

Great Aycliffe Town Council



TOWN COUNCIL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

2015 - 2016

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Introduction to Great Aycliffe

The Parish of Great Aycliffe comprises the town of Newton Aycliffe and the villages of Aycliffe and School Aycliffe. The population of Great Aycliffe is approximately 26,633 (Census data 2011) and is projected to grow over the next few years.

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.

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 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.

Schools in the area are generally good, and are increasingly linked to the higher education network. The investment and building of a University Technological College on the Business Park will enable young people from the area to have a choice of educational and vocational routes with excellent prospects for employment in nearby facilities.

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.

Aycliffe Business Park has grown beyond its original 'industrial' title to become the largest business park in the North East, attracting a wide range of international, national and local companies to its premises. The Aycliffe Business Park comprises approximately 250 hectares with plans for a large expansion.

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 means that Aycliffe can offer a wide choice of starter, family and executive homes to new residents coming to the area. Social housing in the Great Aycliffe area is mainly provided by Livin a 'not for profit' housing association, as well as a number of other registered social and private landlords and private houses.

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 and is still on-going. 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. The planned expansion for Aycliffe Business Park and the investment by Hitachi Rail Europe is assisting Aycliffe to have higher aspirations for the Town.

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, other organisations and partners to ensure the best results for Great Aycliffe residents.

Views on the Plan

The Town Council welcome your views and comments on the Town Council Service Delivery Plan (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
- ◆ Oak Leaf 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.

Equalities

Great Aycliffe Town Council, its employees and elected members of the Council are expected to treat each other and members of the public equally and with respect regardless of – Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage & Civil Partnership; Pregnancy & Maternity; Race; Religion & Belief; Sex or Sexual Orientation.

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.

Services Provided by Great Aycliffe Town Council

The Town Council Service Delivery Plan is a corporate strategic document for the whole of the Town Council. The next few pages set out what the Town Council **DO** and what they are **NOT** responsible for.

Great Aycliffe Town Council:

- ✓ Manage 9 parks, all with play equipment
 - Town Park
 - Moore Lane Park
 - Simpasture Park
 - St Oswald's Park
 - Horndale Park
 - West Park
 - Aycliffe Village
 - Byerley Park
 - Woodham Park
- ✓ Provide additional play areas at Scott Place, School Aycliffe and the Oak Leaf Sport Complex.
- ✓ Provide 6 football pitches, Mini-soccer and six-a-side pitches
- ✓ Run the Oak Leaf Sports Complex - indoor bowls, sports hall, squash courts, bar and catering, children's holidays courses, indoor/outdoor sports activities
- ✓ Run the Oak Leaf Golf Complex – 18 hole golf course and an 18 bay floodlit driving range and practice putting area
- ✓ Manage Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery and provide grounds maintenance and burial service at St Andrew's Churchyard
- ✓ Run St Oswald's pre-school play setting – with a 'good' Ofsted rating
- ✓ Provide and manage a wide range of special community events – Firework Display, Fun-in-the-Parks, Santa Tours, Senior Citizens' Excursions, Aycliffe Festival and 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
- ✓ Provide a range of civic events
- ✓ Provide and continue to maintain Aycliffe Angels Memorial Garden
- ✓ Maintenance of war memorial and flagpole
- ✓ Provide 212 allotment plots in 5 different locations. 2 allotment sites with pigeon or 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
- ✓ Employ a Town Pride Team
- ✓ Crime prevention – the Town Council employs a team of Park Patrol Operatives
- ✓ Provide public seats in many locations

- ✓ Provide bus shelters with litter bins (not the ones with adverts)
- ✓ Grounds maintenance and environmental management at;

North Agnew Plantation	Cobbler's Hall Plantation
Woodham Burn	Simpasture Railway Walk
Great Aycliffe Way	Millfields/Bickford Terrace
Butterfly Meadow at Rail Halt	The area known as Seven Hills
School Aycliffe Wetlands	
Aycliffe Village Greens – custodians and maintenance	
Byerley Park Nature area	
- ✓ Assist Aycliffe Youth Council
- ✓ Provide a lorry park
- ✓ Encourage Community Empowerment through Customer Panel, Consultation and Open Days
- ✓ Provide small grants to local voluntary organisations
- ✓ Comment on planning applications

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.

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

The Town Council **DOES NOT**:

- ✗ Own or provide services in the town centre
- ✗ 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 services
- ✗ Grant planning permission
- ✗ Provide library services
- ✗ Run social services
- ✗ Run housing services
- ✗ Provide bus services

CORPORATE SERVICES SECTION

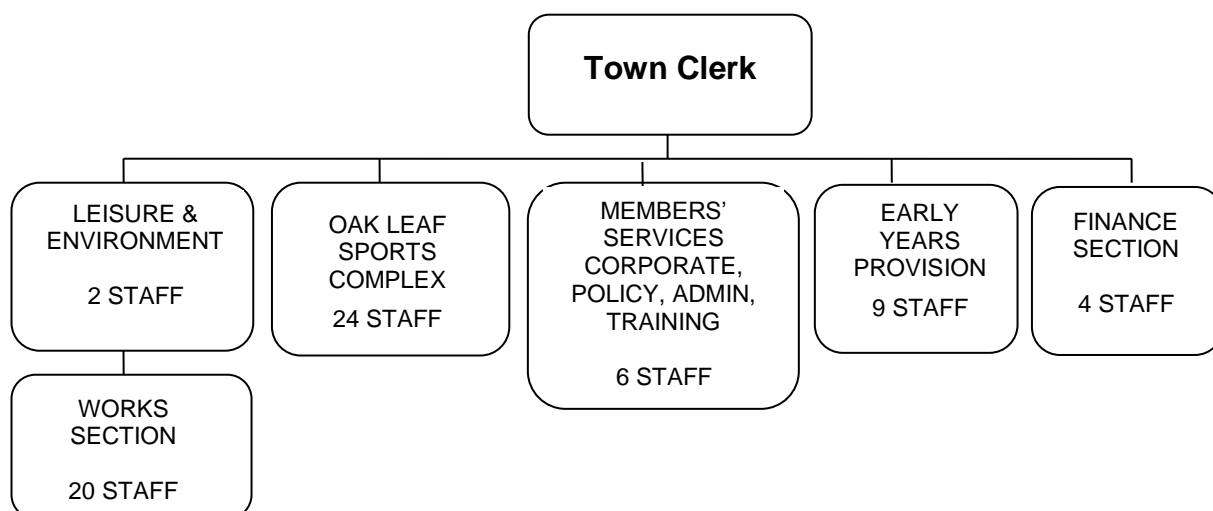
The Town Council

The Town Council Service Delivery Plan will be used as the Corporate Service Plan.

