

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, 22nd MAY 2019** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs. M. Dalton (Chairman / Mayor)
and there were 17 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 M. Iveson, seconded by M. Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting, held on the 23rd May 2018, be confirmed as a correct record and record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **CHAIRMAN / MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The following copy of the Chairman / Mayor's Annual Report was taken as read.

During 2018/19 – the Council has continued to provide services to residents of Great Aycliffe. The coming year and years to come will be challenging due to funding cuts and budget pressures and 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 and hens poultry. These sites are located at:
 - Clarence Chare
 - Finchale Road
 - St. Oswalds
 - 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 Council's 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
 - Cobblers Hall / Burn Lane
- A new play area, including a MUGA and play equipment has been completed at Cobblers 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, Aycliffe Squash Club and Aycliffe Archery Club. The Sports Complex also provides a number of activity sessions for both adults and children, including an activity programme for children during school holidays. This year as well as following national awareness days the programme of events has been extended to include Fantazmajoria (steam punk/sci/fi event), MMA events, Dog Shows and craft fairs.
- 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 continues to provide a series of annual leisure events such as:

- Party in the Park – Part of the Durham Brass Festival
- Senior Citizen Excursions
- Fireworks display
- Fun in the Parks
- Santa Tours and letters
- Introduction of an Easter Egg Hunt

The Council is also supporting events run by local organisations:-

- 10K Fun Run – Aycliffe Running Club
- Music in May organised by Acle Scout Group
- Live Music Festival organised by Aycliffe Radio
- Social Event organised by Great Aycliffe Village Hall Association.

It has also been agreed to organise the following events in the next financial year:-

- Skate Competition and Demonstrations
- Horticultural Show
- Party in the Park

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.

Youth Council

The Youth Council have considered a number of grants and have awarded a total sum of £1,459.

Council Grants / Donations

The Council considered applications for Grants and the following were agreed and paid out over the year 2018/2019.

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|-------------------------------------|-----|
| • School Benevolent Fund | 200 |
| • Women's Banner Group | 250 |
| • Durham Cathedral Support | 250 |
| • Aycliffe Radio | 20 |
| • Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society | 250 |
| • City of Durham Lions Club | 64 |
| • Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe | 150 |

• Aycliffe Village History Society	200
• Friends of Stockton & Darlington Railway	50
• Akari Care Home	50
• Aycliffe Village Residents Association	200
• Great North Air Ambulance	250
• Voyage Care	45
• Akari Care	25
• North East War Memorials Project	100

£ 2,104

Capital Works

The Council has continued to develop its Asset Management Plan in order to plan investment in Council and community assets such as buildings, vehicles, machinery, play equipment and street equipment.

The Council's Capital Programme makes budget provision each year for an ongoing programme of investment in these assets and significant investment has been made in recent years in new community assets such as play equipment, multi-use games areas and skate parks.

Newsletter

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

Council Finances

The 2018/19 year has been a successful one and the Council ended the year in a relatively strong financial situation.

On the positive side the Council received yet another clean bill of health from its external auditors, made savings of more than a quarter of a million pounds on its Revenue Budget, and invested nearly half a million pounds in Council and community assets, including a major new park development at Cobblers Hall and the replacement of the Town Park skate park and Aycliffe Village play area.

On the negative side, Council balances and reserves fell from £1.265 million to £1.128 million as the capital investment made last year exceeded the saving delivered on the Revenue Budget.

All in all though, 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.

Looking ahead, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan highlighted a number of financial challenges that the Council will need to proactively plan ahead for.

These challenges include the ongoing cuts that are being made to the Council Tax Support Grant funding on which the Council is reliant, increases to the National Living Wage which is putting pressure on the Council's pay bill, the significant future capital investment commitments highlighted in the Asset Management Plan which will see Council balances diminish, and a possible future cap on the council tax increases of large town councils.

It was for these reasons that the Council made the difficult decision to increase the Town Council element of the Council Tax by 5% this year.

The additional resources raised were used to establish a top up to capital reserves in the Council's Revenue Budget and to fund changes to the Council's staff grading structure to deal with problems caused by increases in the National Living Wage.

The monthly increase on a Band A property was 65p and the Council hopes that residents will feel that this is a modest price to pay to ensure that all of the important services provided by the Town Council to the community of Great Aycliffe can be protected for another year, whilst ensuring that the council balances can be maintained at prudent levels to help steer the Council through the difficult times that lie ahead.

It is also important to point out that while the Town Council Tax has been increased in excess of inflation for the last couple of years, the average increase over the last ten years has been 1.75%, which is less than inflation.

Information on the Council finances are 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, she did ask if any electors in attendance had anything they wished to raise or question before closing the meeting.

Councillor George C. Gray asked the Mayor / Chairman to clarify the way that this Parish Meeting was advertised throughout the Town.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that appropriate Notices of the Meeting were published in all of the Council Notice Boards along with their publication on the website and in the local press. The agenda (signed by the Mayor / Chairman) of the meeting was also posted in the same way.

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

CHAIRMAN.