

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TOWN MEETING** for the Parish of Great Aycliffe, held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 23rd MAY 2018** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT Councillor J. Clark (Chairman / Mayor)
and there were 21 Electors present.

The Chairman (Mayor) of the Council opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting. The Mayor read out a statement of how the meeting would proceed and possible involvement by members of the electorate.

1. **NOTICE OF MEETING**

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

2. **MINUTES**

It was proposed by W.M. Blenkinsopp, seconded by M. Iveson and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting, held on the 24th May 2017, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mayor's annual report was taken as read.

During 2017/18 the Council has continued to provide services to residents of Great Aycliffe. The coming year and years to come will be challenging due to decreases in finance available. The Council will need to review what services it currently offers and how they are delivered.

Environment

The Town Council continues to:

- Deliver a comprehensive programme of activities for schools, community groups and public events during school holidays.
- Deliver Environment Week, which involves visiting the primary schools in the town, giving them an interactive presentation on litter and then giving them the chance to take part in a litter pick in their local community.
- Facilitate community groups such as local scout, guides and Friends groups.
- Deliver a licence agreement with Durham County Council to operate and maintain areas of land and woodland which form part of the Great Aycliffe Way.
- Provide over 200 allotment sites, including provision for pigeons, hens and poultry. These sites are located at:
 - Clarence Chare
 - Finchale Road
 - St. Oswald's
 - Aycliffe Village and
 - Byerley Park

- Provide and maintain 2 cemeteries at West Cemetery and Stephenson Way, and a burial service for St. Andrews Church in Aycliffe Village.
- Facilitate the introduction of bee keeping plots at St Oswald's – this is proving very popular and consideration is being given to other appropriate allotment sites.

Leisure

Leisure facilities have formed a major part of the Councils provision over the years, this has continued in recent times with a high standard of maintenance and ongoing development of:

- 8 very different parks, all with their own character. These are found around the town at:
 - Moore Lane
 - St. Oswalds
 - Town Park
 - Horndale
 - Simpasture Park
 - West Park
 - Byerley Park and
 - Woodham
- As well as on the parks mentioned above, modern and well maintained play areas are located at:
 - Oakleaf Sports Complex
 - School Aycliffe
 - Aycliffe Village and
 - Scott Place
- New facilities including a MUGA and play equipment have been planned and consulted on. These will be developed in July 2018 on the site of an existing play area at Cobbler's Hall/Burn Lane.
- A challenging well-manicured 18 hole golf course.
- An 18 bay flood lit golf driving range.
- A Sports Complex providing a sports hall, 4 squash courts, indoor bowls, function room and a bar and catering service. The Sports Complex is home to Great Aycliffe Indoor Bowls Club and Aycliffe Squash Club. The Sports Complex also provides a number of activity sessions for both adults and children.
- Provides 6 football pitches and changing facilities at 3 sites:
 - Sports Complex
 - Simpasture and
 - Moore Lane

The Park Patrol Service is also a key service which provides an out of hour's service to monitor and safeguard the Council's assets and its users.

The Council also continue to provide a series of annual leisure events such as:

- Festival Programme of events
- Senior Citizen Excursions
- Fireworks display
- Fun in the Parks
- Santa Tours and letters

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

Play

An ongoing programme of safety surface repairs has continued to ensure play areas are safe for use.

Pre-School Learning Centre

The Council provides a Pre-School Learning Centre located in St. Oswald's Park which is currently registered for 40 places for 3-year olds.

The Council has invested in the provision of a new two-year old setting 'Tots in the Park', offering 12 places, morning and afternoon, 5 days per week.

A programme of training and support for staff has been undertaken to ensure that the best service to children is provided.

Future Developments 2018 – 2019

The Council continues to invest in play provision.

A new play area is planned to replace part of the Aycliffe Village play provision.

Youth Council

The Youth Council have considered a number of grants and have awarded a total sum of £525

Neighbourhood Plan

The Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan received an overwhelming 'Yes' vote of 91.2% at public referendum last June and is now considered as a supplementary planning document. It has already been referred to in a number of test cases.

Council Grants / Donations

The Council considered applications for Grants and the following were agreed and paid out over the year 2017/2018.

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| • Akari Care Home | 75 |
| • Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe | 150 |
| • Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group | 52 |
| • Great North Air Ambulance | 350 |

Capital Works

The Council has continued to develop its Asset Management Plan in order to keep the Council's buildings and assets up to a required standard.

A replacement programme of Council works department vehicles is in place to ensure vehicles and machinery are available to undertake services.

Newsletter

The Council produces four newsletters each year in order to keep the public advised of current activities, services and events. The newsletter gives information on the Council's budgets and annual report.

Council Finances

The 2017/18 year has seen further improvement in the Council's already sound financial situation.

The Council received yet another clean bill of health from its external auditors, made savings of more than £180,000 on its Revenue Budget, invested nearly £185,000 in Council and community assets, and increased its balances and reserves to £1.265 million.

This all means that the Council is beginning the new financial year in good financial health and has a strong foundation on which to build as it looks ahead to what is likely to be a challenging future.

The Council faces some significant financial challenges in the medium term, with the biggest risks being the ongoing cuts that are being made to the Council Tax Support Grant funding on which the Council is reliant, the ongoing increases to the National Living Wage which is putting pressure on the Council's pay bill.

So while the Council is starting from a strong financial position, in the longer term the process of achieving a balanced Revenue Budget is likely to become increasingly difficult, while balances and reserves will undoubtedly fall as potentially significant capital investment requirements are funded.

The Council is currently in the process of updating its Medium Term Financial Plan, which aims to put in place a strategy to manage the financial impact of the challenges faced, protect services, maintain balances and reserves and keep council tax increases as low as possible over the next few years.

Further information on the Council finances is set out in the Annual Financial Report which has been produced for this Parish Meeting.

4. **QUESTIONS**

The Mayor / Chairman had not received any prior notice of questions on the official sheets, however, he did ask if any electors in attendance had anything they wished to raise or question before closing the meeting.

There were no questions or issues raised. The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

CHAIRMAN.