic location.

Information will generally be provided by the Council in English only. Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated. You can request an alternative format copy by contacting Great Aycliffe Town Council on 01325 300700.

4. Introduction to Great Aycliffe

Great Aycliffe comprises the town of Newton Aycliffe and the villages of Aycliffe and School Aycliffe. The population of Great Aycliffe is approximately 26,500. (Sedgefield Borough Council, regeneration statistics 2007)

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mining industry dominated Durham. During World War II, the Government established an Ordnance factory near to Aycliffe Village, to supply munitions to the services. The workforce, mainly women, became known as the 'Aycliffe Angels' or the 'canaries' so called because the chemicals used in shells turned their hands and skin yellow.

After the war, Aycliffe became the site of a New Town, planned to provide good quality homes near to the Aycliffe Industrial Estate. Under the guidance and control of the Aycliffe Development Corporation, the town flourished and has grown to be part of the Great Aycliffe settlement.

Great Aycliffe is a vibrant community, set in an attractive semi-rural setting. It is bounded on all sides with open countryside and the area administered by the Town

Council contains many attractive green spaces.

Schools in the area are generally good, and are increasingly linked to the higher education network. The towns and villages have excellent road links to the A1, and Newton Aycliffe has a train station on the Darlington to Bishop Auckland rail line.

The Aycliffe Industrial Park comprises 230 hectares and is a base for a mix of local, national and international companies.

There are a wide range of voluntary groups, clubs and societies active in the area. A large range of play and leisure facilities are provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council and Durham County Council.

Housing conditions are generally above average. Significant levels of new house building mean that Aycliffe can offer a wide choice of starter, family and executive homes to new residents coming to the area.

The Town Centre has a mix of individual retail outlets and chain stores, with individual retail outlets in neighbourhood areas. The redevelopment of the town centre commenced in January 2009. A wider range of shopping facilities is available in Darlington, Bishop Auckland and Durham.

As with much of the North East, the highly attractive environment can, however, serve to mask some of the problems inherent in the area. The North East is continuing its transformation from an economy traditionally based on heavy engineering and manufacturing, with a lower skills base, towards the more modern, higher skilled mixed economy visualised in the regional economic strategy.

We are aware of the importance of the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Great Aycliffe area. We are endeavouring to work with Durham County Council and other organisations to ensure the best results for Great Aycliffe residents.

5. Services Provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council

The Parish Performance Plan is a corporate strategic document for the whole of the Town Council. However, it will also be used as the Corporate Service Plan.

Great Aycliffe Town Council:

- ✓ Run the Oakleaf Sports Complex - indoor bowls, sports hall, squash courts, bar and catering, children's holidays courses, indoor/outdoor sports coaching
- ✓ Run the Oakleaf Golf Complex – 18 hole golf course and an 18 bay floodlit driving range
- ✓ Manage Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery and provide grounds maintenance and burial service at St Andrew's Churchyard
- ✓ Manage 8 parks, all with play equipment

Town Park
Moore Lane Park
Simpasture Park
St Oswald's Park

West Park
Aycliffe Village
Byerley Park
Woodham Park

- ✓ Provide additional play areas at Scott Place, School Aycliffe, Oakleaf Complex and Horndale
- ✓ Provide 6 football pitches, Mini-soccer and six-a-side pitches
- ✓ Run 2 pre-school play settings – with 'good' Ofsted ratings
- ✓ Provide and manage a wide range of special community events – Great Aycliffe Show, Fun-in-the-Parks, Santa Tours, Firework Display, Senior Citizens' Excursions, Christmas Lights
- ✓ Assist and support other event organisers – 10k race, 3k Fun Run, Remembrance Parade, Junior Cross Country, Annual Indoor Bowls Competition and Community Enhancement Awards
- ✓ A range of civic events
- ✓ Provision and maintenance of Aycliffe Angels Memorial Garden
- ✓ Maintenance of war memorial and flagpole
- ✓ Provide 214 allotment plots. 5 allotment sites with pigeon and poultry facilities
- ✓ Provide an environmental centre at Moore Lane
- ✓ Encourage interest in the environment of Great Aycliffe through the Environment Officer who works with the community and schools
- ✓ A Civic Pride Team
- ✓ Comment on planning applications
- ✓ Market administration
- ✓ Public seats in many locations
- ✓ Bus shelters with litter bins (not the ones with adverts)
- ✓ Grounds maintenance and environmental management

North Agnew Plantation	Cobbler's Hall Plantation
Woodham Burn	Simpasture Railway Walk
Great Aycliffe Way	Millfields/Bickford Terrace
Butterfly Meadow at Rail Halt	School Aycliffe Wetlands
Aycliffe Village Greens – custodians and maintenance	
- ✓ Youth Council

- ✓ Lorry park
- ✓ Crime prevention – the Town Council employs a team of Park Patrol Operatives
- ✓ Community Empowerment – Customer Panel, Consultation and Open Days
- ✓ Grants – small grants to local voluntary organisations

Great Aycliffe Town Council works with other Town Councils in the area to bring together local councils to share good practice, developing a strong voice for the local council sector in Durham.

6. Relationship with Durham County Council

Local government in England and Wales is provided by a network of primary and secondary councils. The primary council serving the Great Aycliffe area is Durham County Council.

Great Aycliffe is constituted as a town council and is therefore the tier of local government closest to the residents.

Housing in the Great Aycliffe area is provided by Livin a 'not for profit' housing association, as well as a number of registered social and private landlords and private houses.

Durham County Council is responsible for providing education, social services, fire and consumer protection, strategic and local planning, waste collection and disposal, economic development and leisure. Durham County Council has a number of Area Action Partnerships which try to provide a link between the residents and the County Council.

The Town Council **DOES NOT**:

- ✗ Empty household or business refuse bins
- ✗ Manage schools
- ✗ Manage the Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre
- ✗ Run economic development
- ✗ Manage the highways
- ✗ Manage the police, fire or ambulance
- ✗ Grant planning permission
- ✗ Run social services
- ✗ Run housing services
- ✗ Provide bus services

The Area Action Partnership has been in place since April 2009 – The Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership (GAMP). The Town Council makes every effort to play a significant role within this group and wherever possible reflect the wider needs of the area.

The top three priorities for GAMP have been identified as:

1. Activities for young people
2. Employment, enterprise, education and training
3. Support to the community and voluntary sector

The Town Council aims try to reflect these priorities and to deliver targets in line with the above whenever possible.

The Town Council is **NOT RESPONSIBLE** for the Town Centre, which is in private ownership.

7. The Civic Year

Councillor Mrs Val Raw was elected as Mayor of Great Aycliffe in May 2012 and her term of office lasted until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2013.



There are a number of formal civic engagements each year, which include:

- ✿ The Civic Service
- ✿ The Christmas Carol Service
- ✿ The Civic Ball
- ✿ Remembrance Sunday
- ✿ Mayor's 'At Home'

In addition to these, the Mayor attended a further 166 engagements. The Mayor was escorted by her Mayoress Mrs Barbara Clare or her Mayoress Mrs Pat Johnson.

The Mayor raised £6,511 for her nominated charities in her year of office. The Butterwick Hospice received £4,761, Combat Stress for Veterans returning from war received £1,550 and the two food banks on the Town received £100 each.

8. Election of Mayor

The Council elects a Town Mayor annually from amongst its members and the Mayor for 2013/14 is Councillor Mrs Barbara Clare, her Consort will be her husband Councillor John Clare. The Mayor has chosen the cardiothoracic unit at The James Cook University Hospital and the Food Bank based at St. Clare's Church as her charities for her term of office.

9. The Council, its Members and Establishment

9.1 The Council

Great Aycliffe Town Council is one of the largest Town Councils in the country, employing 71 full and part-time staff, with a planned revenue budget of £1,271,600 in 2013/14.

9.2 Members

The Council has a membership of 30, which is made up of 26 Labour and 4 Independents.

