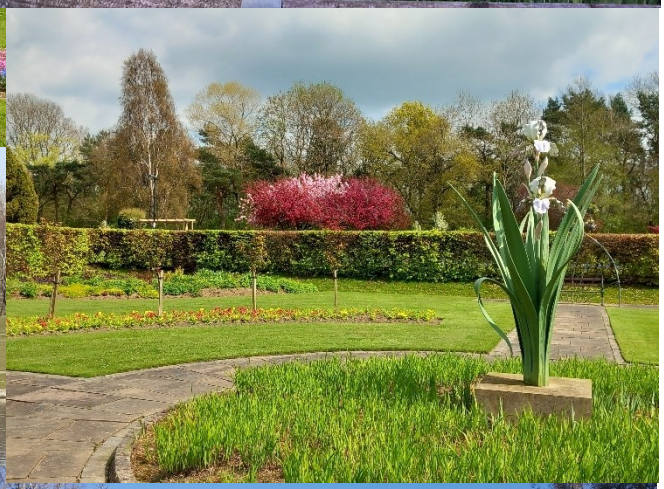
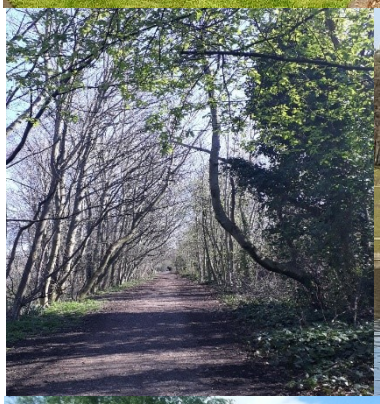
GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN COUNCIL

Service Delivery Plan 2023-24

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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 and is the oldest New Town in the North East. 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, located 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.

There are a great many walking routes, with a number of public rights of way and bridleways, giving easy access to extensive green spaces, nature areas and local wildlife areas. Many of the main thoroughfares have tree lined avenues which enhance the green feel of the town.

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 has enabled young people from the area to have a choice of educational and vocational routes with excellent prospects for employment in nearby facilities.

There is excellent connectivity within and around the town, with the A1(M) to the east and the Bishop Auckland to Darlington rail line running through the western side of the town and Business Park, with two stations serving the parish.

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. Aycliffe Business Park is home to around 500 companies and around 10,000 employees and continues to expand, with a mixed-use retail development and trade park.

There is a strong community feel, with a wide range of community facilities, 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 across the parish, with something for everyone.

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.

However, parts of Great Aycliffe are ranked within the poorest 20% of deprived areas nationally. As a 'new town' Newton Aycliffe has a higher-than-average ageing population. 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.

The Town Centre has a mix of individual retail outlets and chain stores, with other retail outlets in neighbourhood areas. 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 welcomes your views and comments on the Town Council Service Delivery Plan (the Plan), and these can be sent to: Daniel Austin, Town Clerk, Great Aycliffe Town Council, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham, DL5 6QF

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.

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.

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 actually **DOES** and what it is **NOT** responsible for.

Great Aycliffe Town Council:

- ✓ Manages 10 parks, all with play equipment:

Town Park	West Park
Moore Lane Park	Aycliffe Village
Simpasture Park	Byerley Park
St Oswald's Park	Woodham Park
Horndale Park	Cobbler's Hall

- ✓ Provides additional play areas at Scott Place, School Aycliffe, and the Oak Leaf Sport Complex, plus five Multi-Use Games Areas, a BMX Track, a Scoot Track, and a Skate Park
- ✓ Provides 6 football pitches, Mini-soccer, and six-a-side pitches
- ✓ Runs the Oak Leaf Sports Complex - indoor bowls, sports hall, squash courts, bar and catering, children's holidays courses, indoor/outdoor sports activities
- ✓ Runs the Oak Leaf Golf Complex – 18-hole golf course and an 18-bay floodlit driving range and practice putting area
- ✓ Manages Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery and provides grounds maintenance and burial service at St Andrew's Churchyard
- ✓ Runs St Oswald's pre-school play setting – with an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating, and Tots in the Park
- ✓ Provides and manages a wide range of special community events – Fireworks Display, Fun-in-the-Parks, Santa Tours, Senior Citizens' Excursions and Christmas Lights
- ✓ Assists and supports other event organisers – 10k race, 3k Fun Run, Remembrance Day Parade, Cyclocross, various schools partnership activities, Annual Indoor Bowls Competition and Community Enhancement Awards
- ✓ Provides a range of civic events
- ✓ Provides and continues to maintain Aycliffe Angels Memorial Garden
- ✓ Maintenance of war memorial and flagpole
- ✓ Provides 233 allotment plots in 5 different locations. 2 allotment sites with pigeon or poultry facilities

- ✓ 7 Bee keeping plots and 2 training plots
- ✓ Provides an environmental centre at Moore Lane
- ✓ Encourages interest in the environment of Great Aycliffe through the Works and Environment Manager and his team who work with the community and schools
- ✓ Employs a Town Pride Team
- ✓ Employs a team of Park Patrol Operatives to assist with crime prevention
- ✓ Provides public seats in many locations
- ✓ Provides over 50 bus shelters with litter bins (not the ones with adverts)
- ✓ Grounds maintenance and environmental management at:
    - South 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 Nature Park
    - Byerley Park Nature area
    - 2 nature areas on the business park
    - Aycliffe Village Greens (custodians & maintenance)
- ✓ Assists Aycliffe Youth Council
- ✓ Encourages Community Empowerment through Consultation and Open Days
- ✓ Provides small grants to local voluntary organisations
- ✓ Provides and administers the Community Recognition and Awards Scheme
- ✓ Maintains the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan
- ✓ Comments 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**:

- X Own or provide services in the town centre
- X Empty household or business refuse bins
- X Manage schools
- X Manage the Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre
- X Run economic development
- X Manage the highways
- X Manage the police, fire, or ambulance services
- X Grant planning permission
- X Provide library services
- X Run social services
- X Run housing services
- X Provide bus services

