



Great Aycliffe



Town Council

**Works and
Environmental
Service Plan
2024-2025**

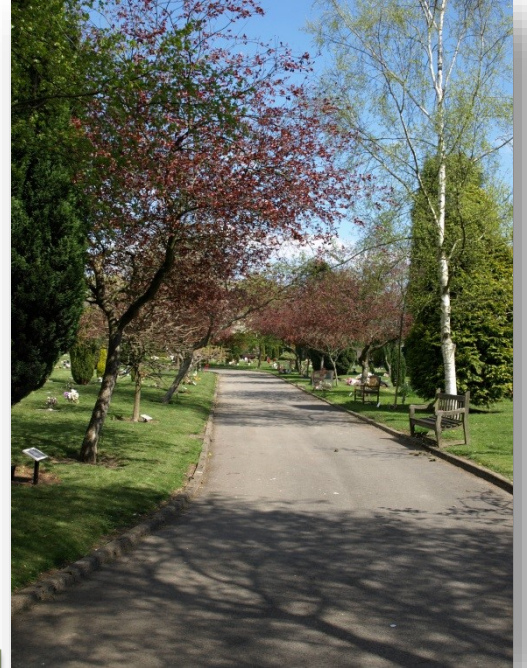
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Aycliffe Way



Stephenson Way Cemetery



West Park

Artworks



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 Golf Driving Range, Pre-School Learning Centres, capital works and improvement projects, Great Aycliffe Way, Nature Park and School Aycliffe Wetlands as well as assisting with all outside events. In effect, the Works and Environmental Services Section service provision has an impact on most Council services.

Our 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, parks and play areas which meet the needs of all the community, the Works and Environmental Services Section will strive to:

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

4.0 Equalities Statement

Although this is primarily an internal working document it will be published on the Council Website for anyone who may be interested in 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 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.

