

Revenue Budget Summary - Corporate Services

Budget Description	Budget Holder(s)	2021/22 Gross Budget	2021/22 Net Budget
Corporate Services	Dan Austin (Town Clerk) Christine Walton (Corporate & Policy Officer)	£275,000	£273,100

Purpose of the Budget:

The purpose of the Corporate Services Budget is to provide the resources to facilitate the effective corporate management of the Council, ensuring that it complies with all statutory and regulatory duties and responsibilities, and formulates, monitors and delivers its strategic aims and targets.

Scope of Activity and Nature of the Service:

The Corporate Services Section has wide ranging responsibilities, some of which are statutory and some of which are discretionary.

It is the corporate centre of the Town Council and is responsible for developing the corporate framework under which all other departments and services must operate.

The Corporate Services Section is responsible for the following specific areas of work:-

- Preparing the Council's Service Delivery Plan each year, including the setting and monitoring of annual aims and targets;
- Managing and administering the Council's Performance Management Framework;
- Maintaining and updating the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders;
- Preparing, maintaining and updating all non-financial Council policies;
- Ensuring the effective organisation and running of the Committees of the Council and overseeing the production of the agendas and minutes of all meetings;
- Overseeing the management of the records of the Council and compliance with GDPR;
- Delivering training to staff and Members;
- Providing professional support and advice to Members and staff;
- Monitoring and managing the Council's risks;
- Managing and overseeing the Council's arrangements for health and safety;
- Managing the Council's information technology facilities and infrastructure and overseeing the information technology support contract;
- Overseeing the operation of the Council's CCTV cameras by Durham County Council;
- Overseeing the use of consultants by the Council where specialist knowledge is required including human resources, planning and procurement advice, and the use of solicitors, surveyors, architects etc;
- Ensuring the effective running of the Youth Council;
- Providing support and guidance for any elections or by-elections;
- Considering and commenting on planning applications and ensuring compliance the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

There are three officers within the Corporate Section; the Town Clerk, Corporate and Policy Officer; and the PA to the Town Clerk.

Contribution to Council Aims:

The Corporate Services Section contributes to the following Council Strategic Aims:-

Aim 1 "To provide good quality governance and management of the Council".

Aim 2 "To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner".

Aim 6 "To help and encourage partnership working to improve services and facilities for the residents of Great Aycliffe".

Aim 7 "To encourage the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in local democracy".

Aim 8 "To research information and make the case for Great Aycliffe".

Performance Measures and Indicators

The Corporate Services Section is ultimately responsible for the Council's Performance Management Framework and makes a direct contribution to a large number of the Strategic Aims and Targets within the Service Delivery Plan and in particular those linked to Aims 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8:-

- Publish the Town Council Service Delivery Plan by 31st May 2021.
- Publish an Annual Report.
- Provide training for the Town Clerk from his annual appraisal and CPD requirements;
- Develop a recommended training programme for Members which shows highly recommended and recommended courses, with a reminder being sent quarterly and records of attendance and non-attendance being kept.
- Undertake an annual review of the Council Constitution and ensure compliance with current legislation.
- Ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by targeting a different service area each newsletter publication and making sure each area is targeted at least once.
- Ensure that social media is used to advertise the Council's services and facilities.
- Undertake research where appropriate for new policies and procedures.
- Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to Council as and when required;
- Ensure all staff have an annual appraisal.
- Complete a review of the Council's electronic filing system and implement improvements to enable the upgrade of the Council's main server and the transfer of data to the 'cloud'.
- Undertake a quarterly review of staff sickness and report to Performance Management Group;
- Continue to implement any recommendations regarding Coronavirus to ensure the safety of staff, members, and the public.
- Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return by 30th September 2021;
- Ensure all relevant information is published in compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code and Openness of Local Government Regulations;
- Ensure that a six-monthly review of progress in delivering the work set out in the Asset Management Plan is undertaken and reported to the Asset Management Working Group;
- To consider the Council's Business Risks every March and minute that a full review has taken place by the Council.
- Ensure that at least one Service Review is completed each year;
- Support and encourage Aycliffe Youth Council by organising the election process, holding at least eight meetings per year and helping to organise at least one project per year;
- Hold an aims and targets meeting each March to discuss progress on existing targets and new targets with residents;
- Review the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan in 2022;
- Hold or take part in at least two events to inform residents about Town Council services; and
- Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out.

Key Budget Changes for 2021/22

This budget has reduced by £11,150 to a net running cost of £273,100 per year.

This firstly provides for expected increases in staffing costs from a forecast 2021/22 local government pay award and a member of staff joining the pension scheme.

In addition, the information technology budget has been boosted to provide for the additional costs relating to the new leased broadband line, additional Microsoft licences for remote staff working and provision for the costs of the possible move to virtual meetings and paperless governance next year e.g. to cover the cost of software licences and support contracts.

These increases have been partly offset by savings from staff turnover i.e. the new Town Clerk commencing work on the bottom of the salary grade.

Importance of Service to the Community

While there have not been any satisfaction surveys or consultation carried out relating specifically to corporate services, it is considered that the effective corporate management of the Council directly supports the effective democratic management of the Council and the delivery of front-line services and therefore benefits the community as a whole.

The 2019 'Your Town, Your Choice, Your Voice' Satisfaction Survey also provided some positive feedback as to public satisfaction with the Council as a whole.

The Council achieved an overall satisfaction figure of 88% in the survey, whilst there were also high levels of satisfaction with the way in which the Council keeps residents informed, how residents can get involved and complain, and the publication of performance information.

External Funding and Fees and Charges:

The only direct income receivable by the Corporate Services Budget is the community benefit funding from the solar farm at School Aycliffe at £900 per year, and a total of £1,000 for miscellaneous corporate income including the insurance low claims rebate and various wayleaves for access to Council land.