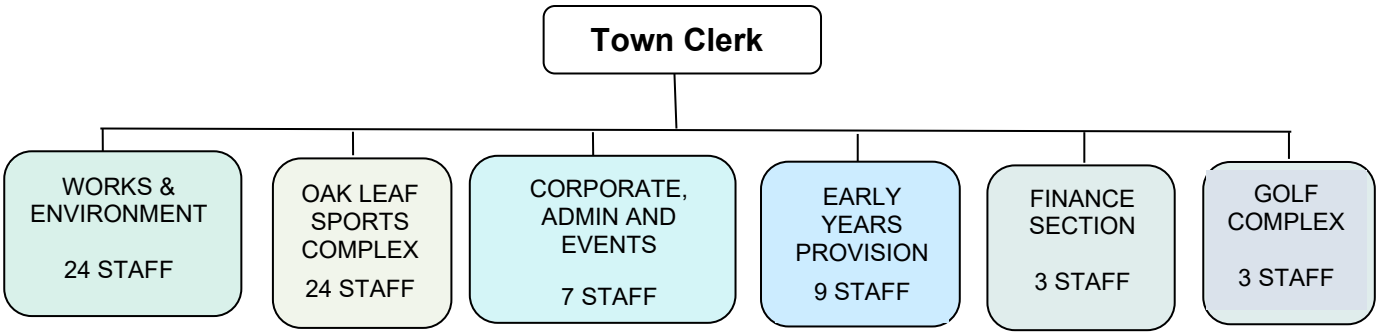
CORPORATE SERVICES SECTION

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 Net Revenue Budget or Precept of £1,890,739 in 2023/24.

The Council currently employs 71 staff, made up of 43 full-time and 28 part-time employees supported by a number of casual staff, who do not form part of the formal staff establishment.



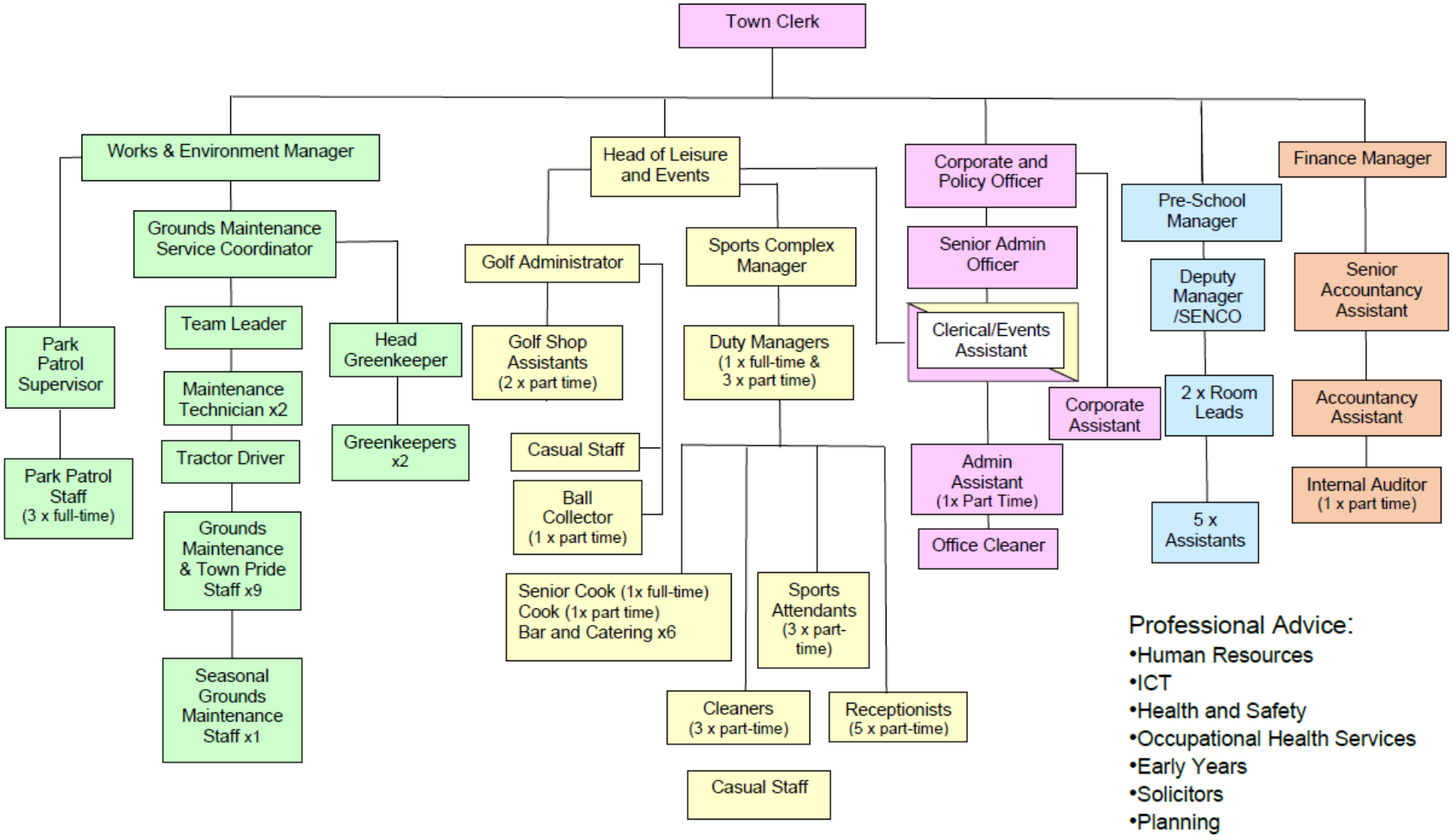
The Council's Establishment

The Council also retains the services of consultants for human resources matters, health and safety, legal, procurement, planning advice, occupational health services and other speciality services such as IT.