5.0 Investment in Employees

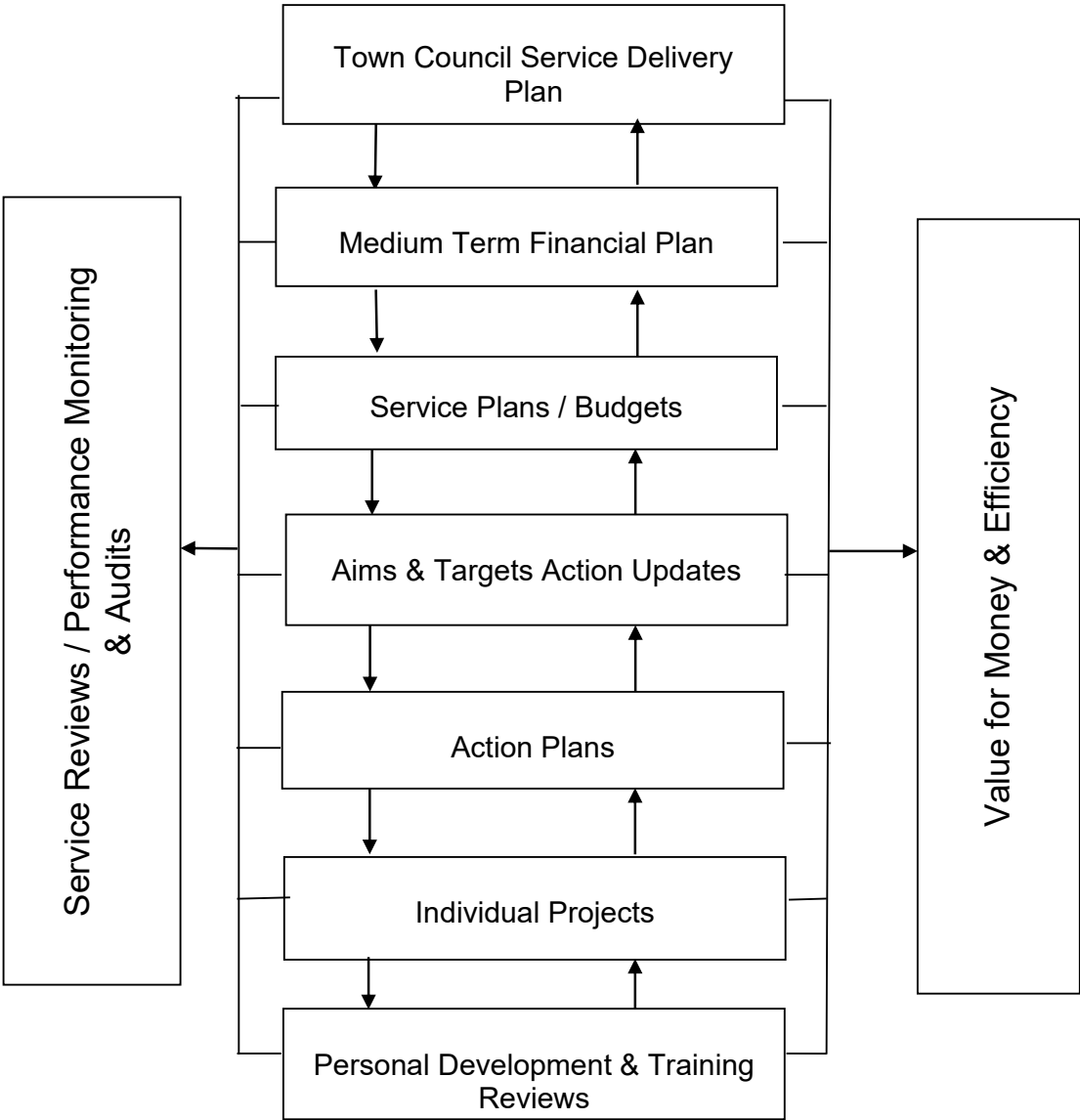
It is clearly acknowledged and recognised that the Works and Environmental Services Section work within a customer-oriented service and as such should maintain a customer focused approach. It is therefore vitally important that the employees delivering front line services should have sufficient skills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

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, parks and play areas which meet the needs of all the community.