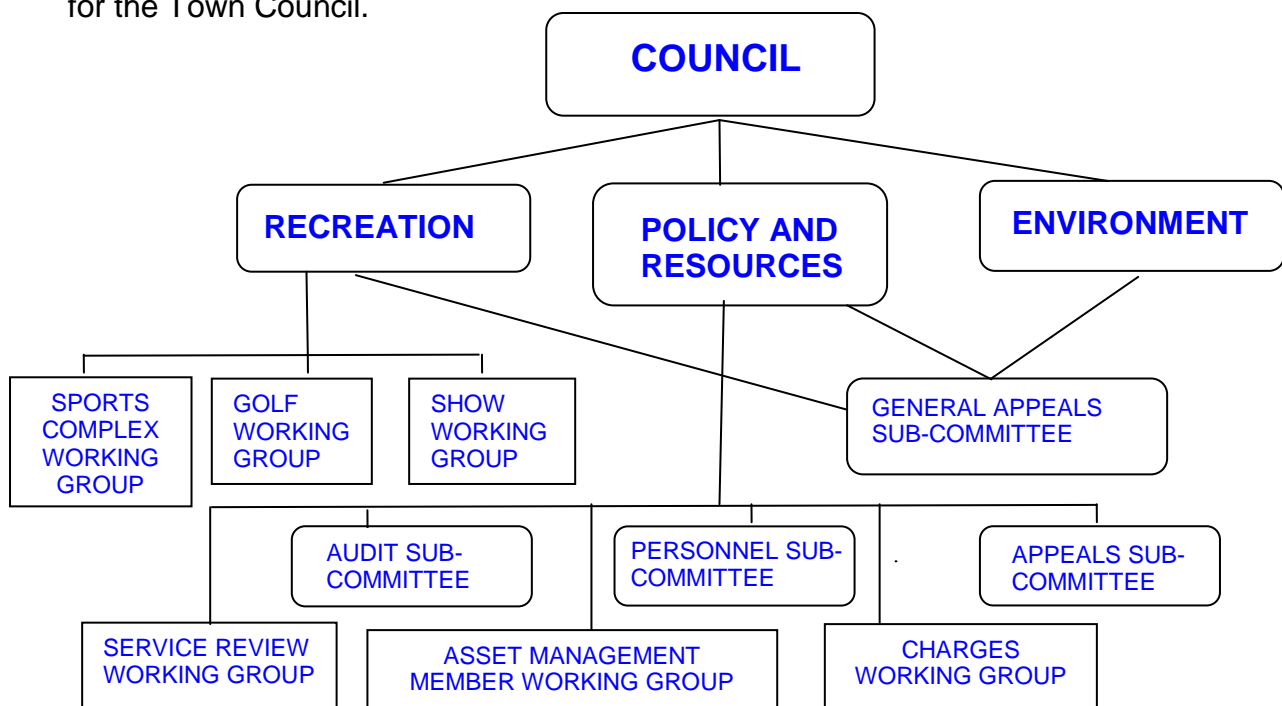
The area represented by the Town Council is divided into eight wards.

◆ Aycliffe Village	1 member
◆ Aycliffe Central	3 members
◆ Byerley Park, Horndale and Cobblers Hall	6 members
◆ Neville	2 members
◆ Shafto/St Mary's	4 members
◆ Simpasture	2 members
◆ Woodham	6 members
◆ West	6 members

The Council conducts its business through committees and the committee structure is set out below. The responsibilities of each committee are set out in the Council's Constitution and are reviewed annually.

9.3 Committee Structure

The Council originally considered its Constitution in 2005/06. The Constitution was reviewed, updated and adopted in May 2009 with a review undertaken each May. The Constitution is reviewed annually to ensure it is still relevant and fit for purpose for the Town Council.



The Local Authorities' (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003 came into force on 1 May 2003, which allowed the Council to pay each member a basic parish allowance.

After taking advice from the Independent Remuneration Panel of Sedgefield Borough Council, as was, in April 2005, the level of remuneration is currently set at £1,059.60 per annum for each member of the Town Council. This amount has not increased since that date.

9.4 Appointment of Committees

The three main committees are appointed at the Council's Annual General Meeting in May each year and a list of the dates for the committee meetings in 2013/14 is set out in the Council's newsletter.

Members for the various sub-committees, working groups and representatives on outside bodies are also appointed at the Council's Annual General Meeting.

9.5 Public Participation

Meetings of the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees are normally open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business or for some other special reason. Notices are placed in the press and on local notice boards informing the public of the dates and times. Agendas and reports are made available on the Friday afternoon preceding the meeting. These are available from the Council website or at the Council Offices. Agendas are displayed on council notice boards.

The public entrance to the council chamber will be open 30 minutes prior to the time of the meeting.

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in regard to any item of business included in the agenda of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees.

With the exception of the Annual and Extraordinary Council meetings, members of the public can submit a written question for the Council agenda as long as it is submitted 7 clear days before the Council meeting date. Questions should relate either to the powers and duties of the Council, or affect the Parish in some way. These will be entered on to a register which will be open to the public for inspection.

A period of up to 20 minutes has been allocated at each Council or Committee for this purpose. Each person may speak once for 3 minutes only in respect of business itemised on the agenda.

Questions **will not be received** by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances, which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister. A question will not be received by the Council, its Committees or specified Sub-Committees where the issue it concerns has been the subject of a decision of the Council in the last six months.

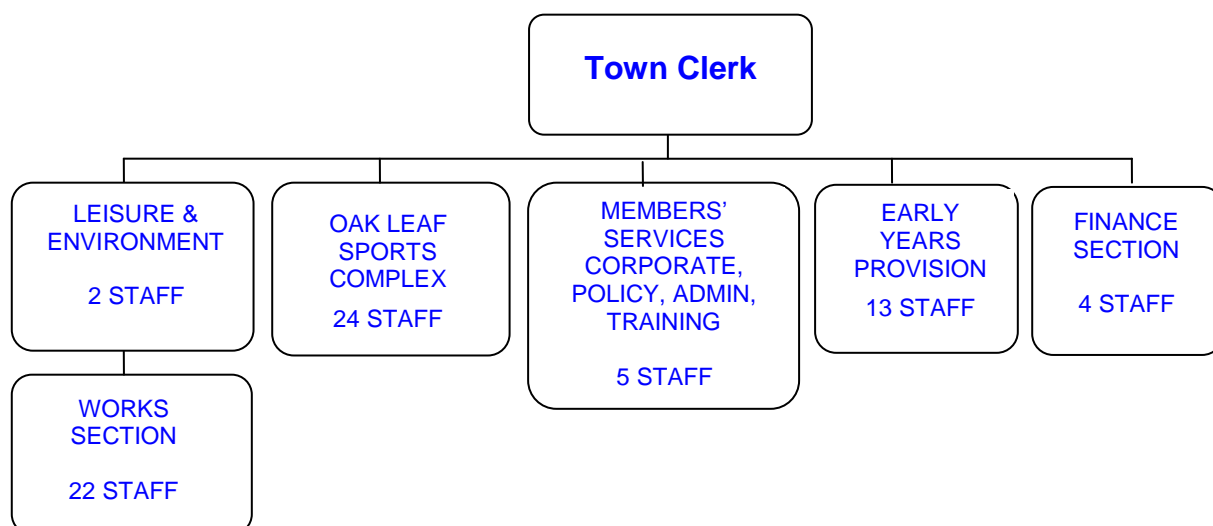
A verbal question or statement concerning an item on the agenda asked by a member of the public during a public participation session at a meeting will normally be taken into account during the subsequent discussion of that agenda item.

However, the Chairman may also direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an immediate oral response or to an employee for a written or oral response.

Written questions submitted to the Council meeting may be debated by members, however, no decision will be made solely on the comments and representations made under a public participation session. A matter raised that falls under the remit of a particular committee may be deferred to the next meeting of the relevant committee.

9.6 The Council's Establishment

The Council employs 49 full-time and 22 part-time employees.



9.7 The Senior Officers within the Council are:

Town Clerk	Andrew Bailey	info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Corporate & Policy Officer	Chrissy Walton	christine.walton@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Finance Manager	Dan Austin	daniel.austin@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Works Manager	Don Thompson	info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Complex Manager	Judith Thexton	judith.thexton@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Early Years Officer	Jackie Swainston	Jackie.swainston@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Senior Admin Officer	Christine Ryder	christine.ryder@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Environment Officer	Steven Cooper	steven.cooper@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Great Aycliffe Town Council occasionally employs casual staff, which do not form part of the formal staff establishment.

The Council also retains the services of consultants for HR matters, Health & Safety and Occupational Health services and other speciality services such as IT.

10. Target Setting

To maintain Quality Parish Council Status, there is an increased emphasis on reviewing our progress and performance. In response, progress on Council targets is discussed at Performance Management Group, which all service managers attend.

A report is given to the Council on a quarterly basis and the Customer Panel on a six monthly basis. The progress made during the year informs the development of targets for the following year.

Following the designation as a Quality Parish, the Council agreed a strategic mission statement in February 2005, which is that Great Aycliffe aims to be:

“A quality Council, working in partnership, listening to and speaking up for the community, to bring excellent services to Great Aycliffe.”

In support of this statement, the Council agreed a number of strategic aims, which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are still appropriate for the work and the people of Great Aycliffe.

The eight strategic aims are:-

1.	To provide good quality governance and management of the Council.
2.	To manage the council’s finances and assets in a responsible manner.
3.	To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities.
4.	To provide pre-school education as appropriate in Great Aycliffe.
5.	To contribute to the environmental improvement of Aycliffe by managing and developing parks, play areas and green spaces.
6.	To help and encourage partnership working to improve the services and facilities for the residents of Great Aycliffe.
7.	To encourage the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in local democracy.
8.	To research information and make the case for Great Aycliffe.

The Council sets a series of targets under each aim to ensure that the aims are met.

Every effort is made to ensure aims and targets are closely linked to medium term financial planning and the budget setting process and within the context of the Council’s Asset Management Plan. It is acknowledged, however, that some work matters and capital projects are generated from other areas as and when funding becomes available.