Great Aycliffe Town Council is one of the largest Town Councils in the country, with a planned revenue budget of just under £1.35 million in 2015/16.

The Council currently employs 66 staff, made up of 44 full-time and 22 part-time employees supported by a number of casual staff, who do not form part of the formal staff establishment.

The Council's Establishment



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

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

Corporate Services and Personnel

This service area covers corporate and cross-cutting issues which have an effect across the entire Council. These are policy, planning, risk management, administrative and committee services, training and customer engagement. In addition, 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
- ◆ Maintaining and updating the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders
- ◆ Provide professional support and advice to Members and staff
- ◆ Ensuring the effective organisation and running of the Committees of the Council and overseeing the production of agendas and minutes of meetings
- ◆ To provide timely and appropriate advice in relation to all employee and employer relations issues
- ◆ Monitoring and managing the Council's risks
- ◆ Managing and overseeing the Council's arrangement for health and safety
- ◆ To provide advice in relation to training requirements for members and employees including delivering training when possible
- ◆ To prepare the annual Town Council Service Delivery Plan including the setting of aims and annual targets
- ◆ Managing and administering the Council's Performance Management Framework
- ◆ Overseeing the use of consultants by the Council
- ◆ Maintain the Town Council's website and ensure an effective IT support service is provided across the Council
- ◆ Ensuring the effective running of the Youth Council
- ◆ Provide support and guidance for any elections
- ◆ Supporting the annual external audit inspection
- ◆ Assist with the preparation of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

Administration

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

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

- ◆ To provide effective, efficient typing and administrative support to officers and Members and reception services to the public in relation to the Council's functions
- ◆ Managing the records of the Council
- ◆ To assist with the upkeep of information on the Town Council's website
- ◆ To provide the necessary support at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

Members and 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 the necessary civic functions agreed annually by the Council
- ◆ To assist with civic hospitality for the Council and its guests
- ◆ To manage the Members' Allowances Scheme.

Finance Section

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 Finance Section also plays an important corporate role in helping to ensure 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 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

Detailed information on the Town Council's finances can be found in the Medium Term Financial Plan, Revenue and Capital Budget, Accounts and Finance Service Plan.

Capital Projects and Asset Management

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 document.

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

The **Capital Programme Budget for 2015/16 totals £378,250** and includes provision for the following planned projects:-

- Building improvement works to the pre-school office at St Oswald's Park;
- A replacement tractor, van and utility vehicle for the Works Section;
- Replacement computers, server, and office photocopier;
- The potential development of a park and play area in the Cobblers Hall area;
- A new multi-use games area at Moore Lane Park and BMX track at Horndale;
- Replacement play equipment at West Park, Horndale and the sports complex;
- Upgrade of the golf complex entrance foyer, glass roof and heating system;
- Purchase of a multi-use aeration machine for maintaining the golf course;
- Sand and reseal of the sports complex sports hall flooring; and
- Ongoing play area safety surfacing repairs and footpath repairs.

The Council made **capital investment of nearly £200,000 in 2014/15** and the main capital works completed are listed below:-

- Council offices alarm system upgrade;
- Electrical testing of all council buildings;
- Replacement ride on mowing machine and pressure washer;
- Financial management system upgrade;
- Website development;
- Replacement roof to the sports complex bar;
- Disabled access improvements at the sports complex;
- Town park pavilion fascia replacement;
- New multi-use games area at Horndale Park; and
- Play area safety surfacing repairs and footpath repairs.

Further details on the Council's recent capital spending and capital investment plans for the future are provided in the 2014/15 Annual Report and Statement of Accounts and the 2015/16 Budget and 2015/16 to 2019/20 Medium Term Financial Plan.

Community Consultation

A wide range of consultations take place on a regular basis and use a number of different methods to encourage all ages to take part and give us their views.

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 users of our services, and we continue to publish a quarterly newsletter.

Surveys are undertaken each year for

- ◆ Users of the Oak Leaf 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.

The town wide consultation process for the neighbourhood plan has been complete and a summary of the findings are detailed in the next section.

Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

The first round of consultation for the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan ran from July to November 2014. Residents were consulted in a number of ways to ensure the most comprehensive reach possible. Officers consulted with residents and the public via events, meetings, social media, local press and a town wide questionnaire.

791 questionnaires were returned from 11,500 households giving a 6.9% response rate. However, overall 1268 individuals completed some form of consultation taking the response up to 11%. Nearly 10,000 individual comments were made during the consultation. Approximately 8,000 people attended specific activities or events where the neighbourhood plan was being promoted and had the opportunity to speak to officers.

Respondents who completed the 791 questionnaires were predominantly aged 45 and over and 149 respondents who took part in the early consultation during summer events were predominantly aged 44 and under.

In addition, all schools were consulted via the logo competition, provided with questionnaires and presentations were made to the Youth Council. 138 under 18s took part in the logo competition. The youngest participant was aged 4, who completed a 'tops and pants' activity at Fun in the Park Event at Moore Lane, with help from her parents.

Respondents were predominantly 'White British' which reflects the ethnicity of the Parish of Great Aycliffe. 6 respondents indicated they were 'Black/Black British' and 2 respondents indicated 'Mixed Asian'. 16 respondents indicated they were not born in the UK. Overall 713 people responded to this question.