7.2 Service Aims and Objectives

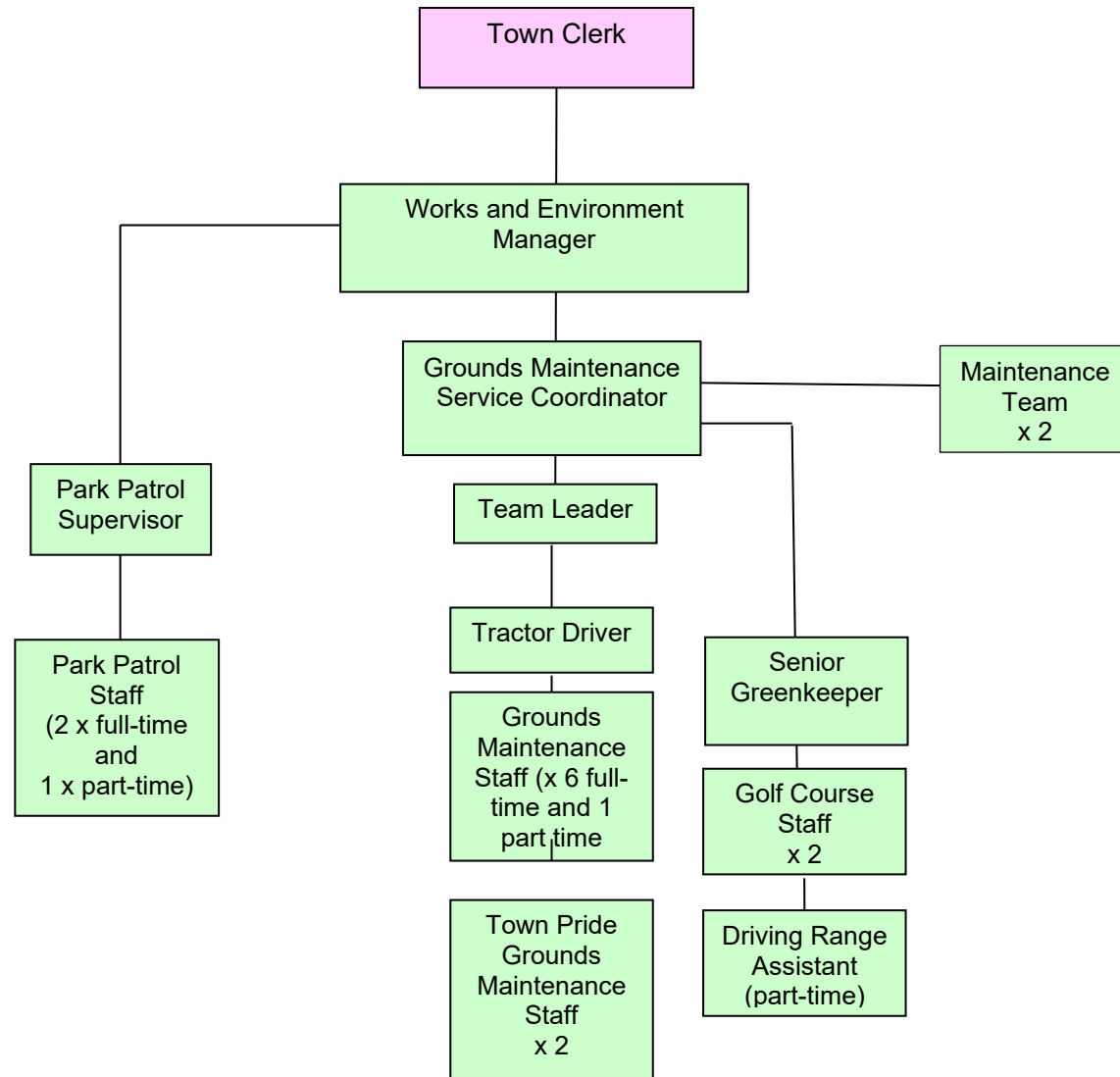
The Works and Environmental Section provide the necessary skills to achieve the following service aims and objectives:

- Grass cutting.
- 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 of Aycliffe Village Churchyard.
- Management, associated record keeping, inspection and maintenance of 5 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 7 parks, and 6 standalone play areas.
- 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 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 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.
- To provide facilities for burials.
- To manage and maintain the Moore Lane Environment Centre.



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 maintenance of the grass at Aycliffe Village.

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 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. Newt Ponds near Millennium way

8.11 Buildings

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 one part-time Driving Range Assistant and one seasonal operative.

9.0 What we achieved last year

Delivered a programme of grounds maintenance and associated works on time and within budget and:-

- Facilitated various staff changes including the appointment of a seasonal Grounds Maintenance Operative.
- Provided a Park Patrol Service.
- Supplied facilities for football at the Sports Complex, Simpasture and Moore Lane.
- Organised and updated the Christmas lighting display.
- Organised the Garden Enhancement and Christmas Display Awards.
- Worked in partnership with Durham County Council to provide a Winter Maintenance Service Plan to ensure key footpaths are cleared of snow and gritted. Plus 72 salt bins serviced.
- Worked in partnership with Durham County Council to provide a Service Level Agreement to help maintain and monitor various parts of the Great Aycliffe Way under the ownership of the County Council.
- Carried out PAT testing of Town Council electrical appliances.
- Carried out inspections of footpaths, seating and bus shelters.
- Carried out inspections of play equipment.
- Carried out annual safety audit of play equipment.
- Provided first aid refresher training to designated first aid staff.
- Identified and delivered staff training requirements including inductions for new staff, stem injection, working on water courses, chain saw works on multiple stem trees, IPAFs for Managers, IPAF training for 4 operatives, manual handling course, ladders and working at height, and new machinery induction training.
- Held an AGM for the Allotments.
- Facilitated multi agency meetings with Police, DCC enforcement teams, Livin and other key partners to co-ordinate the reduction of anti-social behaviour within the town.