The Senior Officers within the Council are:

Town Clerk	Daniel Austin	daniel.austin@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Finance Manager	Tracey Woodhead	tracey.woodhead@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Corporate and Policy Officer	Amanda Donald	amanda.donald@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Works and Environment Manager	Steve Cooper	steven.cooper@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Head of Leisure and Events	Judith Thexton	judith.thexton@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Sports Complex Manager	Andy Clark	andrew.clark@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Grounds Maintenance Co-Ordinator	Lee Williams	lee.williams@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Senior Admin Officer	Sharna Stretch	sharna.stretch@great-aycliffe.gov.uk
Pre-School Manager	Julie Gale	julie.gale@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Town Council Organisation Structure



Professional Advice:

- Human Resources
- ICT
- Health and Safety
- Occupational Health Services
- Early Years
- Solicitors
- Planning

In February 2015, following the town wide survey undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process and after consideration by Council, it was agreed that the Town Council strategic mission statement should 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:-

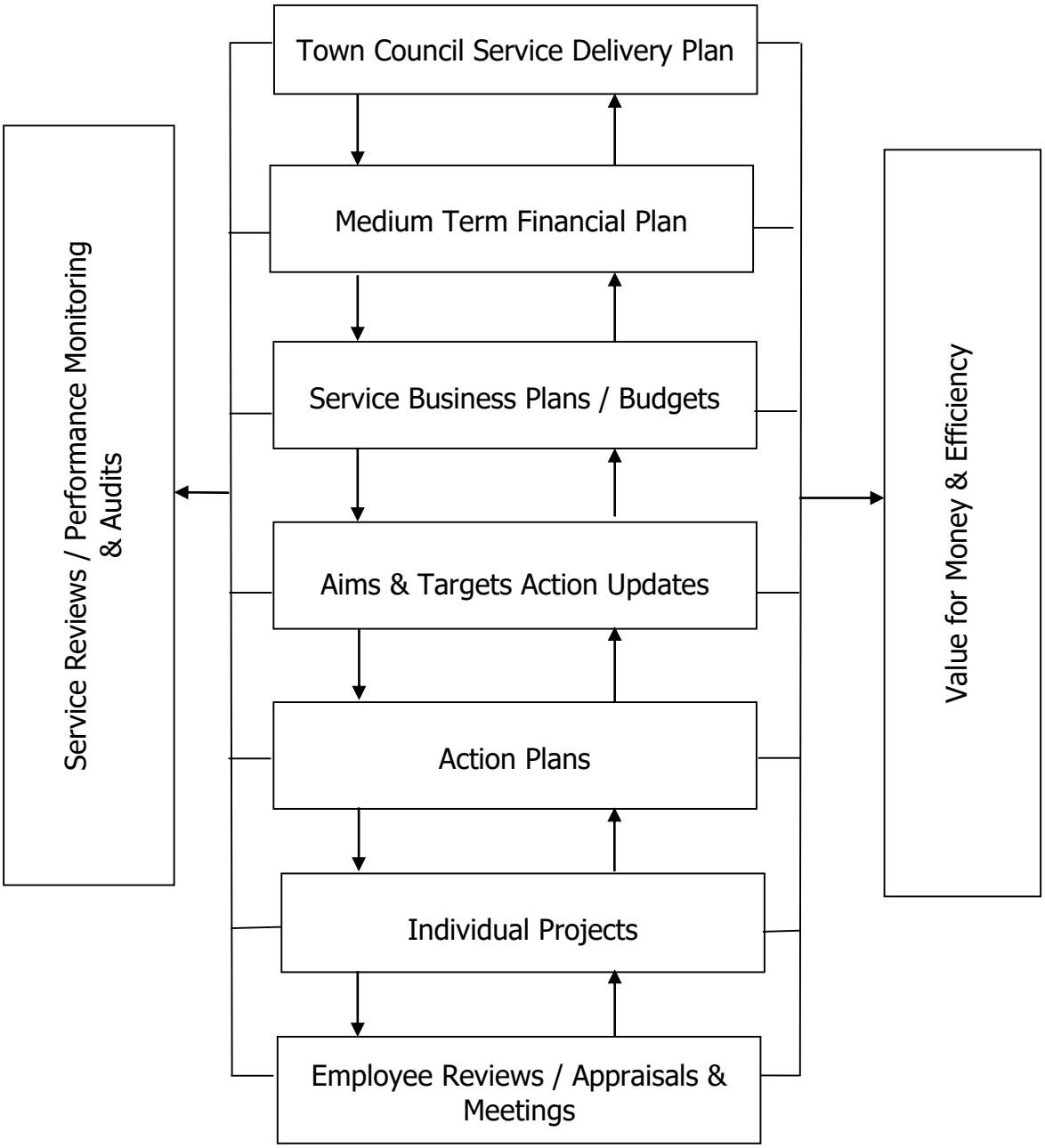
1.	**To provide good quality governance and management of the Council.**
2.	**To manage the council's finances and assets in a responsible manner.**
3.	**To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities.**
4.	**To provide pre-school education as appropriate in Great Aycliffe.**
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. 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 Council 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, while residents are informed and consulted via the Council's newsletters and through engagement with community groups and organisations. The progress made during the year informs the development of targets for the following year.

Council Targets 2022/23

When setting targets, every effort is made to ensure the aims and targets are closely linked to medium-term financial planning, the budget setting process and within the context of the Council's Asset Management Plan. It is acknowledged 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 other sources, giving rise to one-off projects that are not part of the aims and targets but are important to take advantage of. The Town Council Service Delivery 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 (2022/23) including a statement of progress achieved against each target are set out in **Appendix 1,** which provides the close out status on the targets.

Council Targets 2023/24

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 and an annual budget consultation is also held with residents.

It is worth noting, once again, that the **Town Centre is in private ownership and is NOT** the responsibility of the Town Council.

The list of new targets for the coming financial year (2023/24) can be found at **Appendix 2**.

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, particularly 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 its strategic and corporate activities
- To ensure effective management and implementation of the Council's policies and priorities
- To be aware of, and ensure compliance with, all duties and obligations as laid down in Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments, and specific guidelines
- To ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- To maintain and update the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders
- To provide professional support and advice to Members and staff
- To ensure the effective organisation and running of the Committees of the Council and oversee the production of agendas and minutes of meetings
- To provide timely and appropriate advice in relation to all employee and employer relations issues
- To monitor and manage the Council's risks
- To manage and oversee 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 deal with Town Council land and property matters including village greens, sales, and acquisitions
- To prepare the annual Town Council Service Delivery Plan, including the setting of aims and annual targets
- To manage and administer the Council's Performance Management Framework.
- To oversee the use of consultants by the Council
- To maintain the Town Council's website and ensure an effective IT support service is provided across the Council
- To ensure the effective running of the Youth Council
- To provide support and guidance for any elections
- To support the annual external audit inspection
- To ensure the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan is a robust document, helping to maintain high standards of development appropriate to the Parish

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.
- To manage 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 Report
- Preparing the Statement of Accounts
- 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
- Managing 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
- Ensuring an effective Internal Audit service
- Providing 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 Investment 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 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 Council made **capital investment of £165,191 in 2022/23** and the main capital works completed during the year are listed below:

- Flat roof replacement at the Council Offices
- CCTV works at the depot
- Internal CCTV installation at St Oswald's Pre School
- Purchase of two single cab vehicles
- Purchase of electric machinery
- Purchase of replacement ICT equipment
- Website improvement works
- Replacement festive lighting
- Replacement goals
- Improvements to the driving range ball dispenser machine
- Golf course ditch clearance works
- Purchase of cemeteries grave shoring equipment
- Purchase of Remembrance Seating
- Ash Tree Dieback Disease works
- Street Lighting upgrades to LED
- Replacement height restrictor at the offices visitors' car park
- Purchase of Rapid Deployment CCTV cameras, and
- Aycliffe Nature Park resurfacing works

There was therefore a substantial underspend of almost £425,234 compared to the 2022/23 Capital Programme Budget.