The top 3 priorities for respondents were:

1. Retail – 715
2. Environment – 706
3. Housing – 682

When asked if the Town Council's vision was still suitable, 93% of respondents who answered the question (total responses 662) replied yes. 92.5% of respondents (total responses 632) also thought the strategic aims were still appropriate

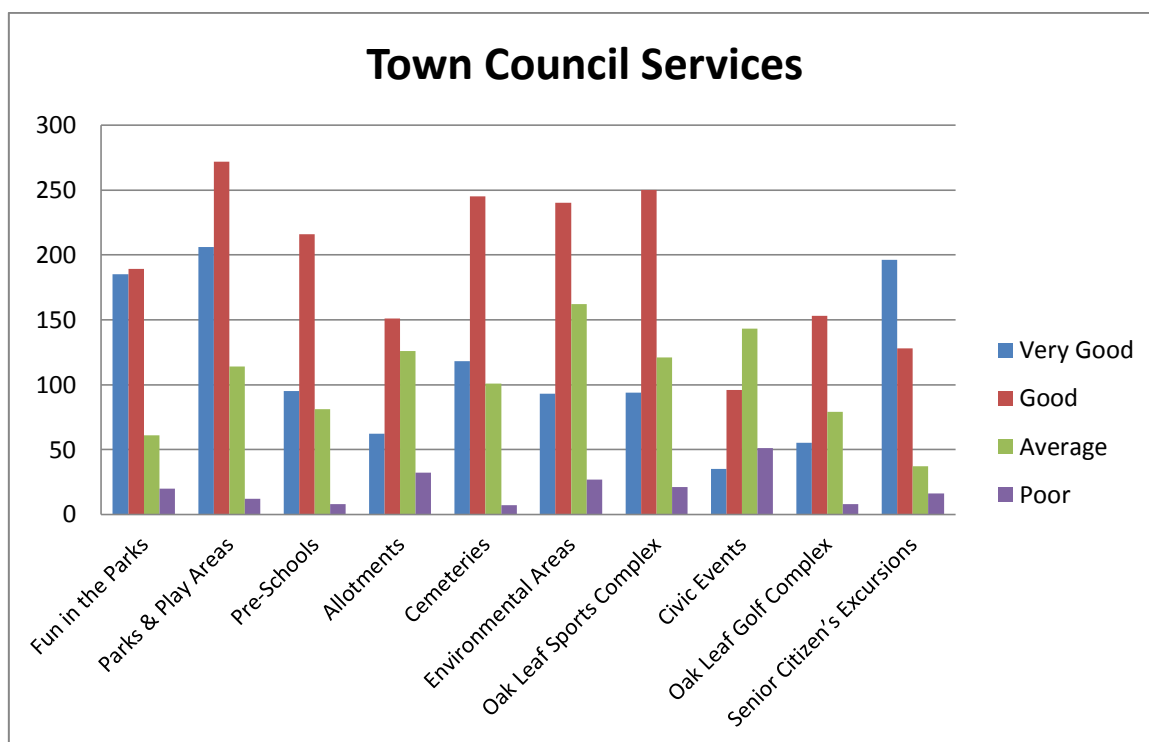
Residents were provided with some financial information regarding the cost of Town Council services and then asked to make three choices from a list and rank them in order preference for continued service delivery.

In summary

- ♦ 23% of respondents ranked grass cutting and flower beds on Town Council owned land as the top priority;
- ♦ parks and play areas were ranked second with 22%; and
- ♦ public seating, bus shelters and litter bins were ranked third with 17%.

Generally, in line with previous surveys and questionnaires, the least important areas for residents were Civic Events and the Oak Leaf Golf Course with only 1% support for each.

Residents were asked to rate a number of Town Council services, the details of which can be found on the following table.



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 and there will be further opportunities for residents to have their say on a number of issues. The Neighbourhood Planning process is likely to last at least until June 2016.

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 this Plan and included as Town Council targets, if applicable.

Other comments regarding areas or services which are not within the remit of the Town Council have been forwarded to the appropriate organisation.

Comments from Residents

When asked what the best three things were about living in Great Aycliffe the environment (289) came out top with residents commenting repeatedly about the green and leafy town with lots of open spaces, parks and play areas. Community (116) was ranked second with many comments regarding a good community spirit, a village feel in many areas, friendly neighbours many of whom had lived there for years. Transport (52) was ranked third with the proximity to the motorway and rail links being cited most. Overall 564 people took the time to comment on this section.

A few of the comments made by residents are set out below.

- There is still a need for better community involvement in a range of projects allowing greater freedom for residents to arrange and develop projects – art crafts, performance arts in green spaces/parks.
- Need to focus on activities for all ages not just young children – teenagers need to be kept engaged.
- Once again, mention of parks, pre-schools etc. which is admirable but what about extra seating in parks for the elderly.
- Unable to differentiate between what GATC and DCC provide and some overlap.
- There were a number of comments stating the Town Council didn't listen to the residents.
- I am impressed with how the town has developed and is thriving, well done.
- There were a number of comments to review the Civic Events and are they needed.
- There were quite a number of older people who stated they went on the Senior Citizen's Trips but why didn't we charge a small amount to help off-set the cost.
- There were a few comments about continuing and helping volunteering projects such as West Park.
- A number of comments were made regarding lots of litter around the town and town centre.

Value for Money

Although the previous best value legislative requirements have been removed from Town and Parish Councils, 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 (this had been postponed for a number of years as a town wide survey would be undertaken as part of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan process).

A section on Town Council Services was incorporated into the neighbourhood plan consultation including questions on 'value for money' and 'satisfaction with services'. It was extremely pleasing, in the current economic climate, to receive the following responses which showed continual improvement on previous surveys:-

Provides value for money

2007	2009	2014
63%	72%	79%

Satisfied with the work of the Town Council

2007	2009	2014
67%	72%	77%

However, after more detailed analysis when the negative responses, which do not relate to Town Council services, such as the state of the town centre, comments about street lights, refuse collection and the state of the refuse tip are removed altogether this would take the adjusted figures to:-

Providing Value for Money	84%
Satisfaction with the Town Council	82%

The Town Council undertakes an annual review of its functions, measures performance on a quarterly basis and produces a number of strategic documents, including this plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan, which are audited by an independent external auditor.

Consultations on specific projects and the annual budget consultation continue to take place.

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 in the use of public money.

The Council will continue to undertake a programme of 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.

A Service Review Sub-Committee was established in May 2015 which is tasked with reviewing the work of corporate services including the following specific responsibilities:

- ◆ To review the Town Council Service Delivery Plan to ensure it is fit for purpose and clearly defines the work of the Town Council.
- ◆ To consider the setting and review of the Council's strategic targets on an annual basis;
- ◆ To undertake a review of the Council's policies; and
- ◆ To prioritise the services of the Council and make recommendations to the Service Review Working Group to ensure that a joined up approach is delivered when reviewing both service delivery and targets.

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.

The Member contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Election of Mayor

The Council elects a Town Mayor annually from amongst its members and the Mayor for 2015/16 is Councillor Mrs Mary Dalton, her Consort will be her son Councillor Michael Dalton. The Mayor has chosen the Renal Unit at James Cook Hospital, Neville Parade Community Centre and Scouts and Guides of Great Aycliffe as her charities for her term of office.

