



Barnard Castle Town Council

Annual Report 2014-15

Forward:

This has been a momentous year for the Town Council and for the country as a whole. It has been my honour to represent Barnard Castle as its Town Mayor this year and to commemorate two significant anniversaries: one, in August 2014, which marked the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War and, more recently, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War 2 in Europe. The ceremonies which marked these occasions, at the Bowes Museum and St Mary's Parish Hall were special and memorable and demonstrated the significance of our town in County Durham and as part of the national story.

The Town Council has fought to stand up for local interests this year to make the case for local determination of decisions which affect people's day-to-day lives but which are all too often taken by people who don't visit Teesdale and have little appreciation of where Barnard Castle is or what it means to live here.

But sometimes Barnard Castle gets recognition and unexpected praise too. The town again made the Sunday Times list of *Best Places to Live in Britain* in 2015. Through our efforts the Town Council works with the support of local groups, businesses and the county council, to promote events and provide opportunities for local people and visitors to come to Barnard Castle and to enjoy what it has to offer.

That is something we will continue to do for the benefit of the town and its people and with your continued support.

Councillor John Blissett

Town Mayor 2014-15

11 May 2015

Services:

Allotments

There was an unexpected high turnover of Allotment gardens at the beginning of the season with six long-standing tenants relinquishing their gardens due to failing health. A further four gardens were re-tenanted during the year. The resultant turnover had a positive effect and considerably reduced the waiting list, which at the end of March 2015 stood at twenty-five; the lowest for many years. A total of five new applications were received during the year.

The Allotment Improvement Holding Account provided funding for further path work improvements at the Raby Avenue site, necessary to support raised ground and protect previous path improvement works. In addition, the Council installed noticeboards produced by the Teesdale YMCA at each site to save on postage costs and to improve communication with tenants.

It was agreed that allotment rental for 2016-17 be increased to £45 due to rising costs of utilities and grounds maintenance.

Floodlights

The Town Council runs the coloured floodlights which illuminate the exterior of the castle. This year, the council has been successful in a grant application to the TAP to install a similar scheme for the Market Cross, which we will be working with Durham County Council to install during 2015.

Floral Displays

In 2014, the Town Council provided the town's colourful Floral Displays and associated watering services. Various schemes to enhance these are in progress for 2015, with new wooden barrels bought to replace old ones around the town.

Market Place Public Toilets

The Town Council continues to pay half the annual running costs of the Market Place Public Toilets, operated by Durham County Council, with a reduced cost saving in 2014-15.

Memorial and Blue Plaques

Memorial and Blue Plaques are considered as and when requests are received. A new leaflet and blue plaque trail has been produced for 2015.

Mini Golf

The Mini Golf service, 'A Journey through Teesdale', is one of the Town Council's self-supporting services. This means that the annual income generated covers the expenditure needed to run the facility and the additional income can be built up to reinvest in the facility, future proofing the course for years to come.

The project formed part of the complete redevelopment of the whole Scar Top area and was made possible following an award of funding from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership. The remaining funding required to achieve the total replacement of the course was secured from North Pennine Dales Leader, Councillor Barbara Harrison's Neighbourhood Budget and a contribution from the Town Council.

The top quality 9-hole course features stone monoliths representing local iconic landmarks and, as the name suggests, playing a round of golf takes you on 'A Journey through Teesdale'.

The course is available free of charge to hire for practical lessons by schools during term time and also for private hire by local organisations, charities and private groups for a small charge outside normal operating times.

The facility is suitable for all ages and abilities and further information can be found on the Town Council's website.

Open Spaces

The Town Council continues to work in partnership with Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership on Flatts Wood and Tees Bank Improvement Project. The Council has taken over regular strimming of the permissive footpath from Raby Avenue

upwards. Work is underway to unblock and restore the Red Well spring to working order in 2015, with funding from Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership.

The Haymeadow became self-sustaining in 2014. A dispenser and leaflet to pick up and identify over 40 plants and grasses on the meadow walk is in progress for 2015, together with scything training for volunteers to assist with maintaining the Haymeadow.