Additional funding is occasionally made available from others sources, giving rise to one-off projects that are not part of the aims and targets but are important to take advantage of. The Parish Performance Plan is therefore only a guide for the Council in deciding on spending priorities in future years and guides the medium term financial planning for the Council.

11. Council Targets 2012/13

As detailed in the Mayor's foreword, whenever possible targets are chosen from our satisfaction surveys, open days, attending community events, the Youth Council and the customer panel. We aim to take into account your views and act upon your priorities in order to improve our services for the people of Great Aycliffe.

We also strive to take into account the wider government agendas where possible, such as the Area Action Partnership and the general health improvement agenda.

The successful introduction of a comprehensive performance management framework a number of years ago ensures a consistent approach to performance management is applied across all services.

Quarterly monitoring of targets and regular progress reports to the Council are also undertaken. These improvements have been closely linked with the budget setting process and risk assessment.

The targets set out for the last financial year, under each aim, are attached as Appendix 1, including a statement of progress achieved against each target.

12. Council Targets 2013/14

Consultations, questionnaires and attending public meetings ensure we are able to reflect the needs of the residents when we set and prioritise the targets for the Council. The Council's budgets are developed in line with these targets. In addition, Members, the Customer Panel and Youth Council have also been consulted and an annual budget consultation is also held.

It is worth noting, once again, that the Town Centre is in private ownership and is **NOT** the responsibility of the Town Council. The Town Council has limited input into any meetings or progress made in this area, although we strive to have a larger impact.

The Town Council is hoping to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan over the next two years. With this in mind, and not wanting to overload residents with consultation, the Town Council has not undertaken a major consultation exercise. Therefore, the targets for 2013/14 have not changed substantially.

The list of targets for 2013/14 is attached as Appendix 2.

13. Service Areas

This section of the Plan explains the individual services we provide and the purpose of the service.

Because of the increasing emphasis on ensuring that all Great Aycliffe Town Council targets can demonstrate direct linkage to the overall aims of the Council, service areas have developed service plans and action plans which can clearly be linked back to the Council's aims.

As always, we invite the community's comments on the Plan and positively welcome constructive criticism, which will help us to improve the information we provide for you each year.

13.1 Corporate Services/Personnel

This service area covers corporate and cross-cutting issues which have an effect across the entire Council. These are policy, planning, performance management, risk management, administrative and committee services, training, and customer engagement.

This service area is responsible for the implementation of performance management arrangements and in particular for setting up systems for monitoring the Council's progress in relation to continuous improvement.

The **objectives** of this service are:

- ◆ To ensure timely and appropriate advice to the Council on matters affecting the strategic and corporate activities of the Council
- ◆ To ensure effective management and implementation of the Council's policies and priorities
- ◆ To be aware of, and ensure compliance with, all duties and obligations as laid down in Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and specific guidelines
- ◆ To provide timely and appropriate advice in relation to all employee/employer relations issues
- ◆ To provide advice in relation to training requirements for members and employees.

13.2 Finance Section

The Finance Section plays an important corporate role in ensuring that sound arrangements are put in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in use of the Council's financial resources and in ensuring that the Council provides value for money to council taxpayers.

The Finance Section is responsible for the overall financial management of the Council and also provides an important support service to the Council's front line service areas, and to Officers and Members of the Council.

The main responsibilities of the Finance Section are detailed below:-

- ◆ Updating and monitoring compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement
- ◆ Managing and developing the Council's accounting systems, internal controls, financial records, financial policies and procedures
- ◆ Reporting on the Council's financial performance
- ◆ Providing financial information to Members and Officers including the regular reporting of budgetary control during the year
- ◆ Preparing the annual Revenue Budget and Capital Programme
- ◆ Preparing the Medium Term Financial Plan
- ◆ Preparing the annual Statement of Accounts
- ◆ Preparing the Annual Governance Statement
- ◆ Treasury Management including the maintenance of the Treasury Management Code of Practice and the management of the Council's cash flow, loans and investments
- ◆ Managing an effective payroll service
- ◆ Managing an effective accounts payable and receivable function to ensure that all invoices are raised and paid promptly
- ◆ Manage an effective income collection and banking system to ensure that all monies receivable by the Council are collected and banked promptly
- ◆ Insurance arrangements
- ◆ Banking arrangements
- ◆ Taxation
- ◆ Managing an effective Internal Audit service; and
- ◆ Provision of financial advice and training

13.3 Members/Civic Services

This service area covers principally the work undertaken by the Mayor's Secretary and the general administration office staff in supporting the Mayor during their year of office.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To support the Mayor in their year of office

- ◆ To ensure that proper conventions and protocols are observed at all times
- ◆ To organise successfully the necessary civic functions agreed annually by the Council
- ◆ To manage the Members' Allowances Scheme.

13.4 Administration

The Administration Section of the Council produces all minutes and agendas and provides support to members and service areas.

The **objectives** of the Administration function are:

- ◆ To provide effective and efficient typing, administration and reception services to members, officers and to the public in relation to the Council's functions
- ◆ To provide the necessary support at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

13.5 Pre-School Learning Centres

The Council's aim is to provide a high quality service, where every child feels safe, is happy and has fun, in safe and secure learning environments in two locations within its administrative area.

Our standards are high and each Pre-school has received a successful inspection from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), each receiving a 'good' grading at their last inspection.

To enable us to develop and maintain these standards we have an excellent ratio of well-trained and motivated staff, who work with the children on a daily basis.

The work of the Pre-schools is managed by the Council's Early Years Officer, who ensures the smooth running of the Pre-Schools in accordance with Council Policy and current legislation.

The continual training of the staff is vital to the operation of the Pre-Schools, and the Council ensures that sufficient resources are available to ensure that high standards continue to be achieved.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To ensure the Pre-schools are fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children, particularly those that arise from their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability.

- ◆ To ensure that quality learning experiences are provided for the children, appropriate to their stage of development
- ◆ To provide the Early Years Foundation Stage and meet the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements
- ◆ To ensure that the current high standards within the Pre-schools are developed further
- ◆ To ensure that appropriate training is identified and provided for all staff in all aspects for the provision of the service
- ◆ To ensure effective liaison and joint working with other organisations, particularly with Sure Start County Durham, who have an interest in the provision of early years learning
- ◆ To seek to secure, for the benefit of the service, assistance, resources and contributions towards its operation
- ◆ To keep the service under review and to make appropriate recommendations.

13.6 Works and Environment Section

The Works and Environment Section provides a range of what might be called 'grounds maintenance' services, including grass-cutting, floral bedding displays, hard and soft landscaping, tree maintenance and planting, play equipment maintenance and installation, litter-picking, supervision of park activities, maintenance of parks, playing fields, woodlands, nature areas, open spaces and amenity areas and the preparation of graves.

In addition, the Section carries out the inspection and maintenance of Town Council owned buildings and property, and inspects and maintains Town Council owned footpaths, roads, cemeteries, bridges, public seats and bus shelters.

The Works and Environment Section provide a range of skilled services to the Council. These services include:

- ◆ Grass cutting
- ◆ Design, planting and maintenance of annual floral bedding displays
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of amenity trees
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of woodlands
- ◆ Management and maintenance of shrub beds and perennial borders
- ◆ Management, inspection, maintenance and renewal of play equipment and play areas

- ◆ Operational management and maintenance of the Oakleaf Golf Course and Driving Range
- ◆ Management, associated record keeping, burial service and maintenance of two cemeteries
- ◆ Maintenance and burial service of Aycliffe Village Churchyard
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of allotment sites
- ◆ Management, inspection and maintenance of 8 parks
- ◆ Maintenance and inspection of Council buildings and property
- ◆ Maintenance and inspection of Council roads and footpaths
- ◆ Maintenance and inspection of bus shelters, litter bins and public seating
- ◆ Provide expertise and assistance in setting up and staging special events
- ◆ Management, setting up, inspection and maintenance of Christmas lighting display
- ◆ Management of the community enhancement award scheme
- ◆ Work in partnership with other agencies to enhance and improve other amenity areas not under the ownership of Great Aycliffe Town Council
- ◆ Provide and manage a park patrol service
- ◆ Provide an 'out of hours' service for emergency call outs in relation to security or health and safety issues
- ◆ Supply and maintain sufficient plant, vehicles and equipment required to undertake the above services
- ◆ To carry out operational duties in a safe manner by employing safe working practices and undertaking risk assessments to ensure the health and safety and welfare of staff and the general public
- ◆ To work with schools to encourage environmental awareness
- ◆ To manage and maintain wild flower areas and wetlands.

The Works and Environment Service charges are allocated across other service areas' budget headings as appropriate and this reflects the variety and range of the work which the Section undertakes.

The **objectives** of the Section therefore need to reflect the variety of services provision and are:

- ◆ To ensure adequate provision and management of well-maintained and accessible environmental areas, allotments, cemeteries, parks and play areas, which meet the needs of all the community in a cost effective, efficient and timely manner.

