



# Barnard Castle Town Council

## Annual Report 2016/17

### Forward

I have been proud to represent Barnard Castle as its Town Mayor in 2016/17 and to chair the town council, as it has taken on new responsibilities and worked hard to support local people and visitors to the town.

The town council has made significant strides in revitalising Woodleigh as an active public building this year. Woodleigh now houses the town council's offices and its meetings. It is home to the Barnard Castle branch of Citizens Advice County Durham and the Association of Teesdale Day Clubs. Woodleigh is also now a regular venue for meetings of the Teesdale Action Partnerships and the Police's PACT meetings.

Partnership with other public and voluntary sector groups is at the heart of how the town council can promote the interests of Barnard Castle and influence the delivery of effective local services.

The council's partnership with Barnard Castle Christmas Lights, which is now a vibrant community group has seen a widespread improvement to the town's festive lighting, which has drawn favourable comments from all over County Durham and beyond.

This year the council has also worked with two new community groups, which have gained the town the status of a *Dementia Friendly* town and a *Walkers Are Welcome* town. It has been great to see the way that local businesses and individuals have embraced these ideas. Each will benefit local people and visitors to the dale.

The town council has continued to pursue asset and service transfer from Durham County Council to ensure that open spaces, including the Demesnes and Scar Top remain locally managed and available to the community.

We have received support from the county council, up to

and including its Chief Executive, Terry Collins, who attended our meeting in March to answer public questions and spoke in support of the joint *Delivering Differently* programme on which we are working. But the devil remains in the detail and work continues to settle the legal aspects of the transfer.

At the start of the year, we took over the running of the Wednesday market. Since then the council has been working with traders to develop a vibrant and successful market.

This year saw Barnard Castle's first *1940s Weekend* event, which the council has promoted with the essential support of a dedicated group of community volunteers. The council has agreed to establish this as an annual event and has been successful in securing a flypast from a Spitfire of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight for 2017.

The council has represented the view of the community in a number of important areas this year. We raised clear objections to the Electoral Commission's proposals to split Barnard Castle between two parliamentary constituencies.

In October 2016, the council hosted a public meeting to

examine the nuisance felt by residents and caused by a minority of users of the Demesnes. Since then the council has been supporting efforts by Durham Constabulary and the county council to address some of these concerns.

The town council has also responded on behalf of residents to planning applications for housing developments in the town and in Startforth. The town council stands firm in fighting for sustainable development which is both supported by local services and which doesn't overload local roads and amenities.

In May, five councillors stood down before the elections. Three of whom; John Hinchcliffe, John Yarker and Tony Cooke, all former Town Mayors, served a total of 73 years. A record of which they may be proud. Thanks should go to them and to all my colleagues, past and present, who provide the drive and determination of the town council. It is my pleasure to serve alongside them.

**Councillor John Blissett**

*Town Mayor 2016/17*

15 May 2017

## Services

### Allotments

During the season, 14 gardens were re-tenanted and 13 new applications received.

The allotment rental increased from £42.00 to £45.00 to contend with the rising costs of utilities, grounds maintenance and the Allotment Improvement Action Plan. Rental will remain at £45.00 for 2017/2018.

The allotment service is self-funding and does not form part of the precept.

Path improvement works were carried out at Raby Avenue and The Demesnes. All water standpipes were replaced to comply with current water regulations. A new bee keeping policy was introduced and applications will be considered for gardens on both the Raby Avenue and The Demesnes sites.

### Wednesday Market

This year, the town council took over management of the town's weekly Wednesday Market from Durham County Council. Work has started to promote and diversify the market to create a vibrant, thriving town for locals and visitors.

### Floral Displays

The town's floral displays continue to be enhanced. This year, 1940s themed summer planting supported the town's vintage weekend. A hanging basket sponsorship scheme provided additional colour outside the town post office. Volunteers actively weed, plant and tidy floral beds to keep the town looking colourful and attractive.

### Open Spaces

The town council took over management of the interpretation boards in Flatts Woods from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership and commissioned a new board to reinterpret the former Gas Works site, now renamed Roman Way Picnic Site.

Management of the Upper Demesnes continues with traditional scything of the wild flower hay meadow.

### Play Areas

The council manages five play areas. Drainage works were concluded to Marwood Drive to reduce surface water flooding to a resident's garden. Repairs were carried out to perimeter safety surfaces at three play areas. Following consultation, part funding has been secured

## Abbreviated Accounts 2016/17 (unaudited figures)

EXPENDITURE	2016/17 Budget (£)	Outturn 31 Mar 17 (£)	INCOME	2016/17 Budget (£)	Outturn 31 Mar 17 (£)
Mayoral & Deputy Allowance	1,200	1,200	Fees and Charges	19,682	27,018
Training	500	858	Rental Income	12,750	12,614
Audit Fees	1,460	1,300	Bank Interest	900	629
Bank Charges	144	648	Grants	0	0
Insurance	2,280	1,946	Donations	0	520
Society of Local Council Clerks	236	225	Sponsorship	0	730
Co Durham Association	710	710	Miscellaneous	0	1,688
Accounts Software Support	240	235	Cumulative Fund	0	0
Travel Allowance	300	474	Precept	171,734	171,734
Chains of Office	50	13	LCTSG	9,105	9,105
Salaries & Associated Costs	110,125	114,537	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>214,171</b>	<b>224,038</b>
Office & Associated Costs	26,452	24,284			
Employee Eye Test	25	50			
Communication	400	70			
Wayfinding Units	100	0			
Allotments	4,065	3,934			