Play Areas

This Council's five Play Areas continue to be well used and maintained. A public consultation was carried out in 2014 in respect of Kalafat, Ten Fields and Green Lane play areas. Future play and sports provision is to be explored and developed in 2015. Drainage works have been carried out at Marwood drive play area.

Public Seats

The Council continues to refurbish Public Seats through the memorial bench donation-sponsorship scheme. During 2014-15, twenty-nine benches have been replaced or renovated. A partnership has been developed with Teesdale YMCA to maintain seats and a joint project with Heart of Teesdale Partnership has provided weed barriers around six public seats.

War Memorials

For many years the Town Council has assumed responsibility for three War Memorials within the Town. The Main Town Memorial situated within the grounds of The Bowes Museum, the South African Boer War Memorial in upper Galgate and the Durham Light Infantry Memorial, also situated within The Bowes Museum grounds.

Following the relocation of The Aviation Day Memorial from the grounds of Deerbolt to the Garden of Remembrance in upper Galgate, the future responsibility for the Aviation Day Memorial will also be taken on by the Town Council.

Environmental matters

The Town Council continued to work on anti-dog fouling initiatives with the local community, schools and Durham County Council's Civic Pride Team. Overall in 2014, dog fouling has improved. 'Shop a Plopper' leaflets were delivered door-to-door and to local businesses, with free poop bags made

available throughout the town and new dog waste bins installed. New signage is to be installed at play areas, together with more positive marketing and publicity to act as deterrents in 2015.

The Town Council agreed to promote and take part in the 2015 Big Spring Clean in March, which took place on Scar Top and surrounding areas with twenty-five volunteers. Preparation is underway to tackle litter dropping in the town, with further initiatives in 2015.

Partnership:

Community Events

Through a programme of outdoor summer events, designed to appeal to local people and attract day visitors to the town, the Town Council has worked in partnership, with music, medievalism and street entertainment in 2014-15.

At Christmas, the switch-on of the tree lights and the arrival of Father Christmas into town were this year complemented by a spectacular fireworks display from the castle marking the culmination of a day which included Victorian Christmas crafts and a civic carol service.

The Town Mayor's charity event at the Glaxo Sports and Social Club in April was held to raise money for the TCR Hub, which was the Town Mayor's charity for 2014-15.

Christmas Lighting

The Town Council provided the 2014 Christmas Lighting display (Market Cross windows, the lamppost motifs and the Town's crib). A public meeting took place to discuss future provision of the town's Christmas lighting. A 'Christmas Lights Working Group', involving the community and businesses, will organise Christmas lighting for 2015.

Grants to Other Bodies

Small financial Grants to Other Bodies are considered under delegated powers by the Council's Partnership Committee three times per year. This is in line with the Financial Donations Policy (available on the Town Council's website).

For 2014-15 the budget was increased from £1,500 to £3,000 and during the year the total budget was awarded to organisations and

activities which contributed constructively to the life and wellbeing of Barnard Castle and benefitted some or all of the people of the Town. Recipients of the 2014-15 awards can be found within the Services section of the Town Council's website.

For 2015-16 the budget remains at £3,000.

Poppy Appeal

The 2013 Poppy Appeal closed at the end of September 2014; the net total raised for our area was £11,770.05 - a 10% increase on last year's net total.

In October 2014 the 2014 Appeal was launched and this will run through until

30 September 2015. Early indication suggests that a total in excess of £12,000 has been raised so far. There is still a chance that this total may increase as donations can be accepted up to 29 September 2015.

Remembrance Sunday

The town's Remembrance Sunday event was organised once again in conjunction with St Mary's Parish Church. The service at both the Church and at the town's main cenotaph on 9 November was well attended.

Planning:

The Planning Committee (acting under delegated powers) considered 59 planning applications this year; a 44% increase on the number of applications considered in 2013-14.

Full Council considered two significant applications: development of 62 residential dwellings at Green Lane, North of Barnard Castle School; and the proposed Emergency Quad Hub in Wilson Street.

