

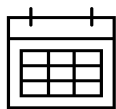
Great Aycliffe Town Council Spring 2026 Newsletter



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Great Aycliffe Town Council – Upcoming Meetings:

- * **Recreation and Environment** – Wednesday 8th April 2026 at 7pm
- * **Policy and Resources** – Wednesday 15th April 2026 at 7pm
- * **Full Council** – Wednesday 22nd April 2026 at 7pm
- * **Annual General Meeting** – Wednesday 13th May 2026 at 7pm
- * **Parish Meeting** - Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 7pm

2026/27 BUDGET

The Town Council has recently set its Revenue and Capital Budget for the 2026/27 financial year which incorporated the full withdrawal by Durham County Council of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant funding paid to town and parish councils, which resulted in a £145,250 loss of revenue for the Town Council for the 2026/27 financial year.

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

The Council has set a 2026/27 Revenue Budget that protects and maintains all services to current standards next year.

The Council is also maintaining some surplus resources within the budget which will allow it to continue to replenish its balances and reserves.

This will help ensure that we can continue to make capital investment in community assets such as our cemeteries, allotments, parks and play areas, for the benefit of the community, in the coming years.

The Council has agreed a 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget of £315,250, with the budget focused on essential investment linked to the delivery of the Council's Asset Management Plan.

Planned investment includes building maintenance works, replacement works machinery including electrical alternatives, essential computer replacements, play area surfacing replacement, footpath repairs and bus shelter repairs.

In approving the 2026/27 Revenue and Capital Budget, the Council has agreed to raise the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax bill by £8.00 per year for the vast majority of local taxpayers i.e. those living in Band A properties. Had the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant not been withdrawn by Durham County Council, the council tax increase would have been at a much-reduced level.

The Council appreciates that any increase in the monthly outgoings of our local taxpayers will not be popular. However, we hope taxpayers will agree that a monthly increase of 67p is a small price to pay to ensure that all the services provided by the Town Council can be protected for another year, and that reserves can continue to be replenished.

IMPROVEMENTS TO AYCLIFFE VILLAGE INFANT PLAY AREA



Great Aycliffe Town Council is pleased to announce that plans to enhance the Aycliffe Village Infant Play Area have been formally approved. Subject to suitable ground conditions, improvement works are expected to begin in the coming months.

Following consultation with the local school community and a range of interest groups, the design proposal from HAGS was selected as the preferred option. Community feedback played a vital role in shaping the future of this valued play space.

The approved design, aimed at children aged between 2 and 7 years old, will complement the existing junior play area. It includes the installation of a new cantilever “birds nest” swing—replacing the damaged swing in the junior area and restoring a much-loved feature for local families.

A strong focus on inclusivity ensures the new play area will be accessible to as many children as possible. Features such as a role-play ticket office and a train-themed climbing frame provide imaginative play opportunities, while also nodding to the neighbouring East Coast Main Line railway.

Great Aycliffe Town Council looks forward to delivering these exciting improvements and creating a welcoming, inclusive, and inspiring play space for local children and families to enjoy for many years to come.

SANTA TOURS REVIEW UNDERWAY

A review of the Town Council's Santa Tours is underway with a view to enhancing and improving the event ahead of Christmas Eve 2026.

The Council has set up a Santa Tours Sub-Committee to undertake this review, made up of councillors, Santa Tours volunteers and members of the public. This ensures that a diverse range of views and opinions can be heard.

This review follows the essential changes made to the format of the event last year in light of increasing safety concerns and logistical challenges running the tours in the traditional format.

These concerns and challenges included near misses between Santa vehicles and children in the road and local traffic, difficulties sourcing enough volunteers and vehicles, the growing town, the increased volume of parked cars on Christmas Eve making narrow streets very difficult to navigate safely, anti-social behaviour and abuse of volunteers, and safety concerns with Santa travelling on the back on the vehicle on the highway.

The Council's Health and Safety Advisor and insurers advised that adjustments needed to be made to the event, to mitigate several high risks, and ensure the safety of both residents and volunteers.

The challenge for the Council was adapting the event to ensure all risks were satisfactorily mitigated and the logistical challenges overcome, whilst seeking to maintain and protect the magic of Santa touring Great Aycliffe on Christmas Eve and ensure the event is accessible to as many residents as possible.

Last year, the event was adapted into a hybrid system whereby Santa stopped at a number of 'meet and greet' locations around the town, at designated times, allowing families a choice to come to whichever location and time suited them best. This was supplemented by a limited tour of the town with Santa in the vehicle but not stopping. Santa also made visits to local care homes earlier on Christmas Eve.

Whilst the fixed location meet and greet system and care home visits worked well and proved popular with those who attended, and the volunteers and community facilities that took part, the touring element was very badly received, with families unhappy that Santa could not enter cul-de-sacs or dead ends, was inside the vehicle, and unable to stop and engage with families.

The review of the event this year will look in more detail at what went well last year, and what did not work, and seek to identify options and ideas for improving the event ahead of Christmas Eve 2026.

