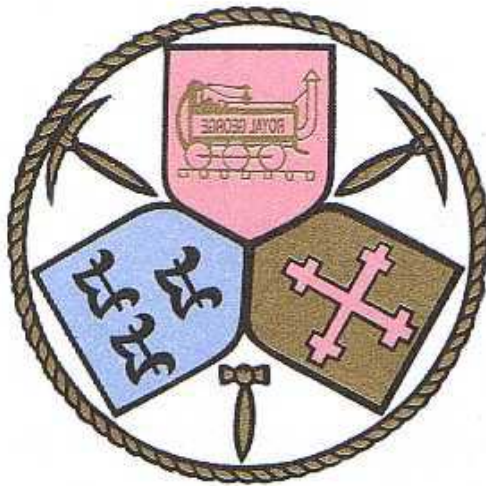


# SHILDON TOWN COUNCIL



**ANNUAL REPORT 2010**

**AND**

**PERFORMANCE PLAN 2011**



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## **Introduction**

The Local Government Act 1999 placed, with effect from April 2000, a duty of Best Value on local authorities.

Parish and Town Councils with a budget in excess of £500,000 were, under the provisions of the Act, subject to Best Value and therefore, since April 2000, Shildon Town Council had been required to satisfy the duty of Best Value.

Meeting this duty required a Best Value authority to consult local people, review all of its functions periodically, measure its performance and produce a performance plan which was audited by an independent auditor. The authority was required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way they exercise their functions having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The central purpose of Best Value was to make a real and positive difference to the services which local people receive from their authority and consequently the engagement of all elected Members was pivotal. Elected Members needed to be involved not only in the processes associated with Best Value but in owning the outcomes which the processes were designed to deliver.

Provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 removed Parish and Town Councils from the Best Value provisions with effect from April 2008. However an Annual Report and Performance Plan in this format is a useful corporate management document and consequently will continue to be produced and approved by the Town Council.

## **Statement of Responsibility**

Shildon Town Council is responsible for the preparation of this Performance Plan and for the information and assessments set out in it and the assumptions and estimates on which they are based. The Council is also responsible for setting in place appropriate performance management and internal control, systems from which the information and assessments included in the Plan have been derived. The Council is satisfied that the information and assessments included in the Plan are in all material respects accurate and complete and that the Plan is realistic and achievable.

## Town Mayor's Review of 2010/11

I would like to begin by thanking all of the people who have helped and supported me during my second year in office and in particular my wife Judith, the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk and all of the staff in the Council Offices together with the Civic Hall Manager and Civic Hall staff. I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors and the Deputy Mayor Cllr Ann Hammond for their support. I have enjoyed representing Shildon at the many events that have taken place throughout County Durham during year.

The last year has again been one of change for local government in County Durham as the new single unitary local authority for the whole of the County continues to bed in and establish itself.

For town and parish councils it continues to be a challenging time as we develop our working relationships with the unitary authority and particularly with the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership. Whilst progress towards the devolution of services to town and parish councils and the resolution of the double taxation problem has been disappointingly slow it is important that town and parish councils continue to work closely with the unitary authority to ensure the effective delivery of local authority services to our communities.

Despite the upheaval the Town Council has over the last twelve months continued to strive to provide quality local services for the community of Shildon.

Capital projects undertaken by the Town Council during the year include:

- The provision of additional lighting in the older children's play area and improvement works to the skatepark have made the Park a safer and more enjoyable area for our children
- The installation of a state of the art youth shelter in Hackworth Park

Both of the above projects were able to be provided as a consequence of the Town Council continuing to work closely with the Shildon West County Councillors in utilising their elected Members' Neighbourhood Budgets to support projects in Shildon primarily aimed at activities for young people.

During the year the Town Council continued to support the Youth Council and the Parish Plan was completed and adopted by the Town Council.