Councillor Mrs Wendy Hillary was elected as Mayor of Great Aycliffe in May 2014 and her term of office lasted until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2015.



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

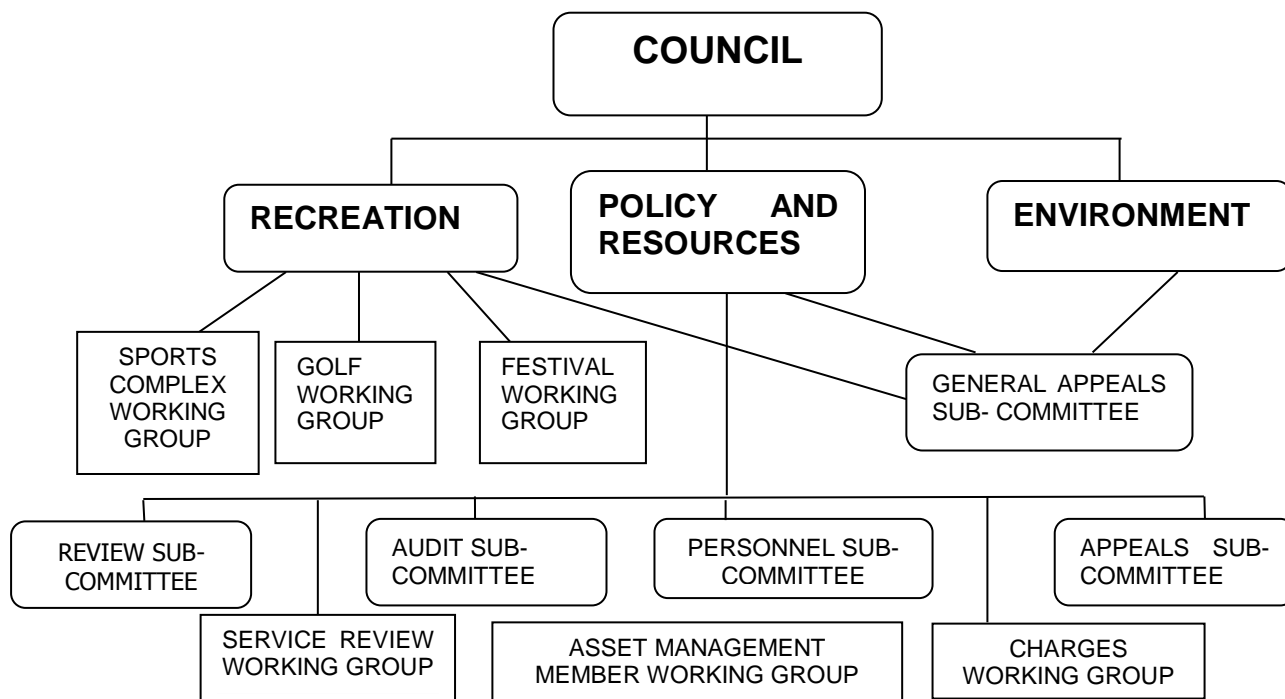
- ✿ The Civic Ball
- ✿ Remembrance Sunday
- ✿ Mayor's 'At Home'

In addition, to these, the Mayor attended a further 158 engagements. The Mayor was escorted by her Consort Councillor Mr Jed Hillary.

The Mayor raised £4,840 for her nominated charities in her year of office. The Cruse Bereavement Care received £2,421 and County Durham Benevolent Fund received £2,421.

Committee Structure

The Council originally considered its Constitution in 2005/06. The Constitution was 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 the 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 was set at £1,059.60 per annum for each member of the Town Council. This amount has not increased since that date.

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 2015/16 is set out in the Council's newsletter and are available on the Council's website.

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

Public Participation

Meetings of the Council, 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 and agendas are displayed on local and Council notice boards. Agendas and reports are

available from the Council Offices or website on the Friday afternoon preceding the meeting. Meeting dates are published in the Council's newsletter.

The public entrance to the council chamber opens 30 minutes prior to the meeting.

During the public questions item on Council, Committee and Sub-Committee agendas, members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence in regard to agenda items at the meeting attended. 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.

With the exception of the Annual and Extraordinary Council meetings, members of the public may submit a written question, in advance, for the Council agenda. In addition, verbal questions may also be raised by the public.

However, there are strict protocols governing written and verbal public questions and the circumstances in which they may be posed and responded to. Full details governing written and verbal questions to the Council are included on the website or may be obtained from the Council Offices.

Public Filming, recording or otherwise reporting at Council / Committee meetings

The Council understands that it is required by legislation to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings and that **no** prior permission is required. However, we ask that any person wishing to film or audio record a public meeting let Council staff know in order that all necessary arrangements can be made for the public meeting.

The Council will provide "reasonable facilities" to facilitate reporting and provide a space to view and hear the meetings, seats and a table. However, this will not be part of the seating arrangements for the Council itself or an area required by Council staff or invited guests.

It is not permitted to provide a running verbal commentary. Those undertaking reporting must not act in a disruptive manner such as making excessive noise, use of intrusive lighting, use of flash photography or moving around the designated area without the consent of the Chairman.

Public will be excluded from a meeting, under the Council's Standing Orders, if acting in a disruptive manner.

Recording equipment must be removed from the chamber if at any stage the meeting becomes a private meeting. No trailing cables or plugging in to sockets of electrical equipment will be permitted.

Children and vulnerable adults are not to be filmed, recorded or photographed or otherwise reported about where the relevant responsible adult has not given consent.

Part of the public area will be used, if required, for children and vulnerable adults or those public attending who do not wish to be filmed, however, this is within the limitation of the Council Chamber and its layout.

Persons taking part in the public participation section, excluding children and vulnerable adults as indicated above, may be filmed, recorded or photographed or otherwise reported whether they are in a designated area or not.

Persons filming meetings etc. are likely to record personal data of individuals. These persons must take care to ensure that personal data is used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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 J Atkinson, D Atkinson and the Corporate and Policy Officer.
- b) County Durham Association of Local Councils
Councillors RS Fleming (Leader), M Iveson (Deputy Leader) and the Town Clerk.
- c) Aycliffe Village Community Association
Councillor C Wheeler
- 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), M Iveson (Deputy Leader) and the Town Clerk.
- g) Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre
Councillor C Wheeler
- h) Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society
Councillors I Gray
- i) Friends of Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve
Councillor I Gray
- j) Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway
Councillor J Atkinson
- k) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Councillors J Atkinson, MA Dalton, I Gray, B Hall, C Wheeler

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.