13.7 Parks and Play Areas

We currently manage and maintain 8 parks, all of which have play equipment.

The 8 parks are:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| ◆ Town Park | ◆ Moore Lane |
| ◆ Woodham | ◆ West Park |
| ◆ St Oswald's | ◆ Horndale |
| ◆ Simpasture | ◆ Byerley Park |

We also provide and maintain play areas at Aycliffe Village, School Aycliffe, Scott Place and the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

The Works and Environment Section carry out maintenance and upkeep of the parks and the play equipment in them and also employs a Park Patrol Service to carry out regular patrols of these areas to prevent anti-social behaviour and any misuse of the facilities. Regular inspections are undertaken of play equipment to ensure that it is safe.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To maintain the Council's parks and play equipment in order to provide a clean, safe environment for the community to use
- ◆ To carry out a phased programme of replacing play equipment in the Council's parks.

13.8 Playing Pitches

The Council provides six permanent football pitches for the use of the community and 8 teams use these during each football season. The football pitches are located at:

- ◆ Oakleaf Sports Complex
- ◆ Simpasture Park
- ◆ Moore Lane Park

In addition, we provide mini-soccer facilities at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex fields.

Our seasonal charges for the pitches range from £350 to £495, depending on location and the facilities provided. Junior team fees are charged two thirds of the adult fees.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To seek to provide sufficient playing pitches to meet the demand from the community

- ◆ To ensure that the pitches provided by the Council are maintained to an acceptable standard
- ◆ To liaise with and work in partnership with other appropriate bodies to secure the availability of suitable playing pitches and to consult as necessary with users
- ◆ To keep under review the charging policy for the use of playing pitches.

13.9 Outside Events

The Council organises several events each year for its community. This service continues to be popular, with many residents enjoying the various events throughout the year.

There is input to this service area from a number of staff, principally the Leisure Manager, the Works Manager and the Leisure and Environment Assistant.

We continually seek to work in partnership with other bodies in the organisation and staffing of outside events.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To organise and/or stage outside events in accordance with the Council's priorities
- ◆ To ensure that the organisation of each event complies with all statutory regulations and requirements
- ◆ To continually survey the community in relation to its satisfaction with such events and to respond to the results of such surveys
- ◆ To actively seek to work in partnership with other appropriate organisations in staging or organising outside events.

13.10 Allotments

The Council provides and supervises five allotment sites. These are located at Aycliffe Village, Finchale Road, Clarence Chare, Byerley Park and St Oswald's Park. There are a total of 211 allotments and fees range from £23.00 for a half plot to £35.50 for a full plot.

We also provide 9 pigeon sites at St. Oswald's and 5 poultry sites at Clarence Chare.

At the inaugural Allotment Tenants Annual Meeting in 2001 and again in February 2010, tenants were asked if they would like to form an allotments association and manage the sites themselves.

The tenants decided that they wanted the Council to manage the sites and agreed to an 'Allotments Charter', which sets out the Council's future commitment to the allotments and also the maintenance standards we intend to achieve and maintain at the sites.

An annual meeting, which is open to all allotment tenants, ensures that the Charter's standards are adhered to.

As a Council we continue to explore new initiatives to reduce green waste and have produced a Good Composting Guide, which has been issued to all tenants.

New allotment tenants are also provided with an Allotment Tenants Handbook, which contains useful information and tips on how to get started.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To provide sufficient allotment plots to meet the demand for them
- ◆ To maintain all allotment sites up to the standards set out in the Council's Allotments Charter and tenancy agreement
- ◆ To liaise with allotment holders and their representatives on a regular basis
- ◆ To ensure that the obligations of the allotment holders under the Allotments Charter are carried out.

13.11 Cemeteries and Burials

The Town Council is the burial authority and is responsible for the following facilities:

- ◆ Stephenson Way Cemetery
- ◆ West Cemetery

Stephenson Way Cemetery was opened for interments in 1963 and West Cemetery in 2000.

Burial spaces are available at both cemeteries. However, at Stephenson Way this is now restricted to reserved and cremated remains plots as the cemetery nears full capacity.

In addition, the Council carries out the burial function at Aycliffe Village Churchyard and also maintains the church grounds. The burial function is undertaken on a rechargeable basis.

The Council works hard to ensure that not only does it provide high quality services, delivered in a professional and sympathetic manner, but that these standards are also observed by funeral directors and stonemasons when carrying out duties in the cemeteries.

To this end, the Council introduced an approval scheme for stonemasons. Only stonemasons on the approved list are allowed to operate in the Council's

cemeteries. Before being accepted on the approved list, stonemasons must provide references from other local authorities regarding standards of workmanship and also produce health and safety documentation and public liability insurance certificates.

In an effort to help bereaved families through a difficult time in their lives, the Council has also produced a reader-friendly booklet, which is issued to grant holders, detailing various aspects of cemetery procedures.

The **objectives** of this service area are:

- ◆ To provide facilities for burials.
- ◆ To provide and manage attractive and well-maintained cemeteries for parishioners and non-parishioners alike
- ◆ To ensure that liaison with undertakers, stonemasons, ministers and the bereaved, and the administration of the service are efficient, professional and sympathetic at all times.

13.12 Street Equipment

This service area relates to the maintenance of street equipment such as bus shelters, dog bins, litter bins, public seats and parish footway lighting.

The Town Council provides most of the bus shelters within the parish (with the exception of the Adshel style shelters located on Woodham Way, Williamfield Way, Burnhill Way and the Industrial Estate) and public seating.

We also provide some footpath lighting, dog bins and litter bins on areas for which we have responsibility. Although, Durham County Council is responsible for the emptying of all dog bins and provide most dog and litter bins.

The objectives of this service area are:

- ◆ To keep under review the demand/requirements for additional street equipment
- ◆ To ensure that existing equipment is maintained in a clean and safe condition
- ◆ To respond effectively to remove graffiti from premises and property for which the Council has responsibility.

13.13 Environment

The Environment Officer helps raise environmental awareness within the Great Aycliffe area and two multi skilled 'Town Pride' operatives enable the Town Council to deal with urgent and environmental issues.

In addition, the Environment Officer works with other external bodies such as the local schools, the Police and Youth Offending Service to raise awareness about the environment, climate change and developing a sense of pride in our local area. The Environment Officer is also responsible for the Environment (Eco) Centre based in Moore Lane Pavilion.

The **objectives** of this service are:

- ◆ To create a greater understanding of the natural environment around Great Aycliffe
- ◆ To provide opportunities for members of the public to become more involved in their towns practical environmental management
- ◆ To develop and maintain strategic environmental policies for Great Aycliffe Town Council
- ◆ To identify suitable conservation and environmental works for the Town Pride Team and Volunteers on natural green areas
- ◆ To examine opportunities to improve the green spaces taken over from Durham County Council and bring them in line with Town Council standards.

13.14 Sports Complex

The Oak Leaf Sports Complex is a family friendly facility, open 7 days each week from 9am until 11pm. We continue to provide facilities for the following sports: five-a-side football, badminton, netball and table tennis within the main sports hall. The Complex also provides the Town's only squash courts and indoor bowls facility.

The bar/catering function provides an excellent facility and a range of reasonably priced meals. The function room can cater for 80 users and is able to provide an excellent venue for a number of leisure activities such as private functions, meetings, bridge, pilates and yoga classes. We employ 24 staff within the Complex, supported by a pool of casual and coaching staff.

The **objectives** for this service area are:

- ◆ To provide and maintain a variety of sporting activities commensurate with the size and capability of the Complex and in accordance with the Council's priorities
- ◆ To be flexible in our approach to the facilities provided
- ◆ To provide and maintain a bar/catering facility
- ◆ To ensure that an efficient and effective booking service is operated for those wishing to use the facilities
- ◆ To seek to maintain or increase levels of usage for each of the activities undertaken

- ◆ To be alert to new initiatives and provide appropriate and timely advice to the Council in relation to the same.

13.15 Golf Course and Driving Range

The Council provides an 18-hole Golf Course and an 18-bay Driving Range. There is involvement from a number of different sections in the operation of both.

The golf shop and driving range is staffed by a Golf Professional who is under a management contract with the Town Council, whose responsibilities are:

- ◆ To collect fees for the Course and Driving Range
- ◆ To operate the Driving Range and to collect the range balls
- ◆ To take tee reservations and to administer party bookings
- ◆ To provide a golf shop with associated professional services.

The Works and Environment Section employ green-keeping specialists who are dedicated to maintaining the course to a high standard.

The **objectives** in relation to these two facilities are:

- ◆ To keep under review the management arrangements for the two facilities
- ◆ To ensure that there is an opportunity within the Golf Working Group for users to make their views known on the operation of the facilities
- ◆ To continue to work with the Oak Leaf Golf Club
- ◆ To provide a warden service for the Course
- ◆ To promote and support junior golf in all appropriate ways
- ◆ To keep the course layout under review, with the intention of all-year-round 18-hole provision
- ◆ To maintain the Golf Course to an acceptable standard.