- Carried out independent Tree Safety Inspection of trees on Great Aycliffe Town Council land and prioritised and carried out arising work highlighted within the report.
- Ensured six monthly tree safety inspections to ash trees as required by the Ash Die Back Action Plan.
- Memorial Safety Inspections at West Cemetery
- Facilitated a highly successful community litter-picking initiative by offering litter-pickers and arranging collection points for the rubbish collected.
- Completed three clean-ups of West Park Lakes with assistance from the public and assistance from Northumbrian Water.
- Provided rapid response to customer complaints regarding litter and fly tipping on Council owned land through the Town Pride Team, ensuring a safe environment.
- Facilitated the maintenance of the St Oswald's Pre-school buildings and grounds.

In addition to the above list, the Works and Environmental Services section undertakes many other works when requested to, on an ad-hoc basis.

- Council operatives were deployed to clear debris and make safe any dangerous trees which had suffered storm damage.
- Application for Environment Agency licences to treat Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed near water courses.
- Himalayan Balsam has been cleared in Woodham Burn and regular checks have been carried out for Giant Hogweed with over 60 plants being removed. Multiple application of herbicide to Japanese Knotweed at Aycliffe Village.
- Approximately 1,000 young trees and whips planted with assistance of volunteers and community groups, with trees donated from the Woodland Trust and The Conservation Volunteers groups.
- Planted 110 standard trees in key locations including Aycliffe Village (13), Woodham Burn (27), Town Park (36) and West Park (34).
- Prioritised and removed 30+ mature trees identified within the independent safety tree inspection within Woodham Burn, West Cemetery, Oakleaf golf course and School Aycliffe.
- Planted 500 trees donated from Gestamp to the rear of Heatherburn Court within Woodham Burn.

- Feasibility study and application to North East Community Forest for a tree planting project of the Oakleaf Golf Course with work proposed to take place in Winter 2024.
- Footpath repairs have been carried out in Oakleaf access road, Council Office car park, Woodham Burn and Stephenson Way Cemetery.
- Removal of Leylandii hedging and landscaped areas in West Cemetery.
- Completed 'phase 2' of the drainage improvements in West Cemetery.
- Completed feasibility study to improve drainage in Stephenson Way Cemetery, followed by raising of waterlogged graves and headstones.
- Completed drainage improvements within St Oswald's Allotments.
- Facilitated the establishment of the Garden Guild at Clarence Chare allotments.
- Improvements to Byerley Park Play area including replacing the external fencing.
- CCTV camera installed in St Oswald's Park
- Safety surfacing replacement in St Oswald's junior play area.
- Established three additional junior football pitches at Moore Lane.
- Replacement of Park Patrol Vehicle with electric e-Berlingo.
- Replaced roofing on 3 bus shelters

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.

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:						
• Changes in government policies	Determines the priorities for local authorities	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Keep up to date with legislation
• Employment law	Affects the hours staff can work. Knock on effects such as flexible working requests	Medium	Weakness	Unknown	Unknown	Keep up to date with legislation
• County Council issues	Knock on effect to services for Town Council	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Make a case for Great Aycliffe at every opportunity
• Effects of leaving EU	Changes to legislation, disruption to supply lines and inflated costs	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Keep up to date with legislation
• Pandemic Regulations	Direct effect to service delivery or restrictions	Medium	Threat	Reducing	Unknown	Keep up to date with legislation
• Post pandemic	Negative effect on procurement of machinery and equipment	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Unknown	Work closely with suppliers of plant and equipment and regularly review MTFP.