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 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. Support to the community and voluntary sector including older people
3. Employment, enterprise, education and training

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

TOWN COUNCIL SERVICE AREAS

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, individual service areas have developed service plans and action plans which can be linked back clearly 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.

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, a burial service 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 and 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 Oak Leaf 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 Council owned 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 need to reflect the variety of services provision and is:

- ◆ 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.

Parks and Play Areas

We currently manage and maintain 9 parks, all of which have play equipment.

The 9 parks are:

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

We also provide and maintain play areas at 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.

Playing Pitches

The Council provides five full sized permanent football pitches for the use of the community with 4 senior teams and various youth football teams using these during each football season. The football pitches are located at:

- ◆ Oak Leaf Sports Complex
- ◆ Simpasture Park
- ◆ Moore Lane Park

In addition, we provide mini-soccer facilities, which cater for junior football teams at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex fields.

Our seasonal charges for the pitches range from £390 to £550, 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.

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 212 allotments and fees range from £20.00 to £40.00 per year depending on the size of the 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 demand
- ◆ 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.

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, Stephenson Way 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.

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 public seating and 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).

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.

Environment

The Environment Officer helps to 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 local schools, 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 Town's 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.

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 including the following events:

- Aycliffe Festival
- Senior Citizen's Trips
- Community Enhancement Awards
- Fun in the Parks
- Fireworks Display
- Christmas Lighting
- Santa Tours

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.

Pre-School Learning

The Council's aim is to provide a high quality service, where every child feels protected, is happy and has fun, in a safe and secure learning environment at St Oswald's.

Our standards are high and St Oswald's Pre-school has received a successful inspection from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), 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-school is managed by the Council's Early Years Officer, who ensures the smooth running of the Pre-School in accordance with Council policy and current legislation.

The continual training of the staff is vital to the operation of the Pre-School, 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-school is 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-school is 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.

Oak Leaf Sports Complex

The Oak Leaf Sports Complex is a family friendly facility, open 7 days each week from 9.00 am until 11.00 pm. We continue to provide facilities for five-a-side football, badminton 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 60 users and is able to offer an excellent venue for a number of leisure activities such as private functions, meetings, bridge and various fitness 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.

Oak Leaf 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 Manager who is under a management contract with the Town Council, whose **responsibilities** are:

- ◆ To collect fees for the Golf Course and Driving Range
- ◆ To operate the Driving Range
- ◆ To work with, and provide an administrative service for, the Oak Leaf Golf Club
- ◆ To promote and support junior golf in all appropriate ways
- ◆ 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 provide a warden service to the golf course through the Park Patrol Service
- ◆ To maintain the Golf Course and Driving Range to an acceptable standard.

The Council also has in place a Golf Working Group whose main responsibilities are:

- ◆ To keep the course layout under review, with the intention of all-year-round 18-hole provision
- ◆ 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.

AIMS AND TARGETS

Aims and Targets

In February 2005 the Council agreed a strategic mission statement 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."**

However, following the town wide survey undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Process from July to November 2014 it was suggested that '*quality*' should be replaced with '*proactive and responsive*'. Residents also suggested changing '*to bring excellent services to Great Aycliffe*' to '*contributing towards making Great Aycliffe an excellent place in which to live for all its residents*'. After consideration by Council it was agreed that this more accurately reflects our aspirations which is to be:

"A proactive and responsive Council, working in partnership, listening to and speaking up for the community, contributing towards making Great Aycliffe an excellent place in which to live for all its residents"

In support of this statement, the Council agreed a number of strategic aims, which are reviewed on a regular basis. These are still considered fit for purpose and will help achieve the overall vision.

The eight strategic aims are:-

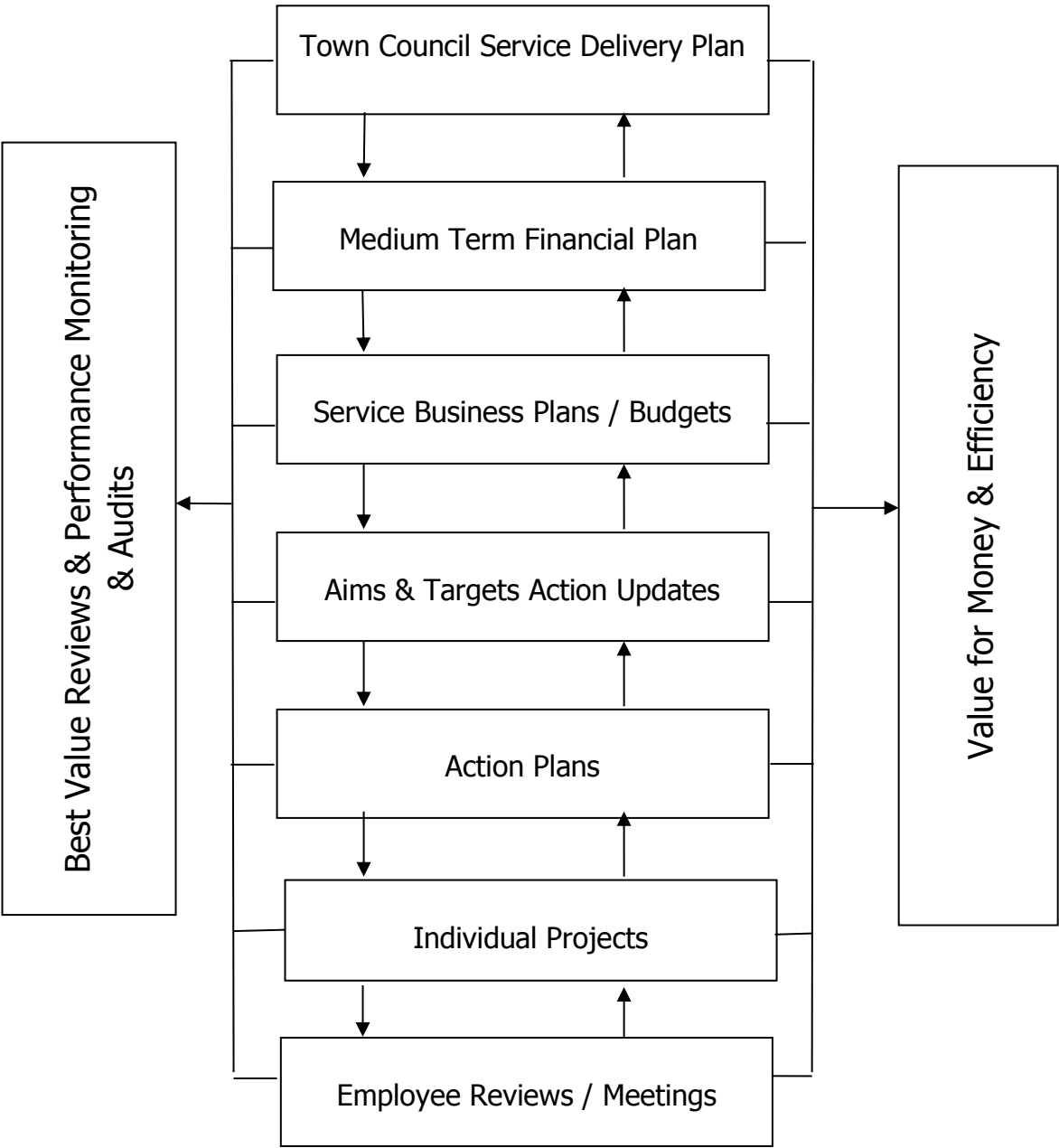
1.	To provide good quality governance and management of the Council.
2.	To manage the council's finances and assets in a responsible manner.
3.	To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities.
4.	To provide pre-school education as appropriate in Great Aycliffe.
5.	To contribute 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.

