Barnard Castle Town Council

Annual Report 2013-14

Forward:

With our new committee system in full swing and a freshly elected council for 2013/14, Barnard Castle Town Council has been active providing services and working in partnership with others to promote the town for the benefit of Barnard Castle's residents, businesses and visitors.

This report provides a flavour of the services, which the Town Council provides, and the ways in which your money is spent on these. The committee summaries in this Annual Report set out some of the highlights and successes of the past twelve months: a year with some new beginnings, like our popular new mini golf course and productive partnership working throughout the town.

There have also been changes on the Council. In March, Cllr John Watson tendered his resignation, announcing his intention to retire having served the town in a number of roles since 1976. The Town Council is very grateful for his dedication and service over those 38 years. John's departure created a casual vacancy in the West Ward and an election, which was contested at the end of the municipal year on 8 May 2014.

On a personal note. I have greatly enjoyed my second term as Town Mayor; I have had the privilege of representing Barnard Castle and its community at ninety events this year, have welcomed prominent visitors to the town and have been delighted to be able support the important work of the Teesdale YMCA, as my nominated charity for 2013/14.

I commend the work of the town council to you and hope you find this report informative.

Councillor Frank Harrison
Town Mayor 2013-14
12 May 2013

Services:

This year, seven **Allotment** plots were re-tenanted and eight new applications received. The waiting list stands at an average of approximately 2 years (longer for the popular sites).

Rents, which are set a year in advance, were revised to £42 for 2015-16; a £2 increase(the first in five years) to contend with rising costs.

The Allotment Improvements Holding Account provided funding for a much needed stepped footpath at the Raby Avenue site. At Crook Lane, the Council worked on a joint project with Teesdale YMCA/Teesdale School to regenerate a derelict plot.

The Council also worked with tenants on the Demesnes to complete a communal wildflower/herb area raised bed.

The **Castle Floodlights,** which were revamped in 2010 following our successful partnership project with English Heritage, Durham County Council and the Barnard Catle Vision, are reprogrammed by the county council's contractor on our behalf. There have been issues with the reliability of the programming, which the Town Council has worked with the contractor to resolve.

The Town Council continues to meet the electricity costs of the new lighting.

The **Floral Displays** in 2013 were slightly extended to include the Market Place public toilets front bedding area and, following a tendering exercise, a local company watered the displays. This arrangement will continue into 2014.

The **Market Place Public Toilets** continue to be the responsibility of DCC but the Town Council pays half of the annual running costs.

Memorial and Blue Plaques are considered as and when they are received and as part of

the normal budgetary process. During 2012, the Council agreed to a request from The Witham to replace the existing blue plaque on that building. This was installed prior to the end of The Witham's renovations which were completed in November 2013.

The **Mini Golf** service is one of the Town Council's self-supporing services. The income generated each season covers the expenditure needed to run the facility.

During the close season 2012/13 a new course, 'A Journey through Teesdale,' was built and opened on 1 June 2013.

The project was made possible following an award of funding from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership and formed part of the complete redevelopment of the whole Scar Top area. The remaining funding required to achive 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 facility is suitable for all ages and abilities and further information can be found on the Town Council's website.

Open Spaces – the long awaited Garden of Remembrance Improvement Project was completed thanks to funding secured from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership and the help of a number of volunteers.

A Castle Walls Bulb Planting Scheme was devised and again, thanks to funding received from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership, volunteers came forward and planted nearly 10,000 daffodil bulbs in November. The spare bulbs will be planted in 2014 to fill the gaps that were apparent following the spring bloom.

A Galgate Greens Improvement Project, funded by the Council, commenced in late March. Phase One of the project saw the removal of the two 'odd' bollards from the green to the south of the Garden of Remembrance and the removal of the concrete bollards on the green to the north. New cast iron bollards were installed in April and the grass has been reinstated.

The Upper Demesnes Hay Meadow project continues to develop and flower.

This Council's 5 **Play Areas** continue to be well used and are regularly maintained to ensure safety standards are upheld. The outcome of a funding application to Fields In Trust's Inclusion Fund, that has match funding from a local charity, is currently awaited so that a wheelchair swing can be purchased for Dawson Road play area.

Following a request from a local resident for a memorial bench to be sited in the town, the Council has developed a **Public Seats** revamp scheme whereby local residents or sponsors can pay for the costs of a bench to be restored, rather than paying for a new bench, which are usually more costly, and to have a memorial plaque on a bench at their preferred location. During 2013, this scheme has enabled 35 benches in the town to be revamped.

The Town Council has 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.

As part of the Garden of Remembrance Improvement Project, an additional bronze plaque was added to the Boer War Memorial. This plaque commemorates those from Barnard Castle who have died serving their country in conflicts or in peacekeeping missions around the world since World War II.

Environmental matters – during 2013, the Council launched its *Poop Scoop Swoop* project in a bid to tackle dog fouling in the town, thanks to match funding from Teesdale Action Partnership's Natural & Built Environment Small Grant's Scheme. This has included the design of new anti-poop posters, which have been put up at dog fouling hot spots. Free poop bags are now available from local distribution points and the Town Council has also bought and installed two new dog waste bins which add to the numerous existing dog bins located around the town. The council is also working with Durham County Council's Civic Pride Team, who oversees 'Responsible Dog Owner' campaigns in the County.

The Town Council also took part in the 2013 and 2014 Big Spring Cleans which took place on the Demesnes and Scar Top.