This 'saving' was due a number of factors, including a number of projects being deferred to future years following the Council's review of the 2022/23 Capital Programme, and the fact that many of the projects included in the budget were 'provisional' sums which did not go ahead this year, whilst some projects have been delayed, and the final costs on a number of other projects were less than budgeted.

The **Capital Programme Budget for 2023/24 totals £116,500** and includes provision for the following planned projects:

- Automatic door motor at the Council Offices
- Depot alarms upgrade
- Replacement of fairways mower cylinders;
- Ongoing purchase of electrical works machinery
- Essential computer replacements and website development
- Upgrade of the sports and golf complex till and booking system
- The ongoing programme of replacement festive lighting
- The ongoing programme of play area surfacing replacement
- Provision for ongoing repairs to the golf course irrigation system
- Various works to the sports complex building including roofing and drainage repairs, external redecoration, public address system and electrical vehicle charging points (subject to external funding)
- Replacement public seating
- Bus shelter repairs, and
- Ongoing programme of footpath repairs

In addition to the above **a total of £335,500 has been carried forward from 2022/23** to meet the cost of ongoing capital projects and provisional sums. These carried forward projects include:-

- Security gate works at the depot
- Internal CCTV at St Oswald's pre-school
- Migration of electronic data to the cloud
- Information technology infrastructure improvements
- Photocopier replacement
- Upgrade of the main computer server
- Play area safety surfacing replacement at St Oswald's Park
- Skate park repair works
- Works at the driving range including steelwork painting and replacement ball washing machine
- Works at the golf shop including replacement flooring and works to the alarm system
- Various works at the sports complex including roofing repairs, security improvements, bar furniture replacements, sports hall flooring maintenance and kitchen equipment replacement and squash court flooring
- Replacement litter and dog bins, and public seating
- Replacement perch seating in the bus shelters, and
- Activity in relation to Ash Tree dieback works

The 2023/24 Capital Programme Budget will be funded from the Council's Earmarked Capital Reserves, which are set aside for this purpose.

Further details on the Council's recent capital spending and capital investment plans for the future are provided in the 2022/23 Outturn Report, 2023/24 Budget Document and the forthcoming Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan (GANP) was agreed by public referendum in 2017 after an extensive period of public consultation. It is a statutory planning document, which covers the parish of Great Aycliffe. Its planning policies relate to land and business use in the parish for 20 years from the date of the Plan. The GANP is community led; it sets out the vision and objectives of the residents of the parish, which are:

'To make Great Aycliffe a vibrant community, the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan will seek to enhance the natural environment, support and encourage high quality housing, local jobs and improved retail and leisure facilities in a healthy, green and attractive town'.

Community Consultation

A wide range of consultations take place on a regular basis, and we use a number of different methods to encourage people of all ages to take part and give us their views. We are flexible in our approach to consultation, but our methods are realistic in terms of cost and available resources.

We produce and publish a quarterly e-newsletter and continue to develop our social media.

Surveys are undertaken each year for users of the Oak Leaf Sports Complex and Senior Citizens' Excursions.

The allotment holders are surveyed every two years, and other surveys are undertaken as and when required, using a mixture of paper and online methods for consultation.

Officers from the Town Council attend community events to highlight the services it provides and gather residents' views.

Results and Comments from the 2023/24 Budget Consultation

The Council takes residents' views into account when planning services and taking spending decisions. The annual Budget Consultation provides an opportunity for you to comment on our budget proposals.

The annual budget is important to the community in terms of how our spending plans may impact on the provision of local services and investment in assets for the benefit of the town, and regarding the level of Council Tax that we need to raise from local taxpayers in order to fund these plans.

Consultation on the Council's draft 2023/24 budget proposals was undertaken this year via an online Budget Survey which was widely publicised on the Council website, in the local press, and on the Council's social media channels. Hard copies of the survey were also placed in a number of community locations including the library and community centres.

A total of 14 responses were received, which is significantly down on the 67 responses received last year.

The results of the Budget Consultation for 2023/24 are summarised below. We asked:

1. Does the Town Council Tax provide value for money?

Yes	**12**	**85.7%**
No	2	14.3%

2. Looking ahead to next year, all things considered, are you in support of the proposed increase in the Town Council Tax (equating to £12.74 per year or £1.06 per month at Council Tax Band A)?

Yes	**11**	**78.6%**
No	3	21.4%

3. Which Council's services are most important to you i.e. where budget cuts should not be made and where any future investment should be targeted?

Top 10 Most Important Services in Priority Order

Service Area
Environment, Nature Parks and Open Space
Parks and Play Areas
Allotments
Park Patrol Service
Fun in the Parks
Litter and Dog Bins
Flower Beds
Santa Tours
Cemeteries
Oakleaf Golf Course and Driving Range

4. Which Council services are least important to you i.e. where budget cuts, if they are required in the future, should be targeted?

Top 10 Least Important Services in Priority Order

Service Area
Senior Citizens' Trips
Civic Events and the Office of Mayor
Councillors
Oakleaf Sports Complex
Oakleaf Golf Course and Driving Range
Large Community Events such as the Big Brash Bash
Flower Beds
Firework Display
Corporate Management and Admin
Moore Lane Environment Centre and Environment Events

Value for Money

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 taxpayers. It 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.

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

Election of Mayor

The Council elects a Town Mayor annually from amongst its members, the Mayor for 2023/24 is Councillor Carl Robinson. The Mayor has chosen All Disabilities Matter as his charities for his term of office and will be accompanied by his wife, the Mayoress, Carol.