As part of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan (GANP) consultation process, residents were asked specifically about Town Council services, including if they considered the vision and strategic aims were still relevant for the Town Council and the residents of Great Aycliffe. 93% of respondents agreed the vision and 92.5% of respondents agreed the strategic aims were still appropriate.

The Council sets a series of targets under each aim to ensure that the aims are met. The targets are reviewed annually as part of the end of year assessment process. However, following the GANP consultation, a more robust and comprehensive review was undertaken by Senior Management Team and the Performance Management Group to ensure comments made during the consultation process could be incorporated into the targets for the Town Council.

Performance Management

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.



Progress on Council targets is discussed at Performance Management Group, which all service managers attend. The Review Sub-Committee regularly reviews progress on the existing targets and works with Senior Officers to set new targets for the coming year. 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.

Council Targets 2014/15

When setting targets every effort is made to ensure the 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.

The targets for the last financial year (under each aim) are set out under each specific service area, including a statement of progress achieved against each target.

Appendix 1 provides the close out status on targets for the last financial year.

Council Targets 2015/16

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.

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 list of new targets for the coming financial year can be found at Appendix 2.

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					
County Council Issues	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Make case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity Feed issues to CDALC for representation
Regional Assembly for NE	Undetermined	Threat	Unknown	Unknown	Monitor
Changes in Government policy / legislation	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date Lobby via NALC
External Audit Inspections	Medium	Opportunity	Unchanged	Important	Comply with FRISSE Maintain internal control Adhere to legislative requirements
Political balance of Council	Low	Strength	Reducing	Important	Be apolitical Work with all parties
Local Government elections	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Await outcome Keep up-to-date with changes
Change in Government	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	Await outcome React accordingly
Localisation of support for Council Tax Grant	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					
Increase in Tax Base (More houses)	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Monitor
Changes in interest rates	Medium	Threat	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	Weakness	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	Medium	Weakness	Increasing	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
Sociological					
Access to services	Low	Strength	Unchanged	Important	Develop partnerships DDA work Pricing policy Marketing
Social exclusion Hard to reach groups Equality and diversity Deprivation	Low	Strength	Unchanged	Important	Special events Free taster sessions Equal opportunities employer Monitor service users Satisfaction Survey
Crime/Fear of Crime	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	Park Patrol Officers
Ageing population	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Provision of services - cost

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION AND IMPORTANCE			ACTION
		<i>Type:</i>	<i>Impact:</i>	<i>Importance:</i>	
	High Medium Low Undetermined	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	
Health/Obesity	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Partnership working
Technical					
New Communication Technologies	Medium	Weakness	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date
Mechanical equipment	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Risk management Asset management
Environmental Impact / Carbon Footprint	Medium	Strength	Increasing	Important	Keep up-to-date with legislation Monitor energy usage

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is also undertaken each year to review the **internal factors** that may help or prevent the delivery of the service.

This is a structured planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a project or in a business venture.

<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 ❖ Adaptability ❖ Health and Safety ❖ Project Planning 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rate of change/speed of decision making ❖ Time and capacity ❖ Lack of specialist knowledge ❖ Reliance on Council Tax Support Grant ❖ Publicity of Council services and facilities ❖ Age of Workforce ❖ Limited ability to raise funding
<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 ❖ Project Planning ❖ Increased Tax Base (more houses) 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Financial cuts – Council Tax Support Grant ❖ Political changes ❖ Crime and vandalism ❖ Failure to retain staff ❖ Staff motivation ❖ Age of workforce/loss of knowledge ❖ Unforeseen budget pressures ❖ Possible government limit on Council Tax increase ❖ Industrial action

APPENDIX 1

CLOSE OUT STATUS

CLOSE OUT STATUS

AIMS & TARGETS MAY 2014 – APRIL 2015

AIM 1 - TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL					
1	Publish a Parish Performance Plan by 30 th June	CW	AB	June 14	Complete There will be no Parish Plan published this year as a full update will be undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Process.
2	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Annual Governance Statement	DA	AB	Sept 14	Audit has been completed and an unqualified opinion was received.
3	Pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, improving community engagement and encouraging the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in the process	CNEO	CW	June 16	Examiners report for DCC Local Plan does not directly impact Great Aycliffe NP, however a meeting was arranged with DCC planners to clarify a number of points. Analysis of consultation completed. Recruitment for thematic groups and general feedback session held. Environment Thematic Group set up and first meeting held. Soft Retail Assessment being pursued, no interest to date, further work being undertaken
4	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report to Council	BW	DA	March 15	Complete and reported to committee in April 15
5	Provide a Member and Town Clerk training programme to comply with guidance for Quality Status	AB	AD	March 15	Will not apply for Quality Status under the new programme. Minute No. 102 Council meeting 10 December 14
6	Undertake a review of all records and filing systems annually to comply with Freedom of Information Act	CR	CW	On-going	On-going.

