



Barnard Castle Town Council

Annual Report 2015-16

Forward:

It has been my privilege and pleasure to represent Barnard Castle as Town Mayor during a year which has seen the town make international headlines through the successful Yves Saint Laurent exhibition which the Council supported with a complimentary brochure and themed floral displays. With the support of the Friends of the Bowes the Council invited civic representatives from communities across Durham and beyond for a private viewing of YSL and the Reading Room and incredible views from the very top windows of the Museum. The town profile was also raised through the Castle Players and their success in taking to the stage with the RSC in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as part of 'A Play for the Nation' marking 400 years since Shakespeare's death.

Obtaining possession last year of Woodleigh on behalf of the town ended a long running saga, however occupation of the building was equally challenging. I hope you will agree that the interior of the building has been greatly enhanced, giving our staff a much more appropriate work environment as well as a welcome for residents and community groups.

It is the efforts of other local groups with the Town Council's help which have highlighted the year! Through the hard work and dedication of Barnard Castle Christmas Lights group who have provided innovative, complementary displays alongside the Town Council's new icicle lighting, the town's display has been rejuvenated and greatly admired by many. Again local groups came together in 2015 to support re-location of the Teesdale Aviation memorial to the Galgate Greens. This year Aviation Day will be remembered alongside Armed Forces Day and will form part of another partnership initiative with the first (I hope of many) *1940's Weekend*, as part of the Town Council's events programme.

Volunteering is a huge part of Barnard Castle and the wider area's life. In recognition of this incredible work, it gave me great pleasure to host a 'Celebration of Volunteering' service and event at St. Mary's Church in January. As a lasting tribute to the commitment of volunteers both now and in the future, two oak trees have been planted on the Demesnes and suitable plaques arranged.

Those volunteers of course, include the twelve members of the Town Council. Although not technically named as volunteers, those who have served for a while and those who are newly elected, show, through their willingness to stand and the town's willingness to support them, that the Town Council continues to provide services and amenities which benefit Barnard Castle.

My final point: it was always an ambition of mine to showcase 'Barney' as it is, for both residents and visitors, a welcoming, vibrant town creating opportunities whilst respecting its heritage. Bringing civic guests to the town on four occasions and showing them our 'treasures' has, I hope, made them more aware of our town and what a great place it is to live, work and visit.

Councillor Mrs Sandra Moorhouse

Town Mayor 2015-16

9 May 2016

Services:

Allotments

During the year, nine new applications were received for the waiting list. Seven gardens were re-tenanted and at the end of March 2016 the waiting list stood at 22 with 5 vacant gardens awaiting allocation.

The allotment service is a self-funding service and does not form part of the precept. Any generated income covers the expenditure to run the facility with any additional income built up to reinvest in the service.

Any additional income is transferred into the Allotment Improvement Holding Account at the end of each financial year to 'save up' for improvement projects as identified by the Allotments Improvement Action Plan

During October, the Holding Account received a welcomed financial boost. This was very timely, as Northumbrian Water had identified Water Regulation compliance issues with the water standpipes on four of the sites - the boost enabled the necessary work to be progressed.

It was agreed that allotment rental for 2017-18 remain at £45 due with a view to a possible increase in 2018/19.

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 external floodlights for the Market Cross, which were installed in November.

Floral Displays

The Town Council provides the town's floral displays and associated watering services. French themed summer planting supported The Bowes Museum's Yves Saint Laurent Exhibition. A freestanding planter with twelve hanging baskets is now a core part of the floral displays. A new Floral Development Volunteer Group actively works to keep the town looking colourful and weed free!

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 negotiated cost saving in 2015-16.

Mini Golf

The Mini Golf course, is a self-supporting service, where the annual income covers the expenditure needed to run the course and to build up a reinvestment fund to future proof the course.

The top quality 9-hole course which is now in its fourth season, 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.

Mini golf is suitable for all ages and abilities and further information about the course, dates and times of opening, ticket prices and hire information can be found on the Town Council's website.

Open Spaces

The Town Council continues to maintain various grassed open spaces and has worked in partnership with the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership on Flatts Wood and Tees Bank Improvement and Interpretation Projects. Negotiations are underway with Durham County Council to transfer control of several areas to the Town Council, including the Demesnes, Scar Top and Woodleigh Grounds.

This year, 105 Wetland tree saplings have been planted by volunteers around Kalafat.

The Upper Demesnes Haymeadow is self-sustaining and maintained by a group of volunteers using traditional scything methods. It received a commendation at the County Durham Environment Awards 2015.

Play Areas

This Council's five Play Areas continue to be well used and maintained. An additional two plays areas are due to be transferred from Durham County Council in 2016. Drainage works continue at Marwood drive play area. A rolling programme of play area safety surfacing is underway.

Public Seats

The Council refurbishes public seats throughout the town through its memorial bench donation-sponsorship scheme.

During 2015-16 work to seats on Harmire Road was completed. A seat within the Remembrance Garden and two seats on The Demesnes have been renovated together with a complete refurbishment of RAF Benches used for Aviation Day.

War Memorials

The Town Council maintains three War Memorials within the Town: the Main Town Memorial situated within the grounds of The Bowes Museum, the Boer War Memorial in upper Galgate and the Durham Light Infantry Memorial, also situated within The Bowes Museum grounds. The Main Town Memorial is used annually for the Remembrance Sunday Service.

In March 2015 The Aviation Day Memorial was relocated from the grounds of HMYOI Deerbolt to the Garden of Remembrance in upper Galgate. This Memorial also now falls under the Town Council's responsibility and

will be used annually for the Aviation Day Service.