13.16 Capital Projects

The Council reviews its programme of proposed capital projects on an annual basis.

Capital projects are those that relate to significant one off investment in the Council's fixed assets such as its buildings, vehicles and machinery. Some represent one-off proposals, others a continuing programme of improvements in a particular area.

Capital Programme Budgets are prepared annually, based on the future capital investment requirements set out in the Council's Asset Management Plan. Indicative five year capital budgets are also prepared and included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Asset Management Plan covers a ten year period and ensures that the Council takes a planned approach to the long term maintenance of its assets. It also ensures that capital projects are undertaken within the context of the Council's strategic aims and targets set out within this Parish Performance Plan.

The Capital Programme Budgets provide mainly for planned maintenance of the Council's buildings as well as the replacement of vehicles and major plant and machinery, in line with Asset Management Plan priorities.

Due to the changes in the Town Council's financial situation and the continued need to make savings on the budget, the 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget is very limited and provides for the following main projects:-

- ◆ various asset management works at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex, this is an on-going commitment,
- ◆ computer hardware and software upgrades,
- ◆ play area safety surface and footpath surface repairs.

The main capital works completed in 2012/13 are listed below:-

- ◆ various asset management works at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex,
- ◆ computer hardware and software upgrades,
- ◆ roofing works to the Oak Leaf Sports Complex and Stephenson Way Cemetery,
- ◆ improving and tarmacking the running track at School Aycliffe fields,

Full details are provided in the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts.

14. Value for Money

Although the previous best value legislative requirements have been removed from Town and Parish Councils, and to date no further guidance has been released, the Town Council considers it vital to continue to deliver services under the ethos of best value and providing value for money to the local tax payers.

The Town Council consults its community on a regular basis from a town wide satisfaction survey undertaken every three years to consult on specific projects and the annual budget consultation. It undertakes an annual review of its functions, measures performance on a quarterly basis and produces a number of strategic documents, including the Medium Term Financial Plan, which are audited by an independent external auditor.

As a Quality Council, Great Aycliffe Town Council will continue to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which it exercises its functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Council, will continue to undertake service reviews which have member involvement. The Service Review Working Group is charged with the following responsibilities:

- ◆ To undertake reviews of services as determined by the Council from time to time
- ◆ To consider and make recommendations to the appropriate committee regarding all aspects of value for money for that service.

15. Consultation

We will continue to be flexible in our approach to consultation but our methods of consultation will be realistic in terms of cost and available resources. The Council continues to have a regular programme for surveying the users of our services, and we continue to publish a quarterly newsletter.

Surveys are undertaken each year for

- ◆ Users of the Oakleaf Sports Complex,
- ◆ Pensioners using the trips provided by the Council,

The allotment holders are surveyed every two years, and other ad-hoc surveys are undertaken as and when required.

A Customer Panel was set up in August 2007. The panel is involved in the setting of council targets and is consulted on a range of matters including the budget setting process and the annual budget consultation.

A Youth Council was set up in November 2008 who is also consulted on a range of matters. In addition the Youth Council has been given a devolved budget to help deliver specific projects highlighted by the young people of the Great Aycliffe area.

The Town Council attends community events to highlight the services it provides and gather residents view.

15.1 Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan

The development of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan will ensure that the residents of Great Aycliffe are engaged in the process and consulted on a wide range of issues. The Neighbourhood Planning process is likely to last at least 2 years.

Although the Neighbourhood Plan will be a planning document with a strategic vision for Great Aycliffe covering the next 20 years, the Town Council recognises that not all concerns that will be discussed during the community engagement and consultation will be matters for the Neighbourhood Plan. Wherever possible these non-planning matters will be used as information for the next Parish Performance Plan and Town Council targets, if applicable.

16. Representation

Organisations based on the Town may request Members of the Town Council to attend their meetings thereby providing a link between the two, where information and ideas can be shared for the benefit of all.

The Council nominates representatives annually to these organisations and the current list of outside bodies and their representatives are:

- a) Aycliffe Youth Council
Councillors JD Clare, T Twissell, D Summers and the Corporate and Policy Officer.
- b) County Durham Association of Local Councils
Councillors RS Fleming (Leader), JD Clare (Deputy Leader) and the Town Clerk.
- c) Citizens' Advice Bureau
Vacant
- d) Woodham Village Community Association
Councillors N Collinson and K Henderson
- e) Great Aycliffe and Middridge A.A.P. Local Council's Committee
Councillors RS Fleming (Leader) and B Hall and the Town Clerk.
- f) Larger Local Councils' Forum
Councillors RS Fleming (Leader), JD Clare (Deputy Leader) and the Town Clerk.
- g) Lifelong Learning Committee
Councillors J Clark, Mrs S Haigh and B Blenkinsopp.
- h) Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre
Councillor D Summers
- i) Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society
Councillors I Gray and D Summers
- j) Sedgefield Health Network
Councillor N Collinson
- k) Friends of Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve
Councillor I Gray

17. A Financial Overview

This section of the Plan sets out a summary of the Council's finances.

This includes details of the Council's spending plans for 2013/14, as represented by the Revenue and Capital Budgets, and explains how these will be funded by the Council Tax payers of the Parish via the Town Council Precept.

There is also a summary of the Council's financial performance in 2012/13, details of the outcome of the annual audit inspection, as well as a look ahead to the future.

17.1 2013/14 Revenue Budget

The Council must set a Revenue Budget every year and the budget is set in advance of the following year. The Council's financial year runs from 1st April to 31st March.

The Revenue Budget is an estimate of the resources that the Council will require to fund all of the services that it provides, achieve its strategic aims and objectives and address community and local taxpayer needs and priorities.

The Revenue Budget funds the day to day running costs of the Council's services, and the net cost, after deducting any income receivable from fees and charges and other funding, is met from the Town Council Precept.

The Town Council Precept is the amount that the Council has estimated it will require to be raised from the tax payers of Great Aycliffe to fund the services that it provides, and is the figure on which the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax bill is calculated.

The Revenue Budget is prepared in line with the overall financial strategy and key principles set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The 2013/14 Revenue Budget was developed on the principle of protecting front line services and avoiding job losses while striving to freeze the Town Council Tax for a fourth year in a row.

The setting of the Revenue Budget needed to take into account the likely changes in costs and income between the two years.

Additional budget provision needed to be made for the following:-

- An assumed 1% officer pay award
- A number of staff joining the local government pension scheme
- Inflation on running costs
- Significant falls in leisure income
- The withdrawal of double taxation grant by DCC
- An increase to the contingency sum

However, this was offset, in full, by a number of savings and budget reductions:-

- The 2012/13 officer pay freeze
- Re-tendered insurance and brewery contracts
- Additional planting budget set aside to take over DCC flower beds removed
- Sports complex staffing restructure
- Reduced audit fees and CCTV running costs
- Higher than expected returns from the solar panel system
- Various other budget reductions and efficiency savings

However, the Council was then faced with the task of meeting a further funding shortfall created by the localisation of support for council tax.

This issue led to loss in the tax raising capacity of the Council of over £352,800. Whilst this was partly offset by a Government Grant of £296,150, it still left the Council facing a net shortfall of £56,650 in the 2013/14 Revenue Budget.

This shortfall was met through a combination of further budget reductions, efficiency savings and deletion of vacant staffing posts.

This meant that the Council was able to fund the shortfall and set a 2013/14 Revenue Budget that delivered the aim of freezing in the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax for a fourth year in a row.

In overall terms, the Council's 2013/14 Precept reduced by £352,800 from £1,624,400 to £1,271,600, reflecting the loss in tax raising capacity following the localisation of support for council tax, the inclusion of the new grant which partly offsets this loss, and the budget reductions made to balance the budget.

It is important to stress that the savings required to balance the Revenue Budget were achieved without the need to make cuts to front line services or staffing levels, although, as highlighted above, vacant staffing posts did need to be deleted.

The 2013/14 Revenue Budget includes a £25,000 contingency sum which provides some protection against any further spending pressures or funding cuts, while the budget also maintains the annual £50,000 contribution to capital reserves.

The 2013/14 Budget document provides more background to the budget setting process and more detail in terms of the budgets for individual service areas. The Budget document can be viewed at the Council Offices or on the Council website.