7	Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication	CW	MR/CR	On-going	The Facebook campaign is going well and additional information provided as part of the NP process is helping spread the word. Regular 'tweets' as part of the Business Hour session on a Thursday being undertaken to target a different audience.
8	Undertake a town wide questionnaire consultation, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process	CW	AD	Dec 14	Analysis complete.
9	Complete the new Health & Safety Manual, ensuring requirements for feedback from Managers is incorporated	AB	AD	Dec 14	Complete.
10	Develop and deliver a training plan for new Members	AB	CW	March 15	Complete for new members.
AIM 2 - TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER					
11	Produce annual statement of accounts by 30.6.14	DA	MN	June 14	Complete
12	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the accounts by 30.9.14	DA	MN	Sept 14	Complete
13	Ensure the Medium Term Financial Plan is approved by 30 th June each year	DA	MN	Jun 14	Complete
14	Quarterly budget control reports are presented to Policy and Resources Committee	DA	MN	Mar 15	Complete
15	Undertake a review of all Council risks every March and report to Council	CW	DA	Mar 15	Complete and reported to April P&R
16	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31 st January 2015	DA	MN	Jan 15	Complete

17	Manage the future financial impact of the localisation of support for council tax (LCTSS) and any future cuts to LCTSS	DA	AB	On-going	Complete for this year. Balanced revenue budget forecast to end of 2018/19.
18	Commence a programme of financial reviews of all service areas	AB	DA	On-going	Golf Complex review complete.
19	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	DA	DA/MJR	Mar 15	Complete
AIM 3 - TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES					
20	Deliver 40 public countryside events	SC	Town Pride	On-going	41 public events undertaken plus 27 specific organised event undertaken
21	Deliver the Council's programme of special events	JT MR	various	Jan 15	Complete
22	Expand the activities offered at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex	JT	Complex Staff	Mar 15	Complete and on-going.
23	Complete the programme of asset management planned work at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex	JT	JT/DT	Mar 15	Complete.
24	Provide at least 10 bar/catering promotions to develop the social side of the Oak Leaf Complex business	JT	Complex Staff	Mar 15	Complete and to review
25	Investigate ways to extend the cycle paths on the Great Aycliffe Way and around Great Aycliffe	CW	AB	Dec 15	Information from Neighbourhood Plan shared with DCC Highways Team, Local Motion and other interested parties. Officers working with Local Motion team to improve and join up cycle ways in Aycliffe who will take this forward.
26	Assist Aycliffe Youth Council to assist and hold additional activities at one Fun in the Park event	CW	SC	Aug 14	Complete

AIM 4 - TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE					
27	Achieve successful Ofsted Inspection Results (if undertaken)	JAS	Pre-School Staff	As and when	Complete. St Oswald's achieved a good Ofsted inspection report.
28	Aim to maximise child numbers at both pre-schools	JAS	Pre-school Staff	On-going	A request had been received from Woodham Burn School to take over the running of the Pre-School. Woodham Burn Pre-School will be transferred to the school in September 2015.
AIM 5 - TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES					
29	Environment Officer to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities	SC	AB	On-going	Regular volunteering sessions now take place each week and further opportunities to work with community groups is being investigated. 32 schools sessions were undertaken
30	Work with the Youth Council, schools, community and voluntary groups to hold a Town Pride Environment Week	SC	Town Pride Team	July 14	All schools took part in yet another successful Town Pride Environment Week. Complete
31	Undertake maintenance and management of specific DCC environmental areas as per the management agreement	AB	DT/SC	On-going	Complete
32	Undertake a limited snow clearing and gritting service on behalf of Durham County Council as per the management agreement	DT	AB	On-going	Reacted to recent snow fall, salting and gritting agreed routes when required with some snow clearing taking place on 2 occasions, 71 salt bins inspected and topped up as required. Complete

AIM 6 – HELP AND ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE					
33	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	CW	SC	On-going	First meeting took place in October and elections for posts took place in November. A number of people have either not taken up the post or have already dropped out. Recruitment and retention has proved difficult this year. There are currently 14 youth councillors Complete
34	Working with other groups to develop community activities to encourage pride in Great Aycliffe	SC	Town Pride Team	On-going	Working with community groups such as Friends of West Park and Friends of Byerley park and other volunteer groups on a regular basis. Membership of the Active Aycliffe group is proving helpful to build partnerships and opportunities for joint working.
35	Work with partners and assist with initiatives to reduce litter	SC	Town Pride Team	On-going	Targeted dog fouling campaign undertaken at Simpasture area. DCC officers have been active in the west ward as requested.
AIM 7 - ENCOURAGE THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY					
36	Hold at least 5 Customer Panel meetings with the residents of Great Aycliffe	CW	AD	On-going	Only 3 meetings have been held this year, with only 1 person attending 1 of the meetings. Work on the neighbourhood plan was replicating some of the information which would have been shared at these meetings.
37	Hold a budget setting consultation meeting with the Customer Panel	DA	CW	Nov 14	Complete
38	Hold a Parish Meeting	AB	CR	Annually In May	Complete.

39	Hold an Allotment AGM	DT		Annually In Nov	Complete
40	Hold 6 allotment representative meetings	DT		On-going	6 meetings held this year – complete
41	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services	CW	AD	Annually	Complete
AIM 8 - TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE					
42	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out	AB	CW	On-going	9 consultations have been undertaken
43	Undertake benchmarking and research where appropriate for new policies and procedures	CW	AB	On-going	Neighbourhood Plan best practice is on-going Most town and parish council's look to us for best practice.
44	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required	CW	AB	On-going	On-going and reported when needed

APPENDIX 2

TARGETS FOR THE COMING YEAR

TOWN COUNCIL TARGETS - 2015 – 2016

AIM 1 - TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
1	Publish a Town Council Service Delivery Plan by 30 th June each year	Annually	CW
2	Publish an Annual Report	Annually	Man'mt Team
3	Provide a Member and Town Clerk training programme	March 16	AB
4	Undertake an annual review of the Council Constitution, Financial Regulations and Council Policies to ensure compliance with current legislation	Annually	Man'mt Team
5	Undertake a review of all records and filing systems annually to comply with Data Protection and Freedom of Information Act	On-going	All
6	Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication	On-going	All
7	Improve use of all media, including social media, to advertise the Council's services and facilities	On-going	CW MR
8	Undertake research where appropriate for new policies and procedures	On-going	CW
9	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required	On-going	Man'mt Team
10	Undertake an audit of energy consumption and reduce usage where possible	On-going	All Managers
11	Develop an information booklet regarding Town Council services, which can be left at Estate Agents and sales offices on new developments	Dec 15	MR
12	Undertake consultations as and when required, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process	On-going	CW AD
13	Develop and implement an annual appraisal scheme for all staff	On-going	All Staff