Environmental Matters

The Town Council continues to work on anti-dog fouling initiatives with the local community, schools and Durham County Council's Civic Pride Team. Free poop bags are available from Woodleigh and the police station and new dog waste bins installed. New smoke free and dog free signage is to be installed at play areas.

A Town Weeding project with 18 volunteers from the Influence Church took place in June 2015. The Town Council supported the 2016 Big Spring Clean in March 2016 with twenty-five volunteers, including Barnard Castle Ramblers. A spectacular display of daffodils were planted around the castle walls with Heart of Teesdale funding.

New Services

The Town Council has pursued a number of asset and service transfers with Durham County Council under its Durham Ask and Delivering Differently programmes.

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 to provide music, Medieval Richard III Event; Picnic Day; Barney Big Draw weekend and street entertainment this year. To support The Bowes Museum's YSL exhibition, 20,000 generic town leaflets were produced, signposting visitors to the town.

At Christmas, crowds braved storms to watch Father Christmas emerge from the new Town Council office at Woodleigh and switch-on the brand-new Christmas tree lights. High winds meant that the fireworks in the castle were cancelled but are re-scheduled in celebration of HM the Queen's 90th Birthday.

The Town Mayor held a Volunteers Celebration Event in January, showcasing volunteers and their organisations.

The Town Council supports the town becoming Dementia Friendly, working with the Alzheimer's Society.

Christmas Lighting

The Town Council worked with newly formed community group *Barnard Castle Christmas Lights* to provide innovative, improved, white Christmas Lighting displays in 2015. Icicle lights were installed between the Methodist Church

and Market Cross and pre-lit Christmas trees over the town's shops. The partnership continues to enhance and extend the displays. The Town Council also supported the Christmas tree festival at St. Mary's Parish Church.

Grants to Other Bodies

The 2015-16 fund of £3,000 was awarded to organisations and activities contributing to the life and wellbeing of Barnard Castle. Recipients of the 2015-16 awards can be found within the Services section of the Town Council's website.

From 2016-17 the council has resolved that this fund will be reduced to £500 with the whole amount directed via the Mayor's Charity (Community Chest). Applications for financial assistance should now be made directly to that charity via the Town Council Office.

Poppy Appeal

The 2014 Poppy Appeal closed at the end of September 2015; the net total raised for our area was £15,273.67 - almost a 30% increase on last year's net total.

In October 2015, the 2015 Appeal was launched and this will run until September. Early indications are that in excess of £13,000 has been raised so far. There is still a chance that this total may increase as donations can be accepted up to 29 September 2016

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 Main Town Memorial on 8 November was well attended.

Planning:

The Planning Committee (acting under delegated powers) considered 65 planning applications this year; a 9% increase on the number of applications considered in 2014-15.

The Town Council has supported the 20's *Plenty for Us* campaign and continues to lobby Durham County Council for a relief road in the County Durham Plan.

Resources:

Honorary Freeman Scheme

The Town Council made its highest award, this year, to two worthy recipients Mr Joe Swinbank and Mr Parkin Raine.

Budget and Finance

Resources Committee prepared the budget, prior to full Council 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 2015-16 was £181,737 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	2015-16 Budget (£)	Outturn 31 Mar 16 (£)	INCOME	2015-16 Budget (£)	Outturn 31 Mar 16 (£)
Mayoral Allowance (£800 & £100)	900	900	Fees and Charges	13,744	15,728
Training	500	286	Bank Interest	1,600	1,792
Audit Fees	1,460	1,100	Bank Interest	0	749
Bank Charges	0	159	Grants	0	7,420
Insurance	2,150	2,014	Donations	0	11,904
Society of Local Council Clerks	236	235	Sponsorship	0	500
Co Durham Association	656	671	Misc. Income	0	22,158
Accounts Software Support	240	230	Cumulative Fund	0	0
Travel Allowance	300	321	Precept	155,582	155,582
Chains of Office	50	15	Local Council Tax Support Grant	11,292	11,292
Salaries & Associated Costs	103,461	103,083	TOTAL INCOME	181,737	227,125
Office & Associated Costs	10,813	18,104			
Meeting Room Hire	940	799			
Employee Eye Test	25	0	Public Seats		
Communication	150	0	Income - Donations		900
Wayfinding Units	100	0	Earmarked Reserve		551
Allotments	3,846	2,292			
Mini Golf	9,000	7,593	Public Seats - Expenditure		774
Christmas Lights	6,500	9,398	Balance		677
Play Areas	10,500	6,677			
Bede Road Bus Shelter	50	15			
Dog Fouling	500	296	RESERVES EXPENDITURE		
Donations	3,000	3,000	During the year £16,326 of the Council's Reserves has been spent on the following projects:		
Floral and Open Spaces	6,000	8,174	Floral & Open Spaces	Christmas Lights	
Castle Floodlights	400	300	Replacement IT & Software	Woodleigh	
War Memorials	710	0	Galgate Greens	Honorary Freeman	
Events	13,589	12,595	Bouch Way Play Area	Defibrillator & Cabinet	
Contingencies	0	235			
Market Place Public Toilets	4,661	4,924			
Replacement IT & Software	850	850			
Digital Voice Recorder	150	41			
Public Seats	0	774			
Miscellaneous	0	13,046			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	181,737	198,127			

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: **Woodleigh, Flatts Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8AA**

Open 10:00 to 4:00, Monday to Friday.

Our telephone number is **01833 690970**

Our email address is clerk@barnardcastletowncouncil.gov.uk