
Great Aycliffe



Town Council

Works and Environmental Service Plan 2026/2027



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Oakleaf Golf Course



Cemeteries



Park's



Play areas



1.0 Executive Summary

The Works and Environmental Services Section provides a range of skilled services to the Council covering the management and maintenance of parks, cemeteries, open spaces, play areas, golf course, sports pitches, allotments, trees and woodlands, buildings, bus shelters, street furniture and the Christmas lighting display.

In addition, the Works and Environmental Services Section supports other areas within the Council such as the Driving Range, Pre-School Learning Centres, capital works and improvement projects, Great Aycliffe Way, Aycliffe Nature Park and School Aycliffe Wetlands, as well as assisting with all outside events.

Effectively, the Works and Environmental Services Section service provision has links to and an impact on most Council services.

The overall aim is to deliver services in a cost effective, efficient, and timely manner.

2.0 Great Aycliffe Town Council

The Council agreed a strategic mission statement, which is that Great Aycliffe aims to 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 the following strategic Aims:

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.

3.0 Contribution to Council's Strategic Aims

The development of the Works and Environmental Services Section and the services it provides will assist in achieving the Council's Strategic Aims 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8.

To ensure the adequate provision and management of well-maintained and accessible environmental areas, allotments, cemeteries, golf course, sports pitches, parks and play areas which meet the needs of all the community, the Works and Environmental Services Section will strive to:

- Deliver the actions from the Annual Action Plan.
- Demonstrate value for money by achieving continuous improvement.

4.0 Equalities Statement

Although this is primarily an internal working document the Works and Environmental Service Plan will be published on the Council Website for anyone who may be interested in finding out more about environmental and grounds maintenance work within Great Aycliffe.

All 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; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion and Belief; or Sexual Orientation.

Information will generally be provided by the Council in English only. Where 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.

5.0 Investment in Employees

It is clearly acknowledged and recognised that the Works and Environmental Services Section work within a customer-oriented service and as such should maintain a customer focused approach. It is therefore vitally important that the employees delivering front line services should have sufficient skills and training to meet customer expectations and requirements.