Partnership:

A **Community Events** programme was developed and the Summer included a Buskers Day, Brass Band Concert, Mediaeval Day and Teddy Bears Picnic and culminated with Barnard Castle being part of The Durham Streets Summer Festival, bringing an international line-up of Street Entertainers to town in August 2013.

In November, the Town Council supported the Meet in organising a bonfire and fireworks display at Green Lane School.

In December, there was the traditional illuminated arrival of Father Christmas who lit the town's Christmas tree in lower Galgate, and then settled into his grotto in the Methodist Church where more than 150 children visited him.

The following week a special performance of the 12 Days of Christmas by the Castle Players and No Added Sugar preceded a Grand Christmas Firework display and entertainment by the North Tyneside Steel Band was thoroughly enjoyed by all who were there.

The 2013 **Christmas Lighting** display (the Christmas tree, Market Cross windows, the lamp post motifs and the Town's crib) provided the town with its traditional colourful glow.

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

For 2013/14 the budget available was £1,500 and 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 2013/14 awards can be found within the Services section of the Town Council's website.

For 2014/15 the budget has been increased to £3,000.

The 2012 **Poppy Appeal** closed at the end of September 2013 and it was confirmed that the net total raised for our area was **£10,670.10**

In October 2013, the 2013 Appeal was launched and this will run through until 30 September 2014. An interim report received from The Royal British Legion recently indicates that a total in excess of £11,000 has been raised so far. There is still a chance that this total may increase as donations can be accepted up to 29 September 2014.

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 was well attended.

Planning:

The Planning Committee (acting under delegated powers) has considered forty-four planning applications this year, a 7% increase on the number of applications considered in 2012/13.

Full Council has considered one significant application - Land at Green Lane North of Barnard Castle School for the construction of 64 residential dwellings.

Resources:

All **Budget and Finance** matters are overseen by the Council's Resources Committee prior to onward transmission to full Council for approval. The annual budgetary cyle 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 Revenue Budget for 2013/14 was £174,021 and details of how this was apportioned can be found under the 'Abbreviated Accounts' section of this report. Information is also available on the use of the Council's Earmarked Reserves. The Council's finances are internally audited every 6 months and externally audited annually.

During the year, working in Partnership with other organisations, two major capital projects were completed – renovation of the Garden of Remembrance in upper Galgate and replacement of the Mini Golf Facility on Scar Top. The Town Council has made contributions to both of these projects.

The **Honorary Freeman Scheme** was introduced in 2010 and to date the Honour has been bestowed upon Mr Michael Wheeler and Mr Alan Wilkinson.

Nominations can be submitted to the Council at any time and the Policy document setting out the criteria for this Honour can be found on the Town Council's website.

Abbreviated Accounts (unaudited figures)

EXPENDITURE	2013-14 Budget (£)	Outturn 31 Mar 14 (£)
Mayoral Allowance (£800 & £100)	900	900
Training	1,000	630
Audit Fees	1,460	1,300
Insurance	2,330	1,875
Society of Local Council Clerks	230	231
Co Durham Association	644	647
Accounts Software Support	225	220
Travel Allowance	100	195
Chains of Office	50	10
Salaries & Associated Costs	98,981	99,756
Office & Associated Costs	10,061	9,605
Meeting Room Hire	750	651
Employee Eye Test	50	0
Advertising	150	0
Public Noticeboard	180	0
Wayfinding Units	100	100
Allotments	3,590	2,681
Mini Golf	4,300	7,083
Christmas Lights	8,000	8,000
Play Areas	7,500	6,618
Red Well	300	191
Bede Road Bus Shelter	50	15
Bartlemere/Kalafat Lighting	4,000	3,231
Dog Fouling	500	494
Blue Plaque - The Witham Hall	350	238
Donations	1,500	1,500
Floral and Open Spaces	5,000	4,157
Castle Floodlights	350	272
War Memorials	3,750	2,630
Events	14,000	13,625
Contingencies	0	0
Market Place Public Toilets	2,180	2,180
Election Costs	1,440	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**174,021**	**169,035**

INCOME	2013-14 Budget (£)	Outturn 31 Mar 14 (£)
Fees and Charges	7,964	14,730
Bank Interest	1,800	1,372
Grants	0	30,381
Donations	0	3,137
Sponsorship	0	400
Misc. Income	0	58
Cumulative Fund	0	0
Precept	147,791	147,791
Local Council Tax Support Grant	16,466	16,466
TOTAL INCOME	**174,021**	**214,335**

GRANTS

Income	
Replacement Mini Golf Course	26,748
TAP - Mini Golf Interpretation Board	250
Dog Fouling	500
Remembrance Garden- HOT	2,883
Total Grant Income	**30,381**
Expenditure	
Replacement Mini Golf Course	26,748
TAP - Mini Golf Interpretation Board	250
Dog Fouling	500
Remembrance Garden - HOT	2,210
Total Grant Expenditure	**29,708**
Public Seats	
Income - Donations	2,860
Earmarked Reserve	1,000
	3,860
Public Seats - Expenditure	3,447
Balance	**413**

RESERVES EXPENDITURE

During the year over £17,000 of the Council's Reserves has been spent on the following projects:

Allotment Improvements	Public Seats
Replacement Mini Golf Course	Remembrance Garden
Market Place Public Toilets	Bouch Way Play Area

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.

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