There are a number of formal civic engagements each year including:

- The Civic Dinner
- A Civic Service
- Remembrance Sunday
- Mayor's 'At Home'
- Carol Service

Councillor Ken Robson was elected as Mayor of Great Aycliffe in May 2022, with his term of office lasting until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2023.

The Mayoress was his wife, Elaine Robson and Councillor Neville Jones was Deputy Mayor.

The Mayor raised a total £1,988 each for his chosen charities: Together 21 and Wishing Well during the term of office.

Members

The Council has a membership of 30, which is made up of 5 Labour, 17 Independent and 8 Liberal Democrat Councillors.

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

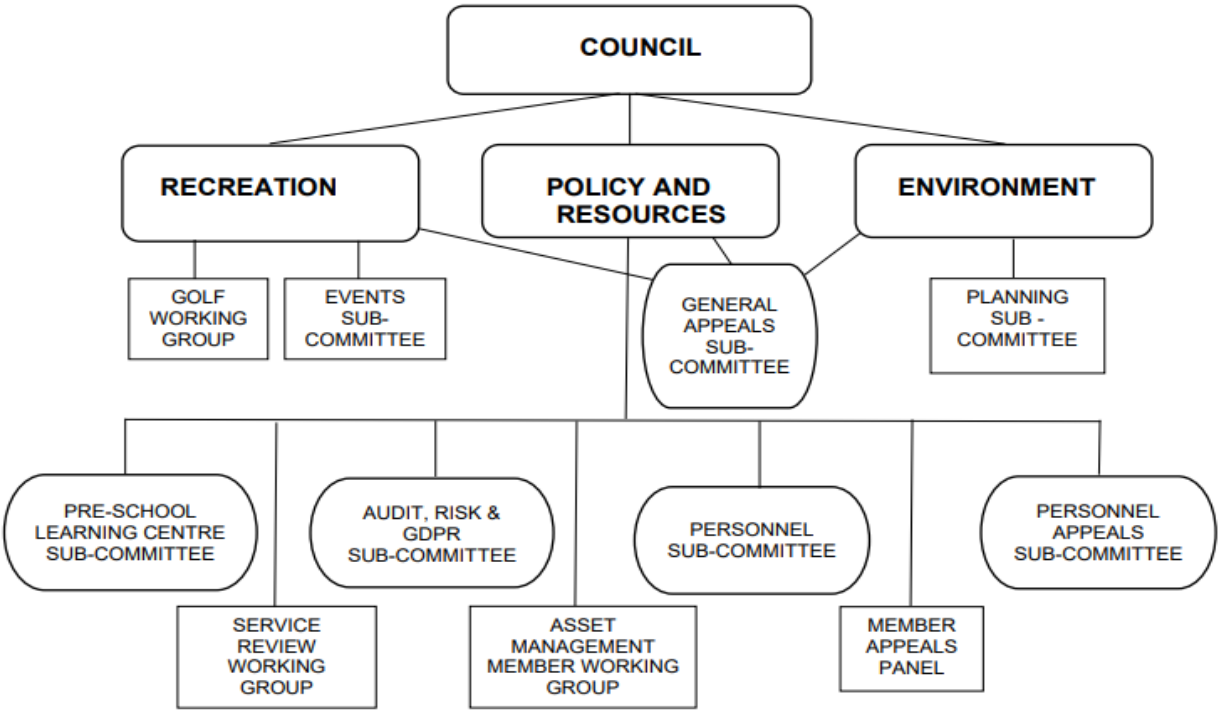
The Local Authorities' (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003 came into force on the 1st May 2003, which allowed the Council to pay each member a basic parish allowance.

After taking advice from the Independent Remuneration Panel of Durham County Council in 2018, the level of remuneration was set at £1,330 per annum for each member of the Town Council. This amount has not increased since that date.

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.

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.



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 2023/24 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 start of 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 other 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 General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

Representation on Outside Bodies

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) Youth Council: Councillors Tony Armstrong, Dorothy Bowman and the Corporate and Policy Officer.

(b) County Durham Association of Local Councils: Councillors Arun M. Chandran, Lindsey Aston and the Town Clerk

(c) Aycliffe Village Hall Association: None appointed at the Annual Meeting.

(d) Woodham Village Community Association: Councillors Lindsey Aston and Michael Stead

(e) Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils Committee: Councillors Arun M. Chandran, Peter Bergg and the Town Clerk.

(f) Larger Local Councils' Forum: Councillors Arun M. Chandran, Lindsey Aston and the Town Clerk.

(g) Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society: Councillor Ian Gray

(h) Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway: Councillor Jim Atkinson

(i) Western Area Partnership: Councillors George Gray and Ken Robson

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) serves the Parish of Great Aycliffe. The Town Council makes every effort to play a significant role within this group and wherever possible reflect the wider needs of the area.

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 strategic aims within this Plan.

Works and Environment Section

The Works and Environment Section provides a range of 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 provides a range of skilled services to the Council including:

- 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
- Partnership work with other agencies to enhance and improve other amenity areas not under the ownership of Great Aycliffe Town Council
- Provision and management of a park patrol service
- Provision of an 'out of hours' service for emergency call outs in relation to security or health and safety issues

- Supply and maintenance of sufficient plant, vehicles and equipment required to undertake the above services
- Provision of operational duties in a safe manner as a result of employing safe working practices and undertaking risk assessments to ensure the health and safety and welfare of staff and the general public
- Work with schools to encourage environmental awareness
- Management and maintenance of wildflower 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 are:

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

Parks and Play Areas

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

The ten parks are:

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

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

The Works and Environment Section carries 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

Sports 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, Simpasture Park and Aycliffe Village.

Our seasonal charges for the pitches range from £555 to £790, depending on location and the facilities provided. Junior team fees are charged at £430.

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 216 produce allotments and fees range from £23.00 to £46.00 per year depending on the size of the plot.

We also provide 7 pigeon sites at St. Oswald's and 5 poultry sites at Clarence Chare.

We provide 9 sites at St. Oswald's for the specific purpose of keeping bees with training sites.

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.

The 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.

Training was provided to anyone who was interested on 'How to Keep Bees' to ensure that residents who wish to take on a 'bee plot' fully understand the requirements of keeping bees.

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 Adshell style shelters located on Woodham Way, Williamfield Way, Burnhill Way, and the Business Park).

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**.