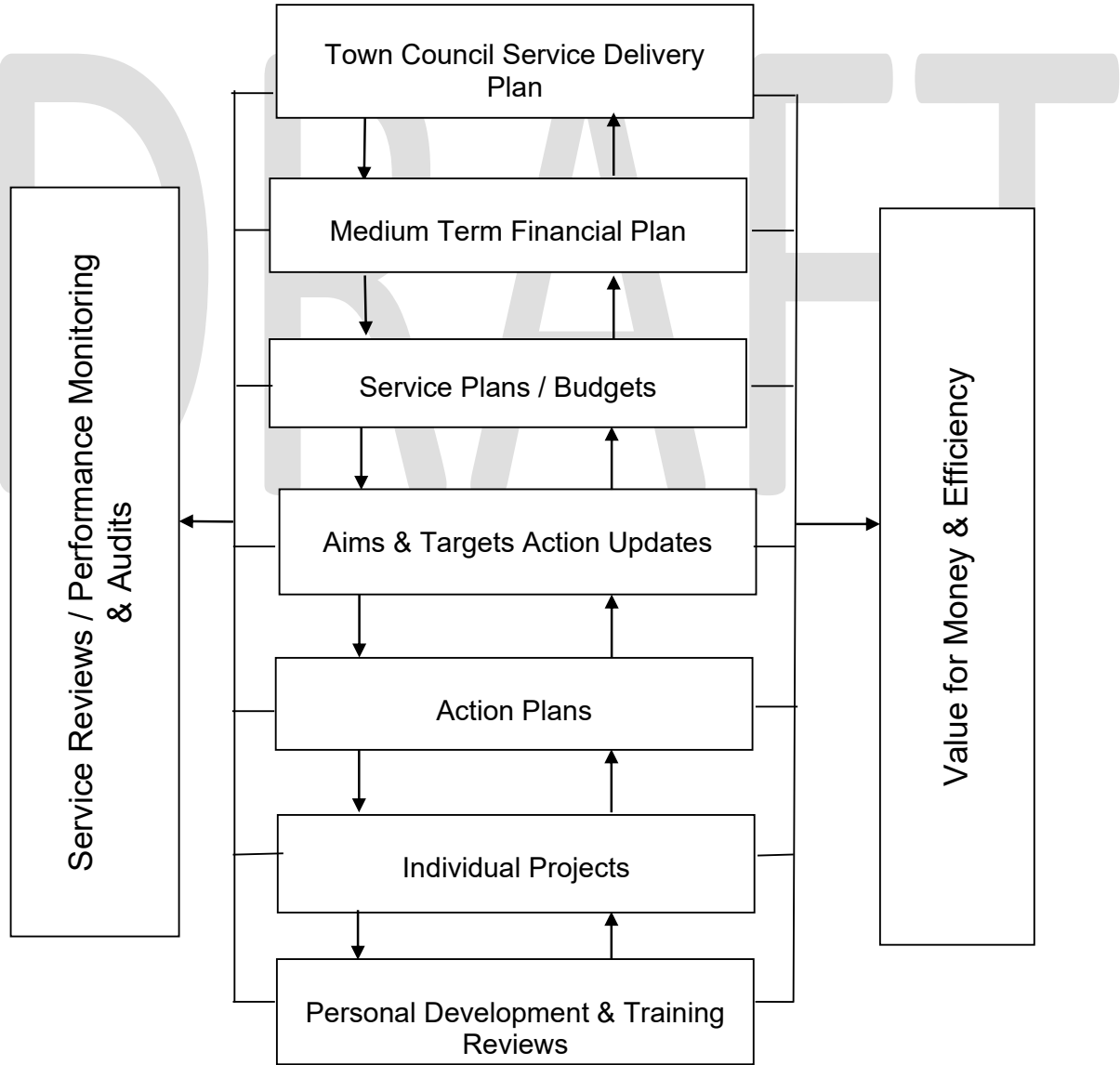
Additionally, it is recognised that the employees are the Council's greatest asset in delivering services in the manner intended, and investment in employees is therefore paramount in achieving this aim.

The Works Department Budget provides significant resources for the training of staff in line with requirements and priorities identified via the Performance and Development Appraisal Scheme.

6.0 Performance Management Framework

The Council's approved performance management framework, shown below, helps to demonstrate how the Council's Strategic Aims and Targets from the Service Delivery Plan link to the Council's other strategies and how they feed down into the aims and objectives of individual service areas, down to the objectives of individual officers, and how these combine to help the Council deliver its aims.

Performance Management Framework



7.0 Works and Environmental Section Profile

7.1 Mission Statement

To ensure the adequate provision and management of safe, well maintained and accessible environmental areas, allotments, cemeteries, golf, course, sports pitches, parks and play areas which meet the needs of all the community.

