

Revenue Budget Summary - Corporate Services

Budget Description	Budget Holder(s)	2024/25 Gross Budget	2024/25 Net Budget
Corporate Services	Dan Austin (Town Clerk) Amanda Donald (Corporate & Policy Officer)	£294,000	£291,950

Purpose of the Budget:

The purpose of the Corporate Services Budget is to provide the resources to facilitate the effective corporate management of the Council, ensuring that it complies with all statutory and regulatory duties and responsibilities, and formulates, monitors and delivers its strategic aims and targets.

Scope of Activity and Nature of the Service:

The Corporate Services Section has wide ranging responsibilities, some of which are statutory and some of which are discretionary.

It is the corporate centre of the Town Council and is responsible for developing the corporate framework under which all other departments and services must operate.

The Corporate Services Section is responsible for the following specific areas of work:-

- Preparing the Council's Service Delivery Plan each year, including the setting and monitoring of annual aims and targets;
- Managing and administering the Council's Performance Management Framework;
- Maintaining and updating the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders;
- Preparing, maintaining and updating all non-financial Council policies;
- Ensuring the effective organisation and running of the Committees of the Council and overseeing the production of the agendas and minutes of all meetings;
- Overseeing the management of the records of the Council and compliance with GDPR;
- Delivering training to staff and Members;
- Providing professional support and advice to Members and staff;
- Monitoring and managing the Council's risks;
- Managing and overseeing the Council's arrangements for health and safety;
- Managing the Council's information technology facilities and infrastructure and overseeing the information technology support contract;
- Overseeing the operation of the Council's CCTV cameras by Durham County Council;
- Overseeing the use of consultants by the Council where specialist knowledge is required including human resources, planning and procurement advice, and the use of solicitors, surveyors, architects etc;
- Providing support and guidance for any elections or by-elections;
- Considering and commenting on planning applications and ensuring compliance the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

There are three officers within the Corporate Section; the Town Clerk, Corporate and Policy Officer; and the Corporate Assistant.

Contribution to Council Aims:

The Corporate Services Section contributes to the following Council Strategic Aims:-

Aim 1 "To provide good quality governance and management of the Council".

Aim 2 "To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner".

Aim 6 "To help and encourage partnership working to improve services and facilities for the residents of Great Aycliffe".

Aim 7 "To encourage the residents of Great Aycliffe to become involved in local democracy".

Aim 8 "To research information and make the case for Great Aycliffe".

Performance Measures and Indicators:

The Corporate Services Section is ultimately responsible for the Council's Performance Management Framework and makes a direct contribution to a large number of the Strategic Aims and Targets within the Service Delivery Plan and in particular those linked to Aims 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8:-

- Publish the Town Council Service Delivery Plan by end of June 2025.
- Publish an Annual Report.
- Provide training for the Town Clerk from his annual appraisal and CPD requirements;
- Maintain a training programme for Members which shows recommended courses, with a regular reminder sent and records of attendance and non-attendance being kept.
- Develop and provide an annual training programme for the staff within each service area, informed by the annual appraisal process.
- Undertake an annual review of the Council Constitution and ensure compliance with current legislation.
- Ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 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.
- Ensure that social media is used to advertise the Council's services and facilities.
- Undertake research where appropriate for new policies and procedures.
- Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to Council as and when required.
- Ensure all staff have an annual appraisal.
- Monitor and enhance Cyber Security arrangements in conjunction with TSG.
- Undertake a quarterly review of staff sickness and report to Service Managers.
- Continue to review and reduce the Council's use of single plastic.
- 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.
- 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.
- Improve the modernisation of business and administrative processes, with more effective use of IT.
- Work with the Council's IT Consultants to update IT systems and equipment and off-site data storage.
- Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return by 30th September 2024;
- Ensure all relevant information is published in compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code and Openness of Local Government Regulations.
- 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;
- To consider the Council's Business Risks every March and minute that a full review has taken place by the Council.
- Ensure that at least one Service Review is completed each year.
- Golf Complex Review to be completed by March 2025.
- Consider a review of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan in 2025.
- Make better use of social media to engage with residents and undertake consultations.
- Continue to engage with community groups and organisations.
- Work with Newton Aycliffe Police to address anti-social behaviour issues.
- Undertake a town wide satisfaction survey in 2024.
- Hold or take part in at least two events to inform residents about Town Council services with an aim to establish priorities; and
- Produce timely responses to all major consultations carried out.

Key Budget Changes for 2024/25:

This budget has increased by £20,300 to a net running cost of £291,950 per year.

This provides for a net increase in staff related salary costs, increase in lorry park rates, audit fees, CCTV running costs and I.T. costs.

Importance of Service to the Community:

While there have not been any satisfaction surveys or consultation carried out relating specifically to corporate services, it is considered that the effective corporate management of the Council directly supports the effective democratic management of the Council and the delivery of front-line services and therefore benefits the community as a whole.

The 2024 'Your Parish, Your Choice, Your Voice' Satisfaction Survey also provided some positive feedback as to public satisfaction with the Council as a whole.

The Council achieved an overall satisfaction figure of 76% in the survey as well as 71% for value for money.

External Funding and Fees and Charges:

The only direct income receivable by the Corporate Services Budget is the community benefit funding from the solar farm at School Aycliffe at around £1,000 per year, and a total of £1,000 for miscellaneous corporate income including various wayleaves for access to Council land.