

## ARTICLE 1 - HOW THE COUNCIL OPERATES

All Councillors meet together as the Council.

The Council retains certain powers and duties to itself, and delegates decision making to committees, sub-committees and, on occasion, to officers.

The Council conducts most of its business through committees. The responsibilities of each committee are set out in this Constitution and are reviewed annually. Article 3 contains the powers and duties of each committee. It is at committees that Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year.

The three main committees, Environment, Recreation and Policy and Resources, are appointed at the Council's Annual General Meeting in May each year and a list of the dates for the committee meetings for the forthcoming year are set.

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

The Council has a membership of 30, which is currently made up of Labour, Independent and Liberal Democrat Councillors. Councillors are usually elected every four years and are therefore democratically accountable to the residents of their ward although they have an overriding duty to the whole community.

The area represented by the Town Council is divided into eight wards.

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|--|-----------|
| • Byerley Park, Horndale and Cobblers Hall | 6 members |
| • Shafto and St Mary's                     | 4 members |
| • Aycliffe Central                         | 3 members |
| • Woodham                                  | 6 members |
| • Simpasture                               | 2 members |
| • Neville                                  | 2 members |
| • West                                     | 6 members |
| • Aycliffe Village                         | 1 member  |

The Senior Administrative Officer maintains a register of the interests of Members. This register is available for inspection by members of the public at the Town Council Offices during normal office hours or available online on the website. Please contact the Senior Administrative Officer to make an appointment to view the register.

### Code of Conduct

Councillors agree to follow a Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. Article 10 contains the Members' Code of Conduct.

Great Aycliffe Town Council has adopted the Model Code of Conduct for Town and Parish Councils. The Code does not apply to the actions of the Council as a whole, or to the conduct of its officers and employees.

The responsibility for handling complaints that a Member may have breached the code is now with the Standards Committee, overseen by Durham County Council.

Details and information on the procedure for Local Assessment of Complaints is available on the Durham County Council website at [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk).

The Council has also signed up to the Civility and Respect Pledge.

## **Public Participation**

Meetings of the Council and 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.

Advance notices of scheduled meetings are advertised on local notice boards, the Council Newsletter, website and at the Council Offices informing the public of the dates and times.

Agendas and reports are made available on the Friday morning preceding the meeting. These are available on Notice Boards, the Council Website or the Council Offices.

The public entrance to the council chamber will be open 30 minutes prior to the time of the meeting.

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in regard to any item of business included in the agenda of the Council, Committees and Sub-Committees.

With the exception of the Annual Meeting and Extraordinary Council Meetings, members of the public can submit a written question for the Council agenda as long as it is submitted seven clear days before the Council meeting date.

Questions should relate either to the powers and duties of the Council or affect the Parish in some way. These will be entered on to a register which will be open to the public for inspection.

A period of 20 minutes has been allocated at each Council or Committee Meeting for this purpose. Each person may speak once for 3 minutes only in respect of business itemised on the agenda.

Questions will not be received by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances, or which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister. A question will not be received by the Council, its Committees and specified Sub-Committees where the issue it concerns has been the subject of a decision of the Council in the last six months.

A verbal question concerning an item on the agenda asked by a member of the public during a public participation session at a meeting will normally be taken into account during the subsequent discussion of that agenda item. However, the Chairman may also direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an immediate oral response or to an employee for a written or oral response.

Written questions submitted to the Council meeting may be debated by members, however, no decision will be made solely on the comments and representations made under a public participation session. A matter raised that falls under the remit of a particular committee may be deferred to the next meeting of the relevant committee.

# **PUBLIC FILMING, RECORDING OR OTHERWISE REPORTING AT COUNCIL / COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

## **COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT**

- The Council acknowledges 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.
- The Council acknowledges that no prior permission is required but asks 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.
- The Council will provide a space to view and hear the meetings, seats and a table. 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. This could be any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of meetings or impedes other members of the public being able to see, hear or film etc. the proceedings.

Examples are listed but are not inclusive:

- (i) Moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chairman;
  - (ii) Excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the debate / discussion;
  - (iii) Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography; and
  - (iv) Asking for people to repeat statements for the purpose of recording.
- 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. (which in the case of a vulnerable adult is a medical professional, their carer or legal guardian, and in the case of a child, their parent, legal guardian or teacher).
- 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 Regulation 2018.

## The Council's Staffing Establishment

The Senior Officers within the Council are:

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

A full management structure and staffing establishment chart is set out on the following page.

Great Aycliffe Town Council occasionally employs casual staff, which do not form part of this formal staff establishment.

The Council also retains the services of consultants for human resources, health and safety, occupational health, legal advice, planning advice, early years support and other speciality services such as information technology.

# Town Council Organisation Structure