7.2 Service Aims and Objectives

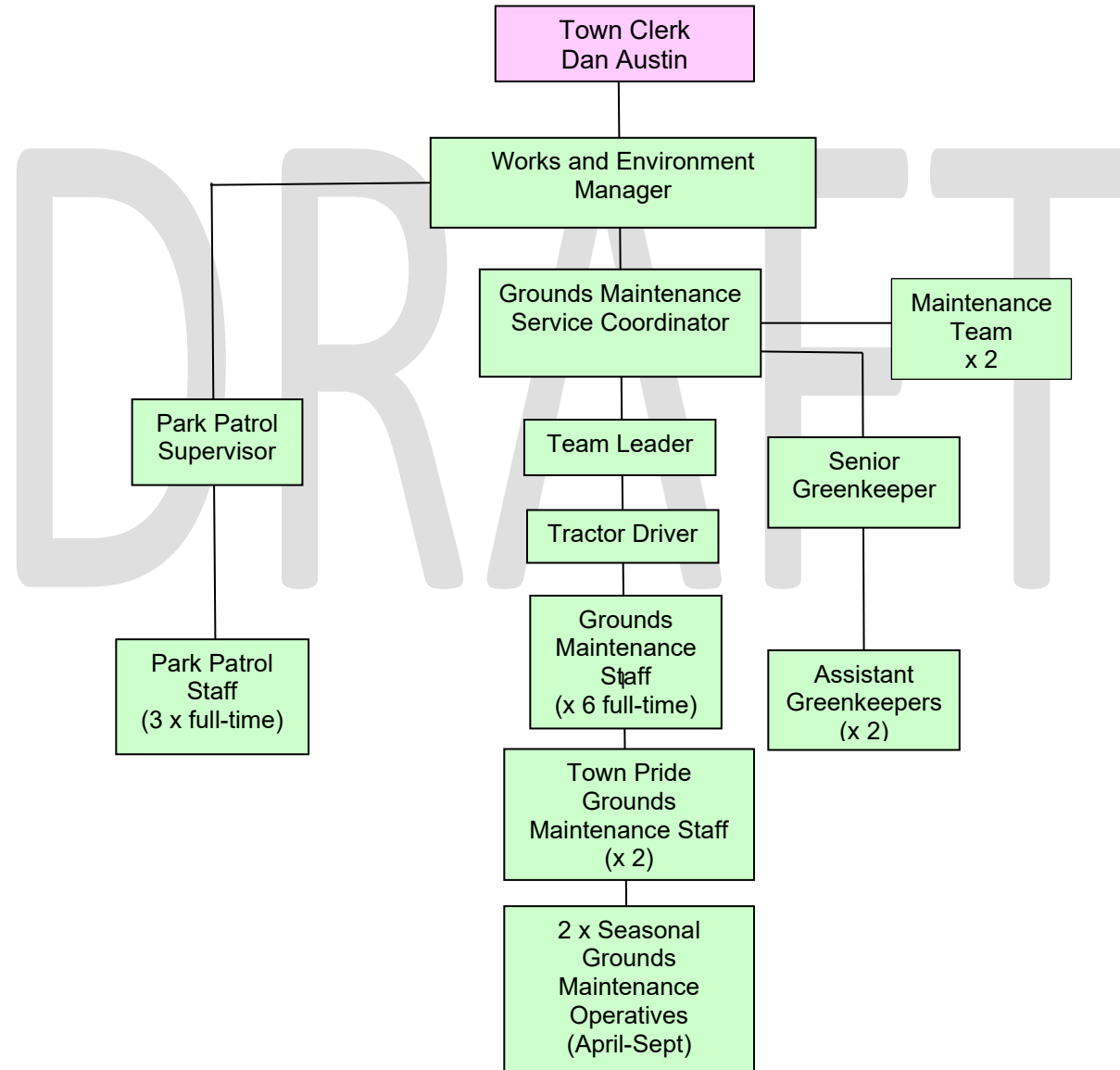
The Works and Environmental Section provide the necessary staffing, skills, experience and other resources to achieve the following service aims and objectives:

- Grass cutting of all Council land.
- Design, planting and maintenance of annual floral bedding displays.
- Management, inspection and maintenance of amenity trees.
- Management, inspection and maintenance of woodlands.
- Management and maintenance of shrub beds and perennial borders.
- Operational management and maintenance of the Oakleaf Golf Course and Driving Range.
- Management, associated record keeping, burial service, inspection and maintenance of two cemeteries located at West Cemetery and Stephenson Way.
- Maintenance and burial service at Aycliffe Village Churchyard.
- Management, associated record keeping, inspection and maintenance of five allotment sites located at: -
 - Aycliffe Village
 - Byerley Park
 - Clarence Chare
 - Finchale Road
 - St. Oswald's
- Management, inspection, maintenance, and renewal of play equipment and associated furniture of seven parks, and six standalone play areas.
- Maintenance and inspection of Council buildings and property.
- Maintenance and inspection of Council access roads and footpaths.
- Maintenance and inspection of bus shelters, litter bins and public seating.