PEST ANALYSIS FACTORS	NOTES	POTENTIAL IMPACT	IMPLICATION <i>Type:</i>	AND <i>Impact:</i>	IMPORTANCE <i>Importance:</i>	ACTION
ECONOMIC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding, grants and initiatives • Inflation/interest rates • Employment • Energy use and costs • Ash Die Back 	Affects the secondary spend capacity	Medium	Weakness	Increasing	Important	Develop partnerships and bid for funding wherever possible
	Affects the staffing resources available	High	Threat	Increasing	Important	Follow Council's budget setting protocols
	Instability of pricing	High	Weakness	Reducing	Important	Obtain best energy prices available
	Cost to make safe existing trees and replanting costs	Medium	Threat	Unknown	Important	Obtain best energy prices available
		High to Medium	Threat	Increasing	Important	Implement Action Plan, regular inspections, Budget established
SOCIAL Health / Obesity	Unwilling/unable to take part in exercise	Low	Opportunity	Increasing	Important	Continue to provide a range of free outdoor activities
TECHNOLOGICAL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advances in computerised games systems • Social Media 	More time spent sat at computers/phones playing games	Medium	Weakness	Increasing	Important	Publicise facilities Keep up to date
	Users can leave unwarranted comment/opinion, without a right to reply.	Medium	Threat	Unchanged	Important	

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">• 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 communication	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in Government legislation and funding• Cost of Living Crisis and increasing inflation and interest rates.• Ash Tree Dieback Disease

12.0 Action Plan

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	By
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 25
Appoint a replacement Park Patrol Operative	Suitable staff to be identified to fulfil Park patrol role	SC/LW	May 24
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 25
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 25
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 24
Organise Christmas lighting display	Improving and enhancing the Christmas experience for residents and visitors	SC/LW	Nov 24
Organise Community Enhancement Award scheme	The opportunity for residents to nominate gardens and Christmas Light displays that enhance their local area	SC/LW	Dec 24

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	By
Parks			
Undertake repairs to the safety surfacing at various parks	Provide safe play areas	SC/GP	Ongoing
Continue programme of footpath repairs on Town Council owned land	Ensure a safe surface is provided	SC/JE	March 25
Complete repairs to West Park Bridge over lake	Provide safe access point	SC/LW	July 24
Health and Safety			
Carry out PAT testing of Town Council appliances	A safe environment is provided for staff and visitors	GP/JT	March 25
Carry out inspection of footpaths	A safe environment is provided for users	SC/LW/JE	September 24
Carry out inspections of play equipment	A safe environment is provided for users	LW/GP	March 25
Carry out annual safety audit of play equipment	A safe environment is provided for users	SC/LW	December 24
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	Mar 25
Hold allotment AGM in November	Tenants' views and comments can be aired and considered	SC/LW	Nov 24

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer	By
Golf Complex			
Complete drainage works to driving range	Improve surface to reduce loss of range balls and associated income	LW/SC	Oct 24
Continue access improvements to Oakleaf golf course	Improve access to course, to reduce days closed and income	LW/SC	March 25

Action	Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	By
Environment			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivered 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	Mar 25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide limited public/community countryside events and activities ▪ Provided limited environmental workshops for local schools 	Increased level of customer satisfaction and awareness amongst general population of environmental issues	SC/LW	Mar 25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provided 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed DCC natural green areas in accordance with agreed environmental plan. 	Ensuring a safe environment	SC/LW	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 or service closure due to pandemic or similar virus	Social distancing, sanitation and PPE in place and available to minimise the disruption.	Medium
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. Nationally recognised 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	Park Patrol to monitor as part of the Out of Hours patrol service.	Medium
Closure of golf course due to flooding	Regular checks/maintenance of drainage ditches. Alternative routes brought into play to reduce closures.	Medium
Covid Restrictions effecting delivery of Service	All available precautions in place and regularly risk assessed. Continue to review government guidance.	Medium

This list is by no means exhaustive and risk assessments are being undertaken in detail and reviewed on a regular basis.