The first meeting of the Santa Tours Sub-Committee took place on 3rd March 2026. The agenda, minutes and reports relating to this meeting can be accessed via the Meeting Section of the Council Website: <https://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk/meetings-diary/past-meetings/>

The Santa Tours Sub Committee discussed two options for the 2026 event:

1. Running the event as closely to the traditional tour as is safely possible, using Council vehicles only, but over several nights in the run up to Christmas Eve; or
2. Maintaining and enhancing the fixed location, meet and greeting format on Christmas Eve, with more and improved locations, and the care home visits, but with no touring element.

It was agreed that the fixed location meet and greet system should be the preferred 'core' option for the event, and the sub-committee has agreed to investigate ideas for further improving and evolving this format, for example by identifying more and better locations, and working with local community centres, churches and public houses to secure indoor and outdoor locations.

It was further agreed that further investigations be made into the feasibility of maintaining some form of tour of the streets on Christmas Eve, as close as possible to the traditional tours, in addition to the fixed locations, possibly in partnership with local groups such as the Rotary Club.

A review of the resourcing of the event was also agreed as part of the next budget setting exercise.

A further meeting of the Santa Tours Sub-Committee is due to be held in April at which it is hoped some firm decisions can be made as to the format of the 2026 event in order to allow more detailed planning to take place.

At this meeting, a public consultation will be developed to establish public opinion on the preferred option and to seek ideas for further improving the event, which will be widely publicised to gain as much feedback as possible from local residents.

Please keep an eye on the Council's website, social media channels and local press for further updates, meeting dates, and details of the consultation.

Finally, the Council would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers, past and present, who have given up their time to help Santa bring joy on Christmas Eve, and to those who have agreed to serve on the Santa Tours Sub-Committee.

EVENTS FROM YOUR TOWN COUNCIL



JOIN US FOR GATC'S FUN IN THE PARK

DAY	DATE	PARK
WEDNESDAY	22ND JULY 2026	TOWN PARK
FRIDAY	24TH JULY 2026	SIMPASTURE PARK
WEDNESDAY	29TH JULY 2026	MOORE LANE PARK
FRIDAY	31ST JULY 2026	OAK LEAF SPORTS COMPLEX FIELD
WEDNESDAY	5TH AUGUST 2026	ST OSWALD'S PARK
FRIDAY	7TH AUGUST 2026	HORNDALE PARK
WEDNESDAY	12TH AUGUST 2026	AYCLIFFE VILLAGE PARK
FRIDAY	14TH AUGUST 2026	WOODHAM PARK

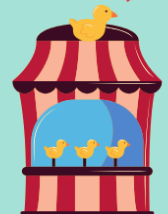
Fun in the Park is our summer holiday event series designed for children aged 3 to 8 years. Taking place across eight of our local parks, each session runs from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm and is packed with activities for young families to enjoy.

These events offer free entertainment for families throughout the day. Additional attractions such as side stalls, body art, food vans, and ice cream vans will also be available, with charges applying for these extras.

Height, weight, and age restrictions apply to inflatables, fairground rides, the climbing wall, and bungee trampolines.



WWW.GREAT-AYCLIFFE.GOV.UK



SENIOR CITIZENS EXCURSIONS

Excursions are free for all residents, regardless of income or savings, with a choice of destinations available.

You must be a resident of the Electoral Parish of Great Aycliffe and 60 or over by 1 April in the year of travel. You do not need to receive a pension or hold a bus pass.

Application forms are available 27 April–8 May 2026 from the Library, Leisure Centre, Oak Leaf Sports Complex, or the GATC website. Forms can be submitted during the same dates.



When submitting your form, you must provide proof of age and residency. Applications without this proof cannot be processed.

Forms may be posted, delivered to the office, or emailed—proof must be included in all cases.

St. Oswald's Pre School Nursery and Tots in the Park



St Oswald's Pre-School & Tots in the Park



- A hidden gem in St Oswald's park
- 15 hours free funding available from the term after a child's third birthday.
- 30 hours for two to four year olds for children who are eligible and in receipt of a working families code
- An hourly rate of £6.00 will apply for children whom are not in receipt of funding with a 1 x 3hr session costing £18.00
- Two-year Funding is also available for children who are in receipt of a play and learn eligibility code or working families code and parents can claim up to 30 hours using this.

Please phone:
Julie Gale (Pre-School Manager) on
07968379009 for further information,
alternatively email

julie.gale@great-aycliffe.gov.uk



GAMES ROOM



POOL

Members - £5 per hour
Non-Members - £7.50 per hour

DARTS

Members - £5 per hour
Non-Members - £7.50 per hour

FULL ROOM

Members - £15 per hour
Non-Members - £20 per hour

**PLEASE SEE RECEPTION FOR
FURTHER DETAILS & BOOKING**

OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX OPENING TIMES



Opening

Sports, Reception *Times* and Bookings

Play Sports Between	9:00am-10:00pm
Reception Open	9:00am-8:55pm

Online Bookings Available 24 hours a day 7 days a week

BAR

KITCHEN

LUNCH EVENING

Monday	11:15am - 10:30pm	12:00pm-2:30pm	5:00pm-8:00pm
Tuesday	11:15am - 10:30pm	11:30am-2:30pm	5:00pm-8:30pm
Wednesday	11:15am - 10:30pm	12:00pm-2:30pm	5:00pm-8:00pm
Thursday	11:15am - 10:30pm	11:30am-2:30pm	5:00pm-8:00pm
Friday	11:15am - 10:30pm	11:30am-2:30pm	4:30pm-8:00pm
Saturday	11:00am - 10:30pm	11:00am-3:15pm	4:30pm-8:00pm
Sunday	11:00am - 10:00pm	11:00am-6:30pm	