- Provide expertise and assistance in setting up and staging Council run community events.
- Management, setting up, inspection and maintenance of the annual Christmas lighting display.
- Management of the community enhancement award scheme (floral displays, festive lighting and allotment awards).
- Work in partnership with other agencies to enhance and improve other amenity areas not under the ownership of Great Aycliffe Town Council.
- Provide and manage a park patrol service.
- Provide an 'out of hours' service for emergency call outs in relation to security or health and safety issues.
- Supply and maintain sufficient plant, vehicles, machinery, and equipment required to undertake the above services.
- To carry out operational duties in a safe manner by employing safe working practices and undertaking risk assessments to ensure the health and safety and welfare of staff and the general public.
- To work with schools to encourage environmental awareness.
- To work with and facilitate community groups for environmental awareness.
- To manage and maintain wild flower areas and wetlands.
- To undertake the grounds maintenance and associated functions within budget and in a timely manner.



Works Team Structure



8.0 Areas of Responsibility

8.1 Parks

St. Oswald's Park, Town Park, Moore Lane Park, Horndale Park, West Park, Simpasture Park, and Woodham Park.

8.2 Play Areas

School Aycliffe, Aycliffe Village, Scott Place, Oakleaf Sports Complex, St. Oswald's Park, Town Park, Moore Lane Park, Horndale Park, West Park, Simpasture Park, Woodham Park, Byerley Park, and Cobblers Hall.

8.3 Open Spaces

Aycliffe Village, Woodham, Horndale, and Woodham Burn.

8.4 Cemeteries

Stephenson Way, West Cemetery, plus burials and grounds maintenance at Aycliffe Village (St Andrew's Church).

8.5 Allotments

Clarence Chare, Byerley Park, Finchale Road, St. Oswald's, Aycliffe Village, including pigeon, poultry and bee keeping plots.

8.6 Sports Pitches

Oakleaf Sports Complex, Simpasture Park, and Moore Lane Park.

8.7 Golf Facilities

Oakleaf Golf Course and Driving Range.

8.8 Bus Shelters, Seats Litter Bins and Dog Bins

57 bus shelters at various locations throughout the town plus associated public seating and litter and dog bins.

8.9 Woodlands

South Agnew Plantation, Cobblers Hall, Rear of Greathead Crescent, Seven Hills, and School Aycliffe tree belt.

8.10 Environmental Areas

Nature Park, Woodham Burn, School Aycliffe Wetlands, Seven Hills and Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve, plus the Newt Ponds near Millennium Way.

8.11 Building Maintenance

Simpasture Pavilion, Moore Lane Pavilion and Eco Centre, St. Oswald's Park Pavilion and Pre-Schools, Council Offices, Horticultural Depot and Vehicle Storage Depot, Town Park Pavilion, Stephenson Way Cemetery, West Cemetery, Sports Complex Football Changing Rooms, Oak Leaf Sports Complex, Golf Complex and Driving Range.

The Works and Environmental Services Section employs 21 full time staff plus two seasonal operatives (one for the golf course and one on open spaces).

9.0 What was achieved last year

Works and Environmental Services – Key Achievements

1. Operational Delivery and Service Performance

- Delivered the full grounds maintenance programme on time and within budget.
 - Maintained provision of Park Patrol Services, enhancing public safety and site oversight and security.
 - Ensured availability of sports facilities, including football pitches and changing rooms at Sports Complex, Simpasture, and Moore Lane.
 - Continued establishment of a summer football pitch for over-35s at Moore Lane.
 - Facilitated maintenance of St Oswald's Pre-School buildings and grounds.
 - Provided rapid response to public complaints relating to litter and fly tipping through the Town Pride Team.
-

2. Workforce Management and Training

- Successfully managed key staffing changes, including recruitment and onboarding of multiple operatives.
 - Delivered extensive staff training programmes, including:
 - Woodchipper and stump grinder operation
 - Chainsaw certification and LOLER training
 - Highway and asbestos awareness
 - Playground inspection and pesticide handling
 - Advanced tractor driving
 - Counter-terrorism awareness
 - Provided refresher first aid training to designated staff.
-