The following table provides a summary of the Council's 2013/14 spending plans:-

2013/14 Revenue Budget Summary

Service Area	2013/14 Budget £
Members and Civic Expenses	70,800
Corporate Management, Finance and Administration	453,850
Capital Financing Charges	30,150
Pre Schools	235,150
Community Events	150,950
Sports Complex	624,700
Golf Course and Driving Range	228,550
Environment and Open Spaces	120,000
Parks, Sports Pitches and Play Areas	239,850
Works and Depot	133,600
Street Equipment	8,000
Cemeteries	70,600
Allotments	14,750
Contingency Sum	25,000
Total Cost of Running Town Council Services	2,405,950
One Off Capital Investment in Council Assets	125,000
Contribution to Capital Reserves	50,000
Total Planned Spending	2,580,950
Less Income	
LCTSS Grant	(296,150)
Pre-Schools Funding and Fees	(208,000)
Sports Complex Fees and Charges	(419,150)
Golf Course and Driving Range Fees and Charges	(166,900)
Cemeteries and Allotments Fees and Charges	(26,400)
Feed In Tariff Income from Solar Panels	(12,000)
Other Income	(26,750)
Investment Income	(4,000)
Total Income	(1,159,350)
Less Use of Council Balances to fund Capital Budget	(125,000)
Less Use of Council Balances to fund 2013 Election	(25,000)
Net Budget Requirement / Council Precept	1,271,600

17.2 2013/14 Council Tax

The Town Council Tax is calculated using the Tax Base for the Parish which is the total number of chargeable properties in the area for council tax purposes, and is calculated by Durham County Council as the billing authority.

The Council Tax Base reduced by over 20% from 7,959 properties to 6,230 properties following the localisation of support for council tax, reflecting the inclusion of council tax benefits payments in the calculation.

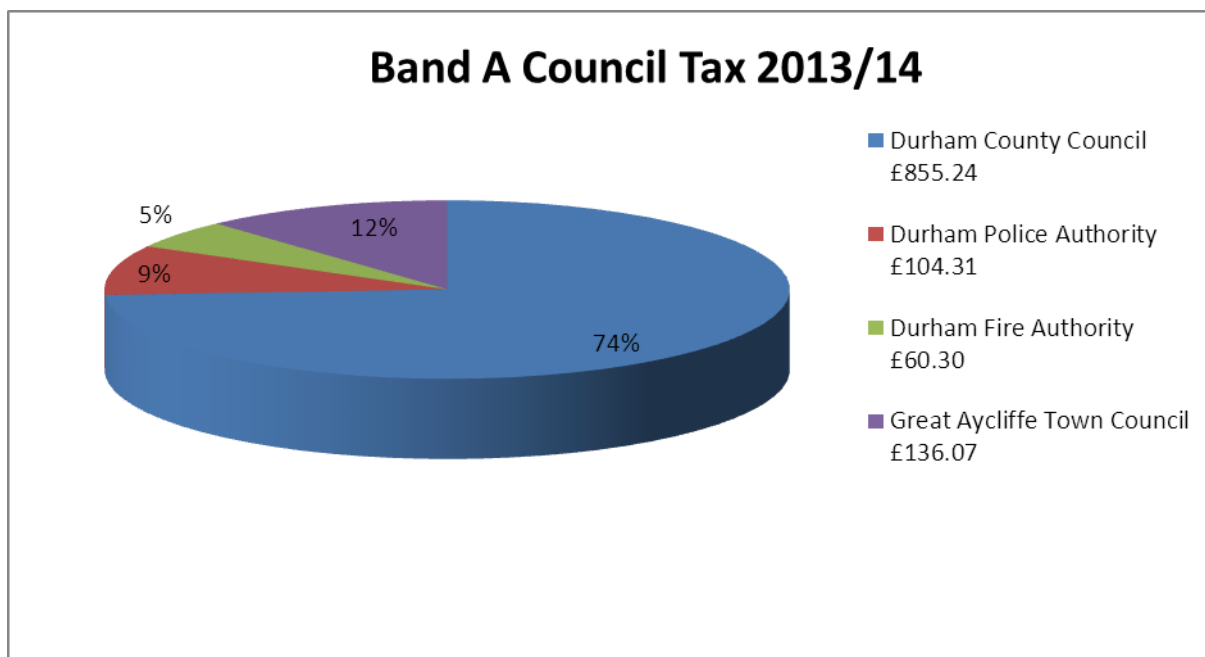
However, by reducing the Council Precept to £1,271,600, the impact of this reduction has been offset and the need to increase the Town Council Tax has been avoided.

As a result, the Council is pleased to report that a freeze in the level of Town Council Tax has been achieved for 2013/14.

This follows on from the small reduction in Council Tax in 2010/11 and the freezes in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and is the fourth year now that the council tax has not been increased. The Council hopes that this will make a small contribution at least towards easing the burden on local tax payers during these difficult economic times.

The 2013/14 Council Tax at Valuation Band D will therefore remain at £204.10 per year while the **Council Tax Valuation Band A**, which is the band at which the majority of properties in Great Aycliffe are valued, **will remain at £136.07 per year or £2.62 per week.**

A breakdown of the 2013/14 Council Tax is shown below demonstrating that only **12p in every £1 of the total Council Tax comes to the Town Council:-**



17.3 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget

The Capital Programme Budget provides for major one off investment in Council and community assets such as buildings, play areas, vehicles and machinery.

The prudent levels of Earmarked Capital Reserves currently held will allow the Council to maintain the required level of capital investment in its assets in 2013/14 in order to continue to deliver the Asset Management Plan.

However, bearing in mind the change in the Council's financial situation following the localisation of support for council tax, it was considered prudent to work on a principle of only undertaking essential capital projects until the Council has more certainty over its future funding arrangements.

The **2013/14 Capital Programme Budget** has therefore been set at a lower level than in recent years at **£125,000** and includes provision for essential building works, replacement machinery and office equipment, footpath and safety surface repairs and refurbishment of bus shelters.

In addition, **£62,250** has been **carried forward from 2012/13** in respect of on-going projects such as the disabled access works at the sports complex, the upgrade of computer servers and equipment and golf irrigation system repairs.

The Capital Programme Budget will be funded in full from the Council's Earmarked Capital Reserves, as there is not currently expected to be any external capital grants and contributions available to support the Council's spending plans, and the Council does not need to undertake further borrowing at the present time.

17.4 Council Balances and Reserves

The Council's Balances and Earmarked Reserves stood at just under **£950,000 at the end of March 2013**.

This is significantly better than originally anticipated in the Medium Term Financial Plan and is as a result of the higher than expected savings on the 2012/13 Revenue Budget and lower than expected outturn on the 2012/13 Capital Programme.

After accounting for the funding of the 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget and a number of on-going revenue and capital budget commitments from 2012/13, as well as the cost of the 2013 Elections, it is likely that the Council will have just over **£750,000 in Balances and Reserves at the end of the 2013/14 financial year**.

However this balance would be higher if savings continue to be achieved on the Revenue Budget, as they have been in recent years. This is considered to be an adequate level of reserves to support future capital spending commitments for the foreseeable future and to provide some protection against future spending commitments and possible cuts to funding.

17.5 2011/12 and 2012/13 Revenue Spending

A summary of the Council's actual expenditure in 2011/12 and 2012/13 in running its various services, and how this expenditure was funded is detailed below:-

2011/12 £	Service Area	2012/13 £
70,119	Members and Civic Expenses	68,670
401,443	Corporate Management, Finance and Administration	413,560
29,768	Capital Financing Charges	30,184
228,521	Pre Schools	232,968
141,617	Community Events	140,409
730,367	Sports Complex	702,778
275,625	Golf Course and Driving Range	274,390
341,265	Parks, Sports Pitches and Play Areas	321,138
311,134	Environment, Works and Street Equipment	318,284
71,945	Cemeteries	79,666
22,656	Allotments	18,057
-	Contingency Sum	3,933
2,624,460	Total Cost of Running Council Services	2,604,037

	Less Income	
(39,075)	Grants	(38,475)
(222,412)	Pre Schools Funding and Fees	(251,345)
(437,827)	Sports Complex Fees and Charges	(424,563)
(196,294)	Golf Course and Driving Range Fees and Charges	(152,110)
(18,267)	Cemeteries Fees	(18,575)
(5,419)	Allotments Rents	(6,425)
(43,163)	Other Fees and Charges	(37,725)
(3,727)	Investment Income	(4,592)
(966,184)	Total Income	(933,810)
(364,050)	Exclusion of Depreciation Charges	(359,843)
1,294,226	Actual Net Cost of Council Services	1,310,384
322,624	Contribution to Council Balances / Savings	314,016
1,616,850	Council Precept / Council Tax	1,624,400

The financial position and spending of the Council is continuously monitored and controlled in order to help achieve the most efficient use of public resources and, as can be seen above, this prudent management of the Council's spending has resulted in significant savings being achieved in both 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Spending in 2012/13 was £315,000 or nearly 20% under the level of Precept.

This is made up of the inclusion in the Revenue Budget of a £50,000 contribution to Earmarked Capital Reserves, as well as substantial efficiency savings and under spending on the Revenue Budget of over £250,000.

There were a number of reasons for the savings on the Revenue Budget including the unused contingency sum, the 2012/13 pay freeze, a restructure of staffing hours at the Sports Complex, high pre-school funding due to both settings being full all year, savings on new insurance contract, the neighbourhood plan not being taken forward and an officer not being appointed, higher than expected returns from the solar panel system, savings on external audit fees, CCTV running costs not being billed due to the cameras out of operation all year, and the County Council flower beds not being taken over, although efficiency savings were achieved across all service areas.