Resources:

Budget and Finance

The Town Council's Budget and its related finances are overseen by the Council's Resources Committee prior to onward transmission to full Council for approval. The annual budgetary cycle takes around three months when all aspects of the Council's financial requirements are considered.

A Precept request is then served on Durham County Council for the required amount (total revenue budget less income generated).

The total Gross Revenue Budget for 2014-15 was £188,019 and details of how this was apportioned can be found, below, under the

'Abbreviated Accounts' section of this report. Information is also available on the use of the Council's Reserves.

The Council's finances are internally audited every six months and externally audited annually.

Abbreviated Accounts (unaudited figures)

| EXPENDITURE | 2014-15 Budget (£) | Outturn 31 Mar 15 (£) | INCOME | 2014-15 Budget (£) | Outturn 31 Mar 15 (£) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mayoral Allowance (8800 & 2100) | 900 | 900 | Fees and Charges | 13,744 | 16,392 |
| Training | 750 | 211 | Bank Interest | 1,600 | 632 |
| Audit Fees | 1,460 | 1,300 | Grants | 0 | 0 |
| Insurance | 2,080 | 1,917 | Donations | 0 | 2,608 |
| Society of Local Council Clerks | 231 | 235 | Sponsorship | 0 | 400 |
| Co Durham Association | 696 | 687 | Misc. Income | 0 | 1,280 |
| Accounts Software Support | 230 | 225 | Cumulative Fund | 7,800 | 7,800 |
| Travel Allowance | 300 | 261 | Precept | 149,994 | 149,994 |
| Chairs of Office | 350 | 295 | Local Council Tax Support Grant | 14,881 | 14,881 |
| Salaries & Associated Costs | 102,189 | 100,375 | TOTAL INCOME | 188,019 | 193,987 |
| Office & Associated Costs | 10,307 | 9,565 | | | |
| Meeting Room Hire | 940 | 950 | | | |
| Employee Eye Test | 25 | 0 | Public Seats | | |
| Communication | 250 | 70 | Income - Donations | | 1,850 |
| Wayfinding Units | 100 | 0 | Income - Miscellaneous | | 1,200 |
| Allotments | 3,630 | 2,406 | Earmarked Reserve | | 413 |
| Mini Golf | 10,000 | 7,708 | | | |
| Christmas Lights | 6,500 | 5,803 | Public Seats - Expenditure | | 2,912 |
| Play Areas | 8,000 | 7,563 | Balance | | 551 |
| Red Well | 300 | 225 | | | |
| Bede Road Bus Shelter | 50 | 15 | | | |
| Dog Fouling | 500 | 162 | RESERVES EXPENDITURE | | |
| Donations | 3,000 | 3,000 | During the year £7,259 of the Council's Reserves has been | | |
| Floral and Open Spaces | 6,000 | 6,074 | spent on the following projects: | | |
| Castle Floodlights | 400 | 206 | Allotment Improvements | Christmas Lights | |
| War Memorials | 710 | 0 | Replacement IT & Software | Chairs of Office | |
| Events | 14,000 | 12,783 | Galgate Greens | Woodleigh | |
| Contingencies | 0 | 1,295 | Bouch Way Play Area | | |
| Market Place Public Toilets | 5,771 | 4,924 | | | |
| Creation of Neighbourhood Plan | 7,500 | 0 | | | |
| Replacement IT & Software | 850 | 850 | | | |
| Public Seats | 0 | 2,912 | | | |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 188,019 | 172,917 | | | |

More information and contact details:

Further details of all the Services mentioned in this annual report can be obtained by visiting the Town Council's website www.barnardcastletowncouncil.gov.uk or from our Facebook -**BarneyCouncil** and Twitter @**BarneyCouncil** profiles.

Our office: **44b Galgate, Barnard Castle, DL12 8BH** is open 10:00 to 4:00, Monday to Friday.

Our telephone number is **01833 690970**

Our email address is clerk@barnardcastletowncouncil.gov.uk