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

One of the key roles of the Works and Environment Manager is to raise environmental awareness within the Great Aycliffe area and two multi-skilled 'Town Pride' operatives enable the Town Council to deal with urgent matters and also assist with various environmental issues.

In addition, the Works and Environment Manager coordinates 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 Centre in Moore Lane Pavilion is the base for many community and school events; this is supplemented with various other activities around the town.

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:

- Senior Citizens' Excursions
- Community Enhancement Awards
- Fun in the Parks
- Fireworks Display
- Christmas Lighting
- Santa Tours
- Santa Letters

In addition, this year, we celebrated His Majesty The King's Coronation, with a family "Big Lunch" picnic event and will be marking the 75th Anniversary of Newton Aycliffe with an "Aycliffe 75 – Through the Decades" family event on Sunday 2nd July.

The Council has also provided grant funding and the use of land for the inaugural 'Ayclive' Music Festival on Saturday 29th July and has funded a Big Brass Bash event in the Town Park on Friday 14th July.

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

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 Centres

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. We provide up to 40 places for three-year olds in our Pre-School and up to 12 places for two-year olds in our Tots in the Park, term-time only from 8.30am until 3.30pm.

Our standards are high, and St Oswald's Pre-school has received a successful inspection from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), receiving an 'Outstanding' grading at their inspection in January 2023.

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 Pre-School Manager ensures the smooth running of the Pre-School and Tots in the Park, 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 Durham County Council, 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 25 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 to seek to diversify events/activities within the Sports Complex 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 main **responsibilities** for the service 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 Golf Club Members to make their views known on the operation of the facilities.

PEST ANALYSIS (Political, Economic, Sociological and Technical 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.

Political

Pest Analysis Factors	Potential Impact: High Medium Low Undetermined	Type: Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Impact: Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Importance: Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	ACTION
County Council Issues	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Make case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity** **Feed issues to CDALC for representation**
Changes in Government policy / legislation	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Keep up-to-date** **Lobby via NALC**
External Audit Inspections	Medium	Opportunity	Unchanged	Important	**Maintain internal control** **Adhere to legislative requirements**
Political balance of Council	Medium	Opportunity	Unknown	Important	**Be apolitical** **Work with all parties**
Council Tax Support Grant	High	Threat	Unknown	Critical	**Monitor and await information from Government and Durham County Council**
Implementation of General Data Protection Regulation	Medium	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	**Continue to review all documentation**

Economic

Pest Analysis Factors	Potential Impact: High Medium Low Undetermined	Type: Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Impact: Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Importance: Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	ACTION
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	Increasing	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**
Coronavirus	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	**Monitor React accordingly**

Sociological

Pest Analysis Factors	Potential Impact: High Medium Low Undetermined	Type: Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	Impact: Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	Importance: Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	ACTION
Access to services	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Develop partnerships** **Pricing policy and Marketing**
Social exclusion **Hard to reach groups** **Equality and diversity** **Deprivation**	Medium	Strength	Increasing	Important	**Special events** **Free taster sessions** **Equal opportunities employer** **Monitor service users** **Satisfaction Survey**
Crime/Fear of Crime	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Park Patrol Officers**
Ageing population	Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Provision of services - cost**
Health/Obesity	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Partnership working**

Technical

Impact on IT from GDPR	High	Weakness	Unchanged	Important	**Continue to monitor and implement security arrangements**
New Communication Technologies	Medium	Opportunity	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**
Cyber-attack and loss of data or critical systems	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	**Undertake security assessments** **Ensure security updates implemented** **Store data off site**

SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

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.

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
❖ Strong customer focus ❖ Committed workforce ❖ Strong working relationships ❖ Commitment to service ❖ Clear focus on the way forward ❖ Different skills ❖ Performance management ❖ Local employer ❖ Sound finances ❖ Risk management ❖ Adaptable and flexible workforce ❖ Health and safety arrangements ❖ Project Planning	❖ 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 ❖ Limited ability to raise funding ❖ Staff turnover ❖ Lack of career progression opportunities ❖ Use of information technology
OPPORTUNITY	**THREAT**
❖ 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 ❖ Working with GAMP ❖ Publicity of Council services and facilities ❖ Project Planning ❖ Increased Tax Base (more houses) ❖ Increased use of social media ❖ Use of information technology to streamline and modernise services ❖ No Government limit on Precept increases	❖ Financial cuts – Council Tax Support Grant ❖ High inflation on price of goods and services ❖ Pay awards ❖ Political changes ❖ Crime and vandalism ❖ Failure to retain or recruit staff ❖ Fall in staff motivation ❖ Unforeseen budget pressures ❖ Possible government limit on Council Tax increases ❖ Industrial action ❖ Non-compliance with GDPR ❖ Confidentiality awareness/compliance

APPENDIX 1

CLOSE OUT STATUS

AIMS AND TARGETS APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023

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

No	Target	Comment
1	Publish a Town Council Service Delivery Plan by the end of June each year.	**Complete**
2	Publish an Annual Report.	**Complete**
3	Provide an annual training programme for the Town Clerk from his annual appraisal and CPD requirements.	**Complete**
4	Maintain a training programme for Members which shows recommended courses with a regular reminder sent and records of attendance and non-attendance kept.	**Complete**
5	Develop and provide an annual training programme for the staff within each service area, informed by the annual appraisal process.	**Complete**
6	Undertake an annual review of the Council Constitution, Financial Regulations and ensure compliance with current legislation.	**Complete**
7	Ensure compliance with GDPR.	**Complete**
8	Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication making sure each area is targeted at least once.	**Complete** E-newsletter in development.
9	Ensure that social media is used to advertise the Council's services and facilities.	**Complete** Social media regularly updated.
10	Undertake research where appropriate for new policies and procedures.	**Complete**
11	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required.	**Complete**
12	Continue to monitor energy consumption, implement energy saving initiatives and reduce usage where possible.	**Complete** Move to LED lights ongoing. Light sensors to be investigated.
13	Ensure all staff have an annual appraisal.	**Complete**
14	To undertake quarterly review of staff sickness and report to service managers.	**Complete**
15	Complete review of electronic filing system and implement improvements to enable upgrade of the Council's main server and transferring data to 'the cloud'.	**Complete**
16	Continue to implement any Government guidance and recommendations regarding Coronavirus to ensure the safety of staff, members, and public.	**Complete** Current advice is monitored for any changes.