AIM 2 - TO MANAGE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES AND ASSETS IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
14	Produce annual statement of accounts by June each year	June 15	DA
15	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Audit Completion Report	Sept 15	DA
16	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the Accounts by 30.9.15	Sept 15	DA
17	Ensure the Medium Term Financial Plan is approved by 30 th June each year	Jun 15	DA
18	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report to Council	March 16	BW
19	Manage the financial impact of the localisation of support for council tax (LCTSS) and any future cuts to LCTSS funding	On-going	AB DA

20	Ensure compliance with the Transparency Code/Openness of Local Government Regulations.	On-going	AB DA
21	Deliver the work set out in the Asset Management Plan via the capital programme and, a six monthly review is undertaken with Officers and Member Asset Management Group	On-going	AB DA
22	Quarterly budget control reports are presented to Policy and Resources Committee	On-going	DA
23	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31 st January 2016	Jan 16	DA
24	Undertake a review of all Council risks every March and report to Council	Mar 16	CW
25	Continue the programme of financial reviews of all service areas	On-going	DA
26	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	On-going	AB DA

AIM 3 - TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
27	Deliver the Council's programme of special events Fun in the Parks Aycliffe Festival Senior Citizens Trips Firework Display Santa Letters Santa Tours	Aug 15 July 15 July 15 Nov 15 Dec 15 Dec 15	JT
28	Undertake a review of the Santa Tours to ensure volunteers and members of the public are safe and as much, as possible, of the Town has a visit from Santa	Nov 15	JT
29	Help co-ordinate and deliver the Aycliffe Festival, providing assistance, financial support if required, training and publicity and undertake a review as soon as possible following the event.	July 15	MR
30	Install a BMX Pump track at Horndale park subject to finance becoming available	Nov 15	DT
31	Undertake a review of activity usage and explore the possibility of any new activities that could be implemented at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex	Mar 16	JT
32	Undertake a review of golf complex usage and explore ways to improve membership and income through new initiatives	Mar 16	Julie

AIM 4 - TO PROVIDE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AS APPROPRIATE IN GREAT AYCLIFFE

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
33	Aim to maintain a 'good' Ofsted Inspection Result (when undertaken)	As and when	JS
34	Complete the successful hand over of Woodham Burn Pre-School to Woodham Burn Primary School	Sept 15	JS AB
35	To undertake a service review of the existing and future provision at St. Oswald's Pre-School	TBA	Service Review WG

AIM 5 - TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF AYCLIFFE BY MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND GREEN SPACES

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
36	Install a MUGA at Moore Lane Park	Aug 15	DT
37	Replace play equipment units at Oak Leaf and Horndale parks which are scheduled in the capital works programme	Sept 15	DT
38	Environment Officer to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities	On-going	SC
39	Undertake a survey of trees on Town Council land in accordance with the Tree Policy and prioritise any work needed	On-going	DT SC
40	Commission The Groundwork Trust to undertake a Hydrology and Ecology report on the lakes at West Park and investigate ways and means to implement any recommendations	On-going	DT SC
41	Undertake landscaping improvement works at West Park working in conjunction with the Environment Officer and Friends Groups	On-going	SC /Town Pride Team
42	Environment Officer to deliver at least 40 public countryside events	On-going	SC
43	Complete at least 5 targeted Himalayan Balsam removing working parties along The Burn	Annually	SC
44	Improve the planting, including additional plant species, in the wildflower meadows	March 16	SC
45	Undertake maintenance and management of specific Durham County Council environmental areas as per the management agreement	On-going	DT
46	Undertake a limited snow clearing and gritting service on behalf of Durham County Council (DCC) as per the management agreement	On-going	DT

AIM 6 – HELP AND ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
47	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	On-going	CW SC
48	To continue partnership working with DCC and build on the existing initiatives	On-going	SC
49	Work with the Youth Council, schools, community and voluntary groups hold a Town Pride Environment Week	July 15	SC CW
50	Environment Officer, Town Pride Team and Park Patrol Officers to work with DCC Officers to ensure that at least 2 areas in the Great Aycliffe Parish have a targeted Anti-Dog Fouling campaign in addition to the work already scheduled by DCC	March 16	SC Town Pride Team
51	Environment Officer and Town Pride Team to work with DCC Officers and Tidy Britain to ensure that the Great Aycliffe Parish has a targeted anti-littering campaign , in addition to the work already scheduled by DCC	March 16	SC Town Pride Team
52	Work in partnership with residents and friends groups to improve our parks, play areas and environment areas.	March 16	SC

AIM 7 - ENCOURAGE THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT AYCLIFFE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
53	Hold at least 5 Customer Panel meetings with the residents of Great Aycliffe and continue to recruit new members	On-going	CW AD
54	Hold a budget setting consultation meeting with the Customer Panel	Nov 15	DA
55	Continue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, improving community engagement and encouraging the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved and help achieve the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help promote the Plan • Assist with the preparation work for the issues and proposals consultation paper • Assist with the analysis of consultation responses • Help test the policies • Review the draft plan • Assist with the independent inspection • Vote in the referendum 	June 16 On-going Oct 16 Nov 16 Jan 16 Jan 16 Mar 16 June 16	CW AD
56	Assist the thematic groups (Environment, Housing and Retail) to research and establish appropriate planning policies for the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan	June 16	CW AD
57	Hold a Parish Meeting	Annually In May	AB
58	Hold an Allotment AGM	Annually In Nov	DT

59	Hold 4 allotment representative meetings	On-going	DT
60	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services	Annually	CW AD

AIM 8 - TO RESEARCH INFORMATION AND MAKE THE CASE FOR GREAT AYCLIFFE

No	Target	Target Date	Officer
61	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out	On-going	AB CW
62	Investigate current neighbourhood plans and planning policies to ensure appropriate CIL and local priorities policies are developed for inclusion in NP as soon as possible	June 16	CW AD AB
63	Undertake a Soft Retail Needs assessment to determine the commercial prospects of improved retail for Newton Aycliffe which will steer the planning policy recommendation for the retail thematic group	Aug 15	CW
64	Research existing neighbourhood plans to provide the best planning policies for the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan to make investment and planning easier in our parish	Mar 16	CW AD

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.
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