

Revenue Budget Summary - Works Department and Depot

Budget Description	Budget Holder	2024/25 Gross Budget	2024/25 Net Budget
Works Department and Depot	Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)	£942,300	£285,200

Purpose of the Budget:

The main purpose of the Works Department and Depot Budget is to fund the operational resources including staffing, premises, vehicles, machinery, tools and equipment to undertake grounds maintenance duties and other associated works on Council owned land and facilities, and to provide support to front line service areas such as the parks, play areas, cemeteries, allotments, golf course, driving range and football pitches.

Scope of Activity and Nature of the Service:

The Works Department, operating from the depot facility, provide the following services on Town Council owned land and facilities within the Great Aycliffe Parish:-

- Grass cutting;
- Arboriculture and tree work;
- Greenkeeping and the maintenance and upkeep of the golf course and driving range;
- Upkeep and maintenance of all Council parks;
- Play equipment inspection, repair, and maintenance;
- Upkeep and maintenance of the two cemeteries, and the undertaking of burial services;
- Upkeep and maintenance of five allotments sites;
- Planting and maintenance of bedding plants, shrubs, trees, and floral displays;
- Litter picking, graffiti removal and environmental cleansing;
- Upkeep and maintenance of sports pitches;
- Provision and maintenance of bus shelters, public seating and litter and dog bins;
- Support to special events including the fireworks display and fun in the parks;
- Organising the annual Christmas lighting display;
- Council building repairs and general maintenance;
- Landscaping works;
- Safety inspections; and
- The Park Patrol Service.

The Works Department currently employs 21 members of staff, broken down as follows:-

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| - 1 x Works and Environment Manager | - 2 x Assistant Green Keepers |
| - 1 x Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator | - 1 x Tractor Driver; |
| - 1 x Team Leader | - 8 x Grounds Maintenance Operatives |
| - 2 x Maintenance Technician | - 1 x Park Patrol Service Supervisor; |
| - 1 x Head Green Keeper | - 3 x Park Patrol Service Operatives; |

There is also provision for the employment of one seasonal worker to help manage the increase in workload during the peak spring and summer months.

The work of the Works Department is partly statutory and partly discretionary as it is responsible for providing support to statutory services such as cemeteries and allotments, but also to discretionary service areas such as the parks, play areas, sports pitches, and golf complex.

Contribution to Council Aims:

The Works Department contributes to the following Council Strategic Aims:-

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

Aim 3: "To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities"

Aim 5: "To contribute to the environmental improvement of Great Aycliffe by managing and developing parks, play areas and green spaces"

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

Performance Measures and Indicators:

The Works Department contribute towards the delivery of a number of targets within the Council's Service Delivery Plan. These targets are as follows:-

- Ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Improve advertising of Council facilities and services by targeting a service area in each publication, making sure each service area is targeted at least once.
- Ensure that social media is used to advertise the Council's services and facilities.
- Keep up to date with any relevant changes in legislation.
- Continue to monitor energy consumption, implement energy saving initiatives and reduce usage where possible.
- Ensure all staff have an annual appraisal;
- Deliver the work set out in the Asset Management Plan via the capital programme.
- Deliver the Council's annual Christmas lighting display.
- Works and Environment Manager to arrange to work with local schools and community groups to develop volunteer opportunities by helping to deliver public countryside events when the opportunity arises.
- To continue to monitor the health and condition of trees on Town Council owned land in line with the Tree Management Policy and undertake a visual tree inspection of a specific area every six months to assess the health and condition of trees.
- Continue to work with Northumbrian Water to improve silt clearance and maintenance in West Park lakes.
- Complete at least 5 targeted Himalayan Balsam removing working parties along the Burn.
- Undertake maintenance and management of specific Durham County Council environmental areas as per the management agreement.
- Carry out repairs to St Oswald's play area safety surface.
- Proactively monitor Ash Dieback Disease and remove diseased trees as necessary.
- To continue partnership working with Durham County Council and build on existing initiatives.
- Work with the Youth Council, DCC officers, Tidy Britain, schools, community, and voluntary groups to hold a Town Pride Environment Week, incorporating an anti-litter campaign.
- The Works and Environment Manager and Park Patrol Officers to work with Durham County Council and the Police in regard to anti-social behaviour issues.
- Work in partnership with residents and friends' groups to improve our parks, play areas and environment areas.

The performance of the Works Department is also monitored internally by the Works and Environment Manager and is reflected in the low number of complaints received by the Council in respect of grounds maintenance, and in the high standard of the parks, play areas, cemeteries, allotments etc.

Finally, a Works Service Plan is also in place, which includes a specific annual action plan to help monitor and improve the internal performance of the Works Department each year.

Key Budget Changes for 2024/25:

The Works and Depot Budgets have decreased by £49,950 to a net running cost of £285,200 per year.

Additional budget provision has been made for a forecast 2024/25 local government pay award and salary increments due to staff, while there have also been inflationary increases in insurance costs, protective clothing, plus vehicle licences, repairs and insurances.

These increases have been partly offset savings from staffing and reduction of vehicle fuel costs.

Importance of Service to the Community:

The Works Department is an essential service that provides the operational resources to enable many of the Council's front-line services to operate efficiently and effectively and to ensure that the Council's land, buildings, and other assets are kept in a good standard of maintenance and repair.

The 2024 'Your Parish, Your Choice, Your Voice' Satisfaction Survey also provided some positive feedback on public satisfaction with the work and performance of the Works Department, with services such as environment and open space, parks and play areas, cemeteries and flower beds all achieving good satisfaction rates and featuring highly amongst the priority services for local taxpayers. South Agnew Plantation had the lowest score, with 67% rating it as very good or good, while St Clare's Church frontage and memorial garden scored highest at 96%, followed by Aycliffe Village Greens at 91%.

Regarding value for money, Cobbler's Hall Plantation was considered the worst value for money, with 61% rating it as very good or good value for money, whereas St Clare's Church frontage received a score of 91%.

External Funding and Fees and Charges:

The only income receivable by the Works Department is in the form of internal recharges to front line service areas, in respect of the hours worked by staff within the department in each front-line service area i.e. parks, play areas, football pitches, golf course, environment, allotments, cemeteries etc.

These recharges currently total £654,700 per year.

The Depot Budget also benefits from the lease agreement in respect of the aerial situated on the land adjacent to the building totalling £2,000 per year, and a small budget provision for income from the sale of scrap metal.