No	Target	Comment
17	Monitor and enhance Cyber Security arrangements in conjunction with TSG.	**Complete**
18	Complete a programme of new Member Induction Training to cover all service areas, roles, and responsibilities.	**Complete for 2022.**
19	Continue to review and reduce the Council's use of single use plastic.	**Complete**
20	Officers liaise with CDALC, NALC, DCC and Genee Consultancy to discuss progressing the Council's climate change response.	**Complete**
21	Officers begin the process of factoring in the possible additional capital costs of tackling climate change in the next update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan.	**Complete**

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

No	Target	Comment
22	Produce Annual Return by 30th June each year.	**Complete**
23	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the Annual Return by 30th September each year.	**Complete**
24	Ensure the Medium-Term Financial Plan is approved by 31st July each year.	**Complete**
25	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report quarterly to Audit Sub Committee then to Council.	**Complete**
26	Manage the financial impact of any cuts to LCTSS funding.	**Complete**
27	Quarterly budget control reports are presented to P&R Committee.	**Complete**
28	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31st January 2023.	**Complete**
29	Ensure all relevant information is published in compliance with the Transparency Code/ Openness of Local Government Regulations.	**Complete**
30	Deliver the work set out in the Asset Management Plan via the capital programme and ensure that a six-monthly review is undertaken with Officers and Member Asset Management Group.	**Complete** Six-monthly review undertaken.
31	Undertake an annual update of the Asset Register including the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for buildings, plant, and machinery.	**Complete**
32	To consider the Council's Business Risks every March and minute that the full review has taken place by Council.	**Complete**
33	Ensure that at least one Service Review is completed each year.	Sports Complex Service Review deferred until 2023/24.

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

No	Target	Comments
34	Deliver the Council's programme of special events:- Platinum Jubilee Fun in the Parks Senior Citizens' Excursions Firework Display Sk8t Fest Santa Letters Christmas Lights Santa Tours Remembrance Town's 75th Anniversary	**All events complete for 2022**. Sk8t Fest did not go ahead. 75th Anniversary celebrations being planned.
35	Develop and provide an improved and enhanced yearly programme of events, including new events.	**Complete for 2022.** Ayclive event planned.
36	Continue to diversify, improve, enhance, and increase the number of events and activities offered within the Sports Complex.	**Ongoing.** Warm Space, NAFC, Pantomime, Infinity Dance, Dog Show, AJX football academy SEN service.
37	Partner with outside bodies including Wellbeing for Life.	**Complete**
38	Officers to carry out feasibility study on refurbishment of Simpasture Pavilion.	**Complete**
39	Sports Complex Service Review to be completed.	Deferred until 2023/24.

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

No	Target	Comments
40	Ensure the continuous improvement of the service and obtain at least a 'good' and aiming for 'excellent' Ofsted Inspection.	**Complete** 'Outstanding' rating achieved February 2023.
41	Ensure that all staff undertake all relevant training and that any new staff receive Special Educational Needs training.	**Complete**

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

No	Target	Comments
42	Works and Environment Manager to arrange to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities by helping to deliver 15 public countryside events.	**Ongoing** Events provided when opportunity arises.
43	To continue to monitor the health and condition of the trees on Town Council land in line with the tree management policy and undertake a visual tree inspection of a specific area every 6 months to assess the health and condition of the trees.	**Complete**
44	Investigate options and costings for the drainage and repair of West Park lakes.	**Complete** Northumbrian Water carried out initial silt clearance. Twice yearly maintenance programme in place.
45	Complete at least 5 targeted Himalayan Balsam removing working parties along The Burn.	**Complete**
46	Undertake maintenance and management of specific Durham County Council environmental areas as per the management agreement.	**Complete**
47	Proactively monitor Ash Dieback Disease and remove diseased trees as necessary.	**Complete**
48	To undertake maintenance and management of the former Elmfield School site, subject to a lease being agreed with Durham County Council.	No progress
49	Work with Great Aycliffe Gardeners' Guild to establish a Gardeners' Guild at Clarence Chare Allotments.	**Ongoing** Planning permission in place, set up on site to take place in the Spring.
50	Complete a feasibility study into possible woodland burial site at West Cemetery.	**Complete**
51	Carry out repairs to St Oswald's play area safety surface.	**Ongoing**
52	Carry out programme of footpath inspections on Town Council owned land.	**Complete**

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

No	Target	Comments
53	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	No volunteers forthcoming for Youth Council this year.
54	To continue partnership working with DCC and build on the existing initiatives.	**Ongoing**
55	Work with the Youth Council, DCC Officers, Tidy Britain, schools, community, and voluntary groups to hold a Town Pride Environment Week, incorporating an anti-litter campaign.	**Complete**
56	The Works and Environment Manager and Park Patrol Officers to work with DCC Officers and Police in regard to anti-social behaviour issues.	**Complete** Regular team meetings held.
57	Work in partnership with residents and friends' groups to improve our parks, play areas and environment areas.	**Complete** Now working with Golf Club and Great Aycliffe Tidy Team.
58	Work with Newton Aycliffe Police to address anti-social behaviour issues.	**Complete** Mobile CCTV cameras now in place and having an impact.

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

No	Target	Comments
59	Undertake a budget setting and aims and targets consultation using social media or other suitable platforms.	**Complete**
60	To review the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan in 2022.	On hold pending updated legislation.
61	Hold a Parish Meeting.	**Complete**
62	Hold an Allotment AGM.	**Complete**
63	Hold a minimum of 4 allotment representative meetings.	**Complete**
64	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services with an aim to establish priorities.	**Complete**
65	Make better use of social media to engage with resident and undertake consultations.	**Complete**
66	Re-engage with community groups and organisations following prolonged Covid restrictions.	**Complete**

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

No	Target	
67	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out.	**Complete**