Mini Golf	10,000	8,031
Christmas Lights	6,500	5,970
Play Areas	11,500	7,174
Bede Road Bus Shelter	50	15
Dog Fouling	300	254
Town Mayor's Charity Fund	500	500
Floral and Open Spaces	9,500	7,941
Castle Floodlights	700	341
War Memorials	710	250
Public Seats	0	168
Community Events	7,000	7,990
Contingencies	0	14,853
Market Place Public Toilets	12,924	4,924
Replacement IT & Software	850	49
Miscellaneous Expenditure	0	500
Election Expenses	0	7,697
Woodleigh Miscellaneous	0	235
Blue Plaque	350	0
Wednesday Market	5,000	3,285
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>214,171</b>	<b>220,661</b>

## RESERVES EXPENDITURE

During the year £16,717 of the council's reserves has been spent on the following projects:

- Public Seats
- Bouch Way
- Allotments
- Play Areas
- Galgate Greens
- Mini Golf
- HM Queen's 90th Birthday

Over the same period, £19,588 has been transferred to Earmarked Reserves, resulting in a net increase in Earmarked Reserves of £2,871, bringing the earmarked reserves total to £50,831.

The council's overall balances and reserves figure (including the above) at the end of 2016/17 stands at £119,331, as of 31 March 2017.

from Durham County Council's Neighbourhood Budget to further develop Green Lane with a trainee cycle track and football goal posts. A lighting project is being explored for the MUGA on Dawson Road.

### **Public Seats**

The memorial bench sponsorship scheme continues to refurbish public seats throughout the town. This year, work was carried out to seats on the Market Place toilets, Galgate Greens, Demesnes and Scar Top.

### **Environmental Matters**

Anti-dog fouling initiatives continue alongside Durham County Council. Free poop bags are available at Woodleigh and the police station. The town council has supported the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order for dog control.

The town council supported the town weeding project in June, alongside the Influence Church, and the Big Spring Clean in March, together with numerous volunteers.

There was partnership working with Northumbrian Water on its *Rainwise* project to manage surface water and reduce flooding.

### **War Memorials**

Four war memorials continue to be maintained; two in the grounds of The Bowes Museum and two on the Galgate Greens.

### **Market Place Public Toilets**

The town council resolved not to take over management of the Market Place public toilets, which continue to be operated by Durham County Council. Half the annual running costs continue to be funded by the town council.

### **Mini Golf**

The service continues to be a popular attraction. The 2016 season saw an average of 57 visitors per day during the 128 operating days. Prior to the 2017 season, the holes were re-felted and new flags purchased.

## **Partnership**

### **Community Events**

The town council held its inaugural *1940s Weekend* in June, working with the local community. Vintage vehicles, re-enactment groups, music, traditional games, vintage stalls, displays, *Dig for Victory* and fashion show attracted locals and visitors. Positive feedback has led to the town council establishing this as an annual event.

The Queen's 90th Birthday was celebrated in style in partnership with English Heritage, with Beacon lighting and grand Fireworks display.

The Witham's *Summer of Stories* was supported with the donation of a shepherdess hut, now a permanent feature and community resource.

The Christmas Lights Switch-on wowed crowds with the added attraction of a giant snow globe, projected theatrical lightshow and festive stalls (provided by Dickins in Teesdale), as well as the arrival of Santa, traditional grotto and family workshops.

To support Barnard Castle becoming a *Dementia Friendly Town*, including the formation of a community group, together with the Alzheimer's Society.

A new Town Map was produced for The Witham, promoting the town's status as *Dementia Friendly* and *Walkers are Welcome*.

### **Christmas Lighting**

New swan motifs were purchased with funding from The Bowes Museum to display on lampposts along Newgate.

The council extended Christmas lighting along Galgate, working with in partnership with Barnard Castle Christmas Lights. The

new display has been met with positive comments.

### **Floodlights**

The town council manages the coloured floodlights illuminating the castle and the external floodlighting to the Market Cross.

### **Poppy Appeal**

The end of September saw the close of the 2015 Poppy Appeal, with the launch of the 2016 Appeal at the end of October.

The local 2015 appeal raised a very healthy total of £15,059 in November 2015, along with generous donations from various church collections and a collection which took place during the council's *1940s Weekend* in June.

So far, the 2016 appeal has raised £11,016. There is still a chance that this total may increase by the close of the appeal at the end of September.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

Remembrance Sunday took place on 13 November 2016, organised with St Mary's Parish Church with assistance from Barnard Castle School staff and cadets from the school's Combined Cadet Force.

The church service was well attended across the community, including the

presence of the Town Mayor and Deputy Lord Lieutenant.

Sixteen Primary schools from across Teesdale took part in a WW1 project organised by The Bowes Museum, each laying a wreath at the cenotaph. The Freemasons Masonic Hall in Newgate opened its doors for refreshments after the event.

## Planning

The Planning Committee (acting under delegated powers) considered 54 planning applications and five licensing applications; a 17% decrease on the number of planning applications considered in 2015/16. Strategic applications were considered by Full Council, including the civic amenity site, Stainton Grove and objections to two major housing developments in Startforth.

A tree preservation order was applied for on the site of the old police station at Bede Kirk.

## Resources

### 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.

The total Gross Revenue Budget for 2016/17 was £214,171 and details of how this was apportioned are in the centre 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.

## 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](http://www.barnardcastletowncouncil.gov.uk)** or from our

Facebook -**BarneyCouncil** and Twitter **@BarneyCouncil** profiles.

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