3. Asset Management, Inspection and Compliance

- Conducted routine inspections of footpaths, seating, bus shelters, and play equipment.
 - Completed annual and independent safety audits of play areas.
 - Undertook comprehensive tree safety inspections, including ongoing ash dieback monitoring.
 - Delivered remedial works following five-year electrical installation inspections.
 - Completed PAT testing across Council electrical equipment.
 - Undertook Memorial Safety Inspections at West Cemetery.
-

4. Infrastructure Improvements and Capital Projects

- Completed multiple infrastructure upgrades, including:
 - Bus shelter roof replacements
 - Play area improvements (e.g., swings, slides, safety surfacing and climbing frame repairs)
 - Drainage improvements at West Cemetery, Stephenson Way Cemetery, and Simpasture Football Pitches
 - Footpath repairs across key locations
- Delivered building improvements, including window and door replacement at St Oswald's Pre-School and internal decoration of the Council Offices.
- Installed security enhancements at Oakleaf Sports pitches, including boundary ditching and improved CCTV.
- Invested in operational vehicles and machinery, including:
 - Electric e-Berlingo vehicle
 - Top dresser and replacement ride-on mower

5. Environmental Management and Sustainability

- Established a new wildflower meadow at Horndale with external funding support.
- Delivered large-scale tree planting initiatives:
 - Approximately 1,000 trees planted in various locations with volunteers and community groups
 - Nearly 2,500 trees planted on the golf course via North East Community Forest funding
- Managed invasive species control programmes, including Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, and Giant Hogweed.
- Secured Environment Agency licences and delivered treatment works for invasive plants near watercourses.
- Collaborated with Tees River Trust to identify untreated invasive species on private land.

6. Partnerships and External Collaboration

- Worked in partnership with Durham County Council to deliver:
 - Winter maintenance services (snow clearance, gritting, and servicing of 72 salt bins)
 - Maintenance and monitoring of sections of the Great Aycliffe Way
- Collaborated with Police, enforcement teams, Livin Housing, and other agencies to address anti-social behaviour.
- Worked with the Probation Service on community improvement initiatives.
- Entered partnership with Newton Aycliffe Sports Club and Durham FA to secure funding for pitch improvements.

7. Community Engagement and Events

- Organised and delivered key community initiatives and events, including:
 - Christmas Lighting Displays and Awards
 - Garden Enhancement Awards
 - Annual Allotments Meeting
 - Environment Week for local primary schools
- Supported and facilitated community events such as:
 - Fireworks Display
 - Santa Tours
 - Fun in the Parks
 - Remembrance Sunday and VE Day celebrations
- Delivered a successful community litter-picking initiative with volunteer participation.

8. Public Safety, Enforcement and Emergency Response

- Responded rapidly to storm damage, clearing debris and making hazardous trees safe.
- Supported multi-agency responses to traveller encampments and off-road bike issues.
- Implemented target hardening measures to reduce anti-social behaviour in key locations.

9. Additional Service Delivery (Ad Hoc and Responsive Works)

- Undertook a wide range of responsive maintenance and environmental works as required, ensuring service flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues.

10.0 P.E.S.T. ANALYSIS

In analysing the macro-environment, it is important to identify the factors that might in turn affect several vital variables that are likely to influence the operation of the Works and Environmental Services Section.

This Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) analysis is merely a framework that categorises environmental 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.