APPENDIX 2

TARGETS FOR THE COMING YEAR 2023/24

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

No	Target	Target Date
1	Publish a Town Council Service Delivery Plan by the end of June each year.	June 23
2	Publish an Annual Report.	June 23
3	Provide an annual training programme for the Town Clerk from his annual appraisal and CPD requirements.	March 24
4	Maintain a training programme for Members which shows recommended courses with ~~a~~ regular reminder sent and records of attendance and non-attendance kept.	Annually
5	Develop and provide an annual training programme for the staff within each service area, informed by the annual appraisal process.	March 24
6	Undertake an annual review of the Council Constitution, Financial Regulations and ensure compliance with current legislation.	Annually in May
7	Ensure compliance with GDPR.	Ongoing
8	Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by developing an electronic newsletter which may be produced quarterly and on an ad-hoc basis targeting each service area at least once per year	Ongoing
9	Ensure that social media is used to advertise the Council's services and facilities.	Ongoing
10	Undertake research where appropriate for new policies and procedures.	Ongoing
11	Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to council as and when required.	Ongoing
12	Continue to monitor energy consumption, implement energy saving initiatives and reduce usage where possible.	Ongoing
13	Ensure all staff have an annual appraisal.	Sept 23
14	To undertake quarterly review of staff sickness and report to service managers.	Ongoing
15	Monitor and enhance Cyber Security arrangements in conjunction with TSG	Ongoing
16	Maintain a programme of new Member Induction Training to cover all service areas, roles, and responsibilities.	
17	Continue to review and reduce the Council's use of single use plastic.	Ongoing
18	Officers continue to liaise with-CDALC, NALC and DCC-discuss progressing the Council's climate change response, calculate its carbon footprint and draw up a carbon reduction plan	Ongoing

No	Target	Target Date
19	Officers continue the process of factoring in the possible additional capital costs of tackling climate change in the next update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan	Ongoing
20	Improve the modernisation of business and administrative processes, with more effective use of IT	Ongoing
21	Work with the Council's IT Consultants to update IT systems and equipment and off-site data storage	Ongoing

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

No	Target	Target Date
22	Produce Annual Return by 30th June each year.	June 23
23	Achieve an unqualified audit opinion of the Annual Return by 30th September each year.	Sept 23
24	Ensure the Medium-Term Financial Plan is approved by 31st July each year.	July 23
25	Deliver the Internal Audit Plan Schedule of Work and report quarterly to Audit Sub Committee then to Council.	March 24
26	Manage the financial impact of any cuts to LCTSS funding.	Ongoing
27	Quarterly budget control reports are presented to P&R Committee.	Ongoing
28	Budgets/Precepts approved by 31st January 2024.	Jan 24
29	Ensure all relevant information is published in compliance with the Transparency Code/ Openness of Local Government Regulations.	Ongoing
30	Deliver the work set out in the Asset Management Plan via the capital programme and ensure that a six-monthly review is undertaken with Officers and Member Asset Management Group.	Ongoing
31	Undertake an annual update of the Asset Register including the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for buildings, plant, and machinery.	Ongoing
32	To consider the Council's Business Risks every March and minute that the full review has taken place by Council.	Mar 23
33	Ensure that at least one Service Review is completed each year.	Ongoing

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

No	Target	Target Date
34	Deliver the Council's programme of special events: Fun in the Parks Senior Citizens' Excursions Firework Display Santa Letters Christmas Lights Santa Tours Remembrance Day King's Coronation Celebrations Support to Ayclive Event	 Aug 23 July 23 Nov 23 Dec 23 Dec 23 Dec 23 Nov 23 May 23 July 23
35	Develop and provide an improved and enhanced yearly programme of events, including new events.	Ongoing
36	Continue to diversify, improve, enhance, and increase the number of events and activities offered within the Sports Complex.	Ongoing
37	Partner with outside bodies including Wellbeing for Life	Ongoing
38	Sports Complex Service Review to be completed	March 2024
39	Focus resources and market the Sports Complex strategically in line with seasonal demand	March 2024
40	Investigate and bid for external funding made available to enhance the services provided at the sports complex (e.g. DCC – Warm Space, Sport England).	March 2024
41	Organise a celebration and lasting commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Newton Aycliffe, including a community event, static history/memories displays, working with local community organisations and engaging with local residents	Ongoing

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

No	Target	Target Date
40	Ensure the continuous improvement of the service.	Ongoing
41	Ensure that all staff undertake all relevant training and that any new staff receive Special Educational Needs training.	Ongoing

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

No	Target	Target Date
42	Works and Environment Manager to arrange to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities by helping to deliver public countryside events when the opportunity arises	Ongoing
43	To continue to monitor the health and condition of the trees on Town Council land in line with the tree management policy and undertake a visual tree inspection of a specific area every 6 months to assess the health and condition of the trees	Ongoing
44	Work with Northumbrian Water to improve silt clearance and maintenance in West Park lakes	Ongoing
45	Complete at least 5 targeted Himalayan Balsam removing working parties along The Burn	Annually
46	Undertake maintenance and management of specific Durham County Council environmental areas as per the management agreement	Ongoing
47	Proactively monitor Ash Dieback Disease and remove diseased trees as necessary	Ongoing
48	Work with Great Aycliffe Gardeners' Guild to establish a Gardeners' Guild at Clarence Chare Allotments	Ongoing
49	Continue investigations into a possible woodland burial site at West Cemetery	Ongoing
50	Carry out repairs to St Oswald's play area safety surface	Ongoing
51	Carry out programme of footpath inspections on Town Council owned land	Ongoing

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

No	Target	Target Date
52	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	Ongoing
53	To continue partnership working with DCC and build on the existing initiatives	Ongoing
54	Work with the Youth Council, DCC Officers, Tidy Britain, schools, community, and voluntary groups to hold a Town Pride Environment Week, incorporating an anti-litter campaign.	
55	The Works and Environment Manager and Park Patrol Officers to work with DCC Officers and Police in regard to anti-social behaviour issues	Ongoing
56	Work in partnership with residents and friends' groups to improve our parks, play areas and environment areas.	Ongoing
57	Work with Newton Aycliffe Police to address anti-social behaviour issues	Ongoing

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

No	Target	Target Date
58	Undertake a budget setting and aims and targets consultation using social media or other suitable platforms	Nov 23
59	Consider a review of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan in 2023	2023
60	Hold a Parish Meeting	Annually In May
61	Hold an Allotment AGM	Annually In Nov
62	Hold a minimum of 4 allotment representative meetings	Ongoing
63	Hold or take part in at least 2 events to inform residents about Town Council services with an aim to establish priorities	Annually
64	Make better use of social media to engage with resident and undertake consultations	Annually
65	Continue to engage with community groups and organisations	Ongoing
66	Undertake a town wide service delivery satisfaction survey in 2023	Nov 23

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

No	Target	Target Date
67	Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out	Ongoing

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 8 wards of the Town.

L – Labour I – Independent LD – Liberal Democrat

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