However these savings were partly offset by shortfalls in income totalling nearly £70,000 in relation to the sports complex bar and catering operations, the golf course and driving range, and the cemeteries.

All savings achieved on the Revenue Budget have been set aside in the Council's Earmarked Reserves to support future spending commitments and to provide for further investment in Council and community assets for the benefit of the tax payers of Great Aycliffe over the coming years.

17.6 2011/12 and 2012/13 Capital Spending

A summary of the Council's capital investment in Council and community assets in 2011/12 and 2012/13, and how this expenditure was funded is detailed below:-

2011/12 £	Investment Area	2012/13 £
47,009	Council Buildings Works	71,105
61,475	Council Offices Solar Panels	10,183
40,000	Sports and Golf Complex Access Road	-
-	Aycliffe Show Field Improvements	46,585
10,000	Replacement Vehicles and Machinery	25,500
33,225	Computers, Servers and Website	-
85,788	Parks and Play Areas Investment	61,008
46,760	Allotments and Environmental Initiatives	2,520
14,245	Other Capital Investment	19,681
338,502	Total Capital Investment	236,582
	Funded by:-	
35,785	Capital Contributions	61,076
302,717	Use of Council Balances	175,506
338,502	Funding of Capital Investment	236,582

Capital investment in Council and community assets has totalled nearly £2 million over the six year term of the Council since 2007.

This investment has included the installation of numerous new play areas and multi-use games areas across the town, the opening of the Environment Centre at Moore Lane, disabled access works, planned maintenance works to public buildings and replacement vehicles, machinery and equipment.

It is also important to note that the Council has actively sought external grant funding to support its capital investment in the town in recent years, securing over £500,000 from funds such as the Local Improvement Programme and Area Action Partnership budgets.

17.7 Annual Audit Report

The Council is subject to an annual external inspection by the Audit Commission and the overall opinion on the overall financial standing of the Council is set out in an Annual Audit Letter. The Audit Commission looked at three main areas in 2012/13:-

5. Statement of Accounts
6. Annual Governance Statement
7. Value for Money (Use of Resources Assessment)

The Council is pleased to report that it has again received a clean bill of health on all aspects of the audit inspection.

This means that the Audit Commission considers that:-

- the Council's Statement of Accounts presents fairly its financial position;
- it is well managed and governed with sound strategies, policies, procedures, systems and internal controls;
- its finances are in good order;
- it delivers economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public money;
- it delivers value for money services to the local community.

This was a very positive Audit Report for the Council and the Audit Commission commended the Council for the progress it has made over the last few years.

This is an excellent achievement and has been achieved as a result of the hard work and commitment of all councillors, management and staff.

It has also been agreed by the Council that it will continue to seek a greater level of external audit in 2013/14 despite a change in legislation which would allow the Council to move to a limited assurance audit regime.

As one of the largest Town Councils in the country and which spends nearly £3 million of local tax payers' money each year, it felt it needed to continue to manage its finances to a higher standard and to seek a greater level of assurance from external auditors in order to demonstrate efficient use of public money.

The 2012/13 Audit Letter is due to be received later in the year, following the completion of the 2012/13 Audit. The Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter to the Council for 2011/12 and the 2011/12 Statement of Accounts are available to view at the Council Offices or on the Council's website.

17.8 Looking Ahead / Medium Term Financial Plan

The Council is currently in the process of preparing its Medium Term Financial Plan for the five year period 2013/14 to 2017/18.

The production of a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) helps the Council take a strategic approach to its financial planning and provides the link between the Council's strategic aims and the priorities of the local community, as set out in this Parish Performance Plan, and the resources that are likely to be available to fund the delivery and achievement of these over the next five years.

The MTFP establishes the Council's financial principles, the national and local context within which the Council's financial planning will be undertaken and highlights the key financial challenges facing the Council over the next five years, putting in place a financial strategy to meet these.

The current MTFP was prepared on the principle of safeguarding the important local services provided by the Council and avoiding the need for job losses, whilst at the same time keeping future council tax increases as low as possible.

The Plan concluded that the Council is in a strong financial position with balances and reserves being maintained at healthy levels and the Revenue Budget currently generating a significant surplus. This places the Council in a good starting position to deal with the challenges that lie ahead.

However the Council is likely to face a number of challenges over the next few years managing the financial impact of the on-going economic difficulties and public sector spending cuts by the Government as well as the fundamental change to the way in which it is funded following the localisation of support for council tax.

These changes have left the Council in a position moving forward whereby it is now reliant on an external funding stream which accounts for nearly 20% of its Precept. This has created much uncertainty and concern for subsequent years as the future receipt of the LCTSS funding is by no means guaranteed.

The Council also has significant on-going capital investment commitments and it is likely that Council Balances and Reserves will diminish.

Therefore, while the Council is starting from a relatively healthy financial position, the situation is likely to deteriorate in the coming years and the Council will face a challenge in delivering its aim to protect local services, avoid job losses and keep future council tax increases as low as possible.

The updated Medium Term Financial Plan is due to be considered by the Council in June and will be published on the Council website in due course.

APPENDIX 1

AIMS AND TARGETS 2012/13

No	Target	Comments
AIM 1 – TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL		
1	Publish a Parish Performance Plan by 30 th June	Complete
2	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Annual Governance Statement	Complete – See Appendix 6
3	Pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, improving community engagement and encouraging the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in the Process	On-going. Although the Town Council confirmed their intent to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) in April 12 the Decision Notice from Durham County Council stating the Town Council area had been approved and could proceed was not received until February 13.
4	Quarterly performance report to Policy & Resources Committee	Complete
5	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report to council	Complete
6	Hold quarterly team meetings or staff supervision sessions to discuss training needs and generate new ideas	On-going
7	Provide a Member and Town Clerk training programme to comply with guidance for Quality Status	On-going
8	Undertake a review of all records and filing systems annually to comply with Freedom Of Information Act	On-going
9	Improve advertising of council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication	On-going
10	Provide apprenticeship/learning opportunities to give young people work experience	Unfortunately due to the recent Council Tax Benefit changes the Town Council has to make significant cuts. Two apprenticeship posts will not be filled until further notice.
11	Undertake a town wide questionnaire consultation exercise	On hold pending work on the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan
AIM 2 – TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER		
12	Produce annual statement of accounts by 30.6.12	Achieved

No	Target	Comments
13	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the account by 30.9.12	Achieved
14	Ensure the Medium Term Financial Plan is approved by 30 th June each year	Achieved
15	Complete any Government returns electronically by the relevant deadline	Complete
16	Aim to deliver 3% efficiency savings	Achieved and exceeded due to significant savings on the new insurance and brewery contracts
17	Implement any works highlighted in the Asset Management Plan, prioritised by the Equality Act	On-going
18	Quarterly budget control reports are presented to Policy & Resources Committee	Complete
19	Undertake a review of all Council risks every March and report to Council	Complete
20	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31 st January 2013	Complete
21	Undertake an annual update of the Asset Register	Complete
22	Undertake an annual review of the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for plant and machinery and build into the capital works programme as necessary	Complete
AIM 3 – TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES		
23	Deliver 40 public countryside events	Complete - 50 events took place
24	Deliver the Council's programme of special events	Complete
25	Expand the activities offered at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex	Complete and on-going
26	Complete the programme of asset management planned work at the Oakleaf Sports Complex	On-going
27	Install outdoor fitness equipment at West Park in partnership with the AAP	Complete
AIM 4 – TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE		
28	Achieve successful Ofsted Inspection Results (if undertaken)	St. Oswald's inspection is due anytime
29	Aim to maximise child numbers at both pre-schools	Both pre-schools are full but marketing of the facilities continues

AIM 5 – TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES		
30	Environment Officer to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities	On-going
31	Work with the Youth Council, schools, community and voluntary groups to hold a Town Pride Environment Day	Complete
32	Take over certain, agreed, green spaces from Durham County Council and approve these areas bringing them in line with Town Council standards	Agreement signed – On-going
33	Continue to provide a limited snow clearing and gritting service on behalf of Durham County Council	Agreement signed – On-going
34	Undertake a range of improvements to Aycliffe Nature Park	Complete
35	Install a new BMX track and area at Woodham Park	Complete
AIM 6 – HELP AND ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE		
36	Support and encourage Aycliffe Youth Council (AYC) by Organising the election process Holding at least 8 meetings a year Help organise at least 1 project per year	On-going
37	Working with other groups to develop community activities to encourage pride in Great Aycliffe	On-going Working with scouts, guides, DISC, Healthy Hearts initiative, Houghall College, Active Aycliffe among others
38	Work with partners and assist with initiatives to reduce litter	On-going Links with DCC, Probation service, Livin and Litterfree Durham among others
AIM 7 – ENCOURAGE THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY		
39	Hold at least 5 Customer Panel meetings with the residents of Great Aycliffe	On-going 8 meetings were held
40	Hold a budget setting consultation meeting with the Customer Panel	Complete
41	Hold a Parish Meeting	Complete Held on 23 rd May 2013
42	Hold an Allotment AGM	Complete Held on in November 2012