TEL: 01325 300600



OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX MEMBERSHIPS

OakLeaf Fees and Charges

SPORTS COMPLEX April 2026 - March 2027

Annual Membership Rates

Adult		Senior Citizen	Junior	
£29.50		£21.50	£10.00	
Football and Sports Hall Hire		Junior £27.00 Adult £43.00 Members	Junior £33.00 Adult £52.00 Non-members	
Badminton, Pickleball Squash, Table Tennis		Junior £3.70 Adult £7.20 Members	Junior £4.70 Adult £9.00 Non-members	
Equipment Hire	£1.50 per item	Darts		£1 members £2 Non-members
Bowls	Junior	£2.50 members	£3.50 non-members	Reduced Rates for 90 minute sessions
	Adults and Seniors	£3.90 members	£5.10 non-members	
Bowls Lockers		£8.25 per year	Shower £1.50	
Function Room		£11.50 per hour	£14.00 per hour	
Caravan and Camping		£16.00 per night (1st night deposit required)	Rally prices available on request	

Bookings Available: Reception 9:00am - 8:45pm
24 hours a day 7 days a week Online

Book
Online



Investment Enhances Facilities at Town Park, Newton Aycliffe

An investment of **£21,900** has delivered significant enhancements to Town Park in Newton Aycliffe, providing visitors with two new and improved recreational features.

Funding secured through Section 106 planning contributions, with Great Aycliffe Town Council providing the resources and maintenance, the replacement of the decommissioned timber arch play structure was replaced with a **new cantilever swing fitted with a bird's nest basket**. The swing has already become a popular addition, quickly embraced by regular park users.

To mark the completion of the project, Durham County Council portfolio holders who helped secure the funding were invited to visit the park and test out the new facilities firsthand. **Councillors Stephen Grey and Joe Quinn** attended the visit and expressed their satisfaction at seeing the investment brought to life.

Alongside the new swing, the Councillors also welcomed the installation of a substantial **calisthenics exercise unit**, designed to help users build strength using their own body weight.

These improvements reflect the ongoing commitment to enhancing local recreational spaces for the benefit of the community.



OakLeaf Golf Membership 2026-2027



12 Months Golf Membership 2026/27

Available From
1st April 2026

**Installment
Options
Available**


Membership Valid
Until 31st March 2027

Adult Membership

7 Day Adult	£544
5 Day Adult	£499
7 Day Over 60	£499
5 Day Over 60	£449

Intermediate & Junior

19 - 30 Intermediate	£225
15 - 18 Junior *	£65
Under 15 Junior *	£30
* Junior members are subject to restrictions on the times of play	

 **01325 310820**

 School Aycliffe Lane,
Newton Aycliffe DL5 6QZ

 @OakleafGolfComplex
 @OakleafGolf

GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN COUNCIL CIVIC DINNER

The Mayor and Mayoress of Great Aycliffe, Councillor Ken Robson and Mrs. Elaine Robson, welcomed Civic dignitaries and guests from around the region to the Civic Dinner which was held at Redworth Hall Hotel.

It was a great night with entertainment from the fantastic Micky Rich and Fully Loaded Disco.

Proceeds from the tombola, raffle and prize draw helped the fundraising for this year towards Options and Wishing Well with over £400 raised during the night.

The Mayor said, "Great Aycliffe Town Council Mayors Civic Dinner was a huge success, attended by civic dignitaries from across the region and Community champions. Everyone had a marvellous evening being entertained by Micky Rich and Fully Loaded disco. The large raffle which weighed down the table ensured plenty of prizes for entrants including a surprise lucky envelope which gave the winner a one-night stay at the hotel which has a reputation for providing high quality breaks. Funds raised for the Mayors good causes, PCP Options social Club and Wishing Well Club will be presented at the council AGM. Many thanks to family friends, Mayors, Civic dignitaries, fellow councillors and community champions for supporting my year as Mayor. Wonderful to see a large gathering of Councillors supporting this year's event. Last but not least thank you to the myriad of businesses and traders who have supported Mayoress Elaine and myself with donated prizes throughout the year."



GET IN TOUCH

info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Council Offices - 01325 300700

Oakleaf Sports Complex - 01325 300600

Oakleaf Golf Complex - 01325 310820

St Oswalds Pre School - 07968 379009

www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk



Great Aycliffe
Town Council

Big enough to matter small enough to care