DRAFT

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	NOTES How might the factors on the left impact on our business	POTENTIAL IMPACT High Medium Low Undetermined	IMPLICATION <i>Type:</i> Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat	AND <i>Impact:</i> Increasing Unchanged Reducing Unknown	IMPORTANCE <i>Importance:</i> Critical Important Unimportant Unknown	ACTION
POLITICAL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in government policies • Employment law • County Council funding cuts 	<p>Determines the priorities for local authorities</p> <p>Affects the hours staff can work. Knock on effects such as flexible working requests</p> <p>Knock on effect to services for Town Council</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Threat</p> <p>Weakness</p> <p>Threat</p>	<p>Increasing</p> <p>Unknown</p> <p>Reducing</p>	<p>Important</p> <p>Unknown</p> <p>Important</p>	<p>Keep up to date with legislation</p> <p>Keep up to date with legislation</p> <p>Make a case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity</p>
ECONOMIC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding, grants and initiatives • Inflation/interest rates • Employment 	<p>Affects the secondary spend capacity</p> <p>Affects the staffing resources available</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Weakness</p> <p>Threat</p> <p>Weakness</p>	<p>Increasing</p> <p>Increasing</p> <p>Reducing</p>	<p>Important</p> <p>Important</p> <p>Important</p>	<p>Develop partnerships and bid for funding wherever possible</p> <p>Follow Council's budget setting protocols</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy use and costs • Ash Tree Die Back 	<p>Instability of pricing</p> <p>Cost to make safe existing trees and replanting costs</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>High to Medium</p>	<p>Threat</p> <p>Threat</p>	<p>Unknown</p> <p>Increasing</p>	<p>Important</p> <p>Important</p>	<p>Obtain best energy prices available</p> <p>Implement Action Plan, regular inspections, Budget established</p>
<p>SOCIAL</p> <p>Health / Obesity</p>	<p>Unwilling/unable to take part in exercise</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Opportunity</p>	<p>Increasing</p>	<p>Important</p>	<p>Continue to provide a range of free outdoor activities</p>
<p>TECHNOLOGICAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advances in computerised games systems • Social Media 	<p>More time spent sat at computers/phones playing games</p> <p>Users can leave unwarranted comment/opinion, without a right to reply.</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Weakness</p> <p>Threat</p>	<p>Increasing</p> <p>Unchanged</p>	<p>Important</p> <p>Important</p>	<p>Publicise facilities</p> <p>Keep up to date</p>

11.0 S.W.O.T Analysis

In order to improve Works and Environmental Services Section services, it is important to analyse the existing internal strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats which may impact on service delivery.

Works and Environmental Services Section

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committed, well trained and multi-skilled staff.• Flexible approach to work.• Good team work.• Vast local knowledge• Room for expansion• Modern machinery and depot facilities.• Constantly reviewing service delivery.• Experienced workforce• Management structure	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some work is weather dependant• Attracting skilled replacement staff.• Wage compatibility with other local authorities.• Age of workforce
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing partnerships• Improved communications	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in Government legislation and funding• Cost of Living Crisis and increasing inflation.• Ash Tree Dieback Disease

12.0 2026/27 Action Plan

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	By
Works Service			
Undertake grounds maintenance and associated duties on time and within designated budget	High level of satisfaction and the creation of a pleasant environment for all to enjoy	SC/LW	March 2027
Provide a Parks Patrol Service	To provide a safe environment and discourage anti-social behaviour on council owned land	SC/LW/EB Park Patrol	Ongoing
Identify and deliver staff training requirements	Staff are developed to their full potential	SC/LW/All staff	March 2027
Review and work in partnership with Durham County Council to improve snow clearing and gritting services in Great Aycliffe	Improvements in Winter maintenance.	SC/LW	March 2027
Special Events			
Facilitate with Fun in the Parks, Firework Display, Christmas Santa Tours and other Council Events	To ensure the smooth running of the event and compliance with health and safety requirements.	SC/LW	December 2026
Organise Christmas lighting display	Improving and enhancing the Christmas experience for residents and visitors	SC/LW	November 2026
Organise Community Enhancement Award scheme	The opportunity for residents to nominate gardens and Christmas Light displays that enhance their local area	SC/LW	December 2026