43	Hold 6 allotment representative meetings	On-going Meetings are held prior to Environment Committee
44	Provide information about elections, the need to register to vote, how to become a Councillor etc on the Council's website	Complete Information is now on the website
45	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services	On-going Boards were put on display at the Great Aycliffe Show. Information is being prepared on the parks and play areas for the Environment Officer and Youth Council to circulate during Environment Week
AIM 8 – TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE		
46	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out	On-going
47	Undertake benchmarking and research where appropriate for new policies and procedures	On-going
48	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required	On-going

APPENDIX 2

AIMS AND TARGETS 2013/2014

No	Objective
AIM 1 - TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL	
1	Publish a Parish Performance Plan by 30 th June
2	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Annual Governance Statement
3	Pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, improving community engagement and encouraging the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in the process
4	Quarterly performance reports are presented to Policy & Resources Committee
5	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report to Council
6	Provide a Member and Town Clerk training programme to comply with guidance for Quality Status
7	Undertake a review of all records and filing systems annually to comply with Freedom of Information Act
8	Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication
9	Undertake a town wide questionnaire consultation, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process
10	Complete the new Health & Safety Manual, ensuring requirements for feedback from Managers is incorporated
11	Quarterly reporting to Performance Management Group regarding Health & Safety requirements, accidents and other information
12	Develop and deliver a training plan for new Members
AIM 2 - TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER	
13	Produce annual statement of accounts by 30.6.13
14	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the accounts by 30.9.13
15	Ensure the Medium Term Financial Plan is approved by 30 th June each year
16	Quarterly budget control reports are presented to Policy and Resources Committee
17	Undertake a review of all Council risks every March and report to Council
18	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31 st January 2014
19	Manage the future financial impact of the localisation of support for council tax (LCTSS) and any future cuts to LCTSS
20	Commence a programme of financial reviews of all service areas

No	Objective
21	Undertake an annual update of the Asset Register including the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for plant and machinery. Ensuring that any works are prioritised by the Equality Act and replacement plant and machinery is built into the capital works programme as necessary
AIM 3 - TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
22	Deliver 40 public countryside events
23	Deliver the Council's programme of special events
24	Expand the activities offered at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex
25	Complete the programme of asset management planned work at the Oakleaf Sports Complex
26	Provide at least 10 bar/catering promotions to develop the social side of the OakLeaf Complex business
27	Investigate ways to extend the cycle paths on the Great Aycliffe Way and around Great Aycliffe
28	Assist Aycliffe Youth Council to hold a Free Family Fun Day in the Town Park on 30 th July 2013 to coincide with the first Fun in the Park event
AIM 4 - TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE	
29	Achieve successful Ofsted Inspection Results (if undertaken)
30	Aim to maximise child numbers at both pre-schools
AIM 5 - TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES	
31	Environment Officer to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities
32	Work with the Youth Council, schools, community and voluntary groups hold a Town Pride Environment Day
33	Undertake maintenance and management of specific DCC environmental areas as per the management agreement
34	Undertake a limited snow clearing and gritting service on behalf of Durham County Council as per the management agreement
AIM 6 – HELP AND ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE	
35	Support and encourage Aycliffe Youth Council (AYC) by Organising the election process Holding at least 8 meetings a year Helping to organise at least 1 project a year
36	Working with other groups to develop community activities to encourage pride in Great Aycliffe
37	Work with partners and assist with initiatives to reduce litter

No	Objective
AIM 7 - ENCOURAGE THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY	
38	Hold at least 5 Customer Panel meetings with the residents of Great Aycliffe
39	Hold a budget setting consultation meeting with the Customer Panel
40	Hold a Parish Meeting
41	Hold an Allotment AGM
42	Hold 6 allotment representative meetings
43	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services
AIM 8 - TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE	
44	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out
45	Undertake benchmarking and research where appropriate for new policies and procedures
46	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required

APPENDIX 3

PEST ANALYSIS

In analysing the macro-environment, it is important to identify external factors that might in turn affect a number of variables that are likely to influence the operation of the Council.

This PEST analysis is merely a framework that categorises issues as political, economic, social and technological forces.

This analysis is not a set of rigid compartments into which ideas need to be sorted it is best thought of as a set of information on what is happening externally that will or may affect the service.

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		Type:	Impact:	Importance:	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Political					
Unitary Council / AAP developments	High	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Make case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity Feed issues to CDALC for representation
Changes in Government policy / legislation	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date Lobby via NALC
Audit Commission Inspections	Medium	Opportunity	Unchanged	Important	Comply with FRISSE Maintain internal control Adhere to legislative requirements Larger body audit arrangements to be reviewed
Political balance of Council	Low	Opportunity	Reducing	Important	Be apolitical Work with all parties
Local Government elections	Low	Opportunity	Unchanged	Important	Await outcome Keep up-to-date with changes
Change in Government	Medium	Weakness	Unknown	Important	Await outcome React accordingly
Localisation of support for Council Tax (LCTSS)	High	Threat	Unknown	Critical	Monitor and await information from Government and Durham County Council

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		Type:	Impact:	Importance:	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Economic					
Tax Base	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Monitor
Changes in interest rates	High	Weak	Increasing	Important	Borrowing/repayments Loss on interest Medium Term Financial Plan
Skills Shortages	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Monitor
Inflation	Medium	Threat	Reducing	Important	Efficiency savings Precept rate
Levels of Employment	Medium	Weak	Unknown	Important	Monitor
Demand for Services	Medium	Threat	Reducing	Important	Monitor and offer promotions where possible
Lack of government grant funding/ limited fund raising ability	Low	Weakness	Unchanged	Important	Review Bid for funding whenever possible
Requests for financial assistance from outside bodies	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Monitor
Severe Weather	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	React accordingly

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		Type:	Impact:	Importance:	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Sociological					
Access to services	Low	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Develop partnerships DDA work Pricing policy Marketing
Social exclusion Hard to reach groups Equality and diversity Deprivation	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Special events Free taster sessions Equal opportunities employer Monitor service users Satisfaction Survey
Crime/Fear of Crime	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	CCTV Park Patrol Officers
Ageing population	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Provision of services - cost
Health/Obesity	High	Opportunity	Unknown	Important	Partnership working
Technical					
New Communication Technologies	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date
Mechanical equipment	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Risk management Asset management
Environmental Impact / Carbon Footprint	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date with legislation Monitor energy usage

APPENDIX 4

SWOT ANALYSIS

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strong customer focus ❖ Stable and committed workforce ❖ Improved working relationships ❖ Commitment to service ❖ Clear focus on the way forward ❖ Different skills ❖ Performance management ❖ Local employer ❖ Sound finances ❖ Risk management ❖ Quality Council status ❖ Adaptability ❖ Health and Safety 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rate of change/speed of decision making ❖ Project planning ❖ Time and capacity ❖ Lack of specialist knowledge
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increased efficiency in service delivery ❖ Customer involvement at a deeper level ❖ Need to increase and build morale through recognition of success ❖ Strengthen aspirations ❖ Improve skills of existing staff and Members ❖ Increased flexibility ❖ Partnership working ❖ Area Action Partnership ❖ Publicity of Council services and facilities 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Financial cuts ❖ Political changes ❖ Crime and vandalism ❖ Failure to retain staff ❖ Staff motivation ❖ Age of workforce/loss of knowledge ❖ Unforeseen budget pressures ❖ Partnership working ❖ Industrial action ❖ Localisation of support for Council Tax (LCTSS)

APPENDIX 5

MEMBER CONTACT DETAILS

Advice and information about our services can be obtained by telephoning 01325 300700 or visiting our website at www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk.

There are 30 elected members who represent the 7 wards of the Town.

L – Labour I – Independent

COUNCILLOR	TELEPHONE (01325)	EMAIL ADDRESS
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<u>AYCLIFFE VILLAGE</u>		
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APPENDIX 6

ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

28 June 2012

To all Members of the Council
Great Aycliffe Town Council
Council Offices
School Aycliffe Lane
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 6QF

Direct line 0844 798 1654
Email g-barker@audit-
commission.gov.uk

Dear Member of the Council,

Great Aycliffe Town Council - Annual Audit Letter 2011/12

I am pleased to submit my Annual Audit Letter which summarises my 2011/12 audit of Great Aycliffe Town Council.

Financial statements and VFM work

On 27 June 2012 I presented my Annual Governance Report (AGR) to the Council outlining the findings of my audit of the Council's 2011/12 financial statements. I will not replicate those findings in this letter.

Following the Council meeting I have:

- issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's 2011/12 financial statements on 28 June 2012; and
- concluded that there are no matters arising from my value for money work that I need to report.

Closing remarks

I have discussed and agreed this letter with the Town Clerk and Finance Manager. I wish to thank your officers for the positive and constructive approach they have taken to my audit. I also wish to thank the Council for their support and co-operation during the audit.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Barker
Senior Audit Manager and Engagement Lead

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