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	By
Parks			
Undertake repairs to the safety surfacing at various parks	Provide safe play areas	SC/GP	Ongoing
Pursue external funding with view to upgrade Simpasture junior play area.	Provide updated play facilities	SC/GP	March 2027
Continue programme of footpath repairs on Town Council owned land	Ensure a safe surface is provided	SC/JE	March 2027
Health and Safety			
Carry out PAT testing of Town Council appliances	A safe environment is provided for staff and visitors	GP/JT	March 2027
Carry out inspection of footpaths	A safe environment is provided for users	SC/LW/JE	September 2026
Carry out inspections of play equipment	A safe environment is provided for users	LW/GP	March 2027
Carry out annual safety audit of play equipment	A safe environment is provided for users	SC/LW	May 2026
Provide first aid refresher training to designated first aid staff	To meet first aid requirements in the workplace.	SC/LW	Ongoing
Allotments			
Continue with 6-weekly inspections of allotment sites	Sites are maintained to a suitable standard	SC/LW	Ongoing
Hold allotment representatives meeting every 6 weeks during the growing season	Tenants' views and comments can be aired and considered	SC/LW	March 2026
Hold Allotments AGM in November	Tenants' views and comments can be aired and considered	SC/LW	November 2025
Golf Complex			
Continue access and drainage improvements to Oakleaf Golf Course	Improve access to course, to reduce days closed and income	LW/SC	March 2027

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	By
Environment			
Deliver an environmental maintenance programme and improvements of natural areas in Great Aycliffe through the Town Pride Team	Increased level of customer satisfaction and awareness amongst general population of environmental issues and actions possible to improve the environment.	SC/LW/Town Pride	March 2027
Provide limited public/community countryside events and activities Provide limited environmental workshops for local schools	Increased level of customer satisfaction and awareness amongst general population of environmental issues	SC/LW	March 2027
Organise the litter picking campaign - Environment Pride week with all local schools	Increased awareness amongst general population of environmental issues	SC/LW/Town Pride	July 2026
Develop partnership working with the Police, Youth Offending Team, Probation Service, local colleges, scouts, guides etc to provide opportunities and diversionary activities for those at risk of offending	Action possible to improve the environment	SC/LW/Town Pride	Ongoing
Provide rapid response to customer complaints regarding litter and fly tipping on Council owned land through the Town Pride Team, ensuring a safe environment	Ensuring a safe environment	SC/LW	Ongoing
Manage DCC natural green areas in accordance with agreed environmental plan	Ensuring a safe environment	SC/LW	Ongoing
Continue Partnership Working Arrangements with Durham County Council and other agencies to deliver environmental improvements in Great Aycliffe	Improve the bio-diversification of the landscape in Great Aycliffe.	DA/SC/LW	Ongoing

13.0 Risk Analysis

This year's plan has taken an innovative approach to service delivery and could possibly be affected by the risks shown as identified in the Council's risk register.

Detail of Risk	Current Control	Level
Falling behind with grass cutting schedule	Schedule in place. Machinery maintained and serviced	Low
Sabotage of equipment	Hire equipment. Daily checks	Low
Pollution of West Park lakes	Use of specialist contractors to clear lakes	Low
Burial in wrong grave	Registers/maps kept up to date. Checking procedures in place	Low
Headstone erected on wrong grave	Cemeteries officer present prior to fitting Registers/maps up to date	Low
Unsafe headstones leading to accident	Stonemason registration scheme Appropriate fixing method Annual inspections	Low
Play equipment not maintained	Maintenance and inspection programmes. Annual independent inspections	Low
Failure to maintain golf course adequately	Work schedule in place. Monthly meetings with Golf Club committee. Golf Working Group.	Medium
Vandalism to golf greens	Regular checks undertaken	Medium
Closure of golf course due to flooding	Drainage checked and maintained Drainage improvements undertaken	Medium
Risk of Legionella	Checks in place	Medium
Lack of action on Ash Dieback disease	Trees currently monitored Action plan in place Staff trained in use of chain saws Public informed	Medium
Unauthorised access by individuals on Council land	Regular patrols and maintenance Option of legal action Target hardening in place	Medium
Dumping illegal/toxic substances on Town Council land	Regular patrols	Low
Delays in the supply of materials, equipment and services	Alternative suppliers and equipment considered where possible and appropriate	Medium
Failure to put in place additional measures to address risks created by driving range balls exiting over the right-hand fence onto the 17 th hole of the golf course	Internal out of bounds line put in place for trial period, pending re-rating of course	Medium

This list is not exhaustive and health and safety risk assessments are undertaken in detail and reviewed on a regular basis.