Elsewhere community and voluntary groups continue to provide valuable services to the community despite the increasing difficulty in obtaining external funding, Locomotion continues to thrive and the new major housing developments at Spout Lane and Dale Road are eagerly awaited. Looking ahead the Localism Bill is currently being debated and, once approved, may provide further opportunities through the introduction of a general power of competence, the Community Right to Challenge and the

Community Right to Buy. However at the same time the unitary authority has faced an unheralded cut in Central Government funding and the impact of the expenditure reductions as a consequence on future service provision will need to be monitored carefully during the coming year.

Whilst a lot of work remains to be done in a difficult financial climate, I believe Shildon is an attractive town in which to live, to work and to visit and long may it continue.

Cllr G M R Howe  
Town Mayor 2010/11

## The Town Council

Shildon Town Council was formed on local government reorganisation in 1974.

The Council has 17 elected Members, individual details of whom can be found in Appendix 3, and elects a Town Mayor each year. All of the Members are normally elected for a four-year term of office and the latest elections were held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007. Whilst the next elections would have been expected to be held in May 2011, as a result of the local government restructure in County Durham the elections will now be held in May 2013 and therefore the existing members will serve a six-year term of office.

The Council is based in the Council Offices in Civic Hall Square, Shildon with the Direct Works section located in the depot at Harker Street, Shildon.

The main areas of responsibility of the Town Council are as follows:

- Shildon Civic Hall
- Parks and open spaces including Hackworth Park
- West Road cemetery
- 3 play areas
- Skatepark
- Tennis courts, bowling green and 3 football pitches
- 11 allotment sites
- Operation of public toilets at Hackworth Park and Cheapside
- 25 bus shelters
- Christmas illuminations
- Provision of grant aid scheme
- Community events during the year
- Partnership working with Shildon Community Safety Group, CAB, Shildon People's Centre, Shildon Children and Young People's Network etc
- Support for the town centre and Hackworth Park CCTV system

## Corporate Aims and Objectives

The Audit Commission previously expressed a view that the overall vision of the Town Council is unclear and consequently it is not easy to determine whether or not the Council's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement are drawn from its vision.

However it is clear that the Town Council's primary aim is to, together with others, improve the quality of life for the people of, and visitors to, the town. The Town Council also has given a commitment to strive for continuous improvement in the level of services provided based upon outcomes and has successfully attained Quality Town Council Status.

Whilst the above sat comfortably with the principles of the former Best Value regime it is acknowledged that greater clarity needs to be introduced and consequently, bearing in mind the need to work together with others to deliver the primary aim, the Council has previously agreed to the development of a Parish Plan to produce a vision for the town for the future.

The Parish Plan has recently been completed and will provide not only a focus for service providers for the future but in time will also enable the Council to redevelop its own strategic objectives and priorities in the light of the priorities identified in the completed Plan under the following themes:

- A healthy community
- A prosperous community
- A safe community
- An attractive community

## Review of Services

Best value authorities were required to periodically review all of the services they provide. The purpose of the reviews was to consider new approaches to service delivery and to set performance targets that will deliver continuous improvement. In reviewing its functions an authority is required to:

- **Challenge** why, how and by whom a service is being provided
- **Compare** with the performance of others across a range of relevant indicators, taking into account the views of both service users and potential suppliers
- **Consult** local people and key partners in the setting of priorities and performance targets
- **Compete** openly and fairly, wherever practicable, as a means of securing efficient and effective services

Whilst the legislative requirements of Best Value no longer apply to town and parish councils the Town Council will continue to monitor the provision of services in accordance with the above principles.

In addition service provision will also be reviewed with reference to the Parish Plan following its completion..

## Direct Works

The following performance targets were introduced following the Best Value review of Direct Works some time ago and remain applicable for 2011/12:

<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
To continue to review working practice at Hackworth Park in accordance with the provisions of the Park Management Plan	Ongoing
To continue to maintain and improve the appearance of roundabouts on approaches to the town in partnership with Durham County Council	Ongoing
To continue to preserve a multi-skilled workforce and working practice	Achieved and ongoing
To seek to work in partnership with Durham County Council to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of environmental services	Ongoing

The following specific targets were set for 2010/11 some of which were subject to relevant funding being accessed:

<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
Replace Ford Escort van and Ford Tipper	Completed
Undertake tree works at St Johns closed churchyard	Completed
Install additional lighting at Hackworth Park and undertake improvements to skatepark	Project complete
Complete annual PAT testing of all Council owned electrical equipment	Achieved
Undertake 6 monthly headstone check in West Road Cemetery and graveyards	Achieved

Check all playground equipment on a weekly basis	Achieved
Undertake annual safety audit of all play equipment	Achieved
Undertake 23 cuts of all grassed amenity areas	Achieved
Undertake annual safety report of sports ground pavilions	Achieved

The following specific targets have been added for 2011/12:

- Review existing cemetery rules
- To seek to train Direct Works staff in relevant rodent control
- To plan for Hackworth Park centenary celebration

Key Performance Information 2010/11

a)	No. of interments	31
	No. of ashes interred	15
	Net cost of cemetery per head	£3.34
b)	No. of football fields provided and maintained	3
	No. of football fields occupied	3
c)	No. of public conveniences provided and maintained	2
	Cost of public conveniences per head	£0.46
d)	No. of bus shelters provided and maintained	25
	Cost of bus shelters per head	£0.35
e)	No. of parks provided and maintained	1
	Net cost of parks and open spaces per head	£18.65
f)	No. of allotment sites provided	11

## Civic Hall

Performance against the targets set for 2010/11 has been as follows.

<b>Targets</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
To continue to improve the trading position of the Civic Hall	Whilst both bar and food sales significantly exceeded budget the overall trading position failed to achieve the budget
Install automated line cleaning system	Complete
Introduce new staff uniforms	Complete
Review menu and wet product and meal prices	Complete
Deliver programme of live music events	Complete

The performance targets for 2011/12 are:

- Continue to take all steps to improve the trading position
- Deliver programme of live music events
- Seek to extend programme e.g. comedy nights etc

### Key Performance Information 2010/11

i) Income generation

	<u>Budget</u> <u>2010/11</u> £	<u>Actual</u> <u>2010/11</u> £
Bar sales	128,310	168,042
Food sales	153,170	162,294

ii) Overall trading position      (75,600)                      (82,619)

## Central Services

Performance against the targets set for 2010/11 has been as follows.

<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
To complete the development of the Parish Plan	Complete
To develop a policy for e-mail and internet usage	Outstanding
To undertake a review of financial regulations	Complete
To complete the registration of all council owned land	Complete
To continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in the continuing development of the new unitary authority for County Durham	Achieved
To engage effectively with the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership	Achieved
To complete closure of final accounts by the due date and to the satisfaction of the external auditor	Achieved
To produce and deliver the Corporate Risk Action Plan	Achieved
To secure eligibility for the Power of Well Being	Complete and power adopted
To support the Shildon Children and Young People's Action Network and the Youth Council	Achieved
To successfully administer Sid Chaplin Short Story Competition and Arts, Crafts and Photography competition	Achieved

To continue to promote outdoor events at a reasonable cost including Fun Day and Christmas Procession	Achieved
To continue to encourage and work with multi-agency initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour and crime in the town	Achieved
To continue to offer grant aid to local organisations	Achieved
To continue to part fund relevant organisations/projects where the benefit to the community is relevant and measurable	Achieved

The performance targets for 2011/12 are as follows:

- To monitor delivery of the Parish Plan Action Plans
- To develop a policy for e-mail and internet usage
- To seek Quality Status re-accreditation
- To continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in the continuing development of the new unitary authority for County Durham
- To engage effectively with the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership
- To complete closure of final accounts by the due date and to the satisfaction of the external auditor
- To produce and deliver the Annual Corporate Risk Action Plan
- To support the Shildon Children and Young People's Action Network and the Youth Council
- To successfully administer Sid Chaplin Short Story Competition and Arts, Crafts and Photography competition
- To continue to promote outdoor events at a reasonable cost including Fun Day and Christmas Procession
- To continue to encourage and work with multi-agency initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour and crime in the town

- To continue to offer grant aid to local organisations
- To continue to part fund relevant organisations/projects where the benefit to the community is relevant and measurable

Key Performance Information 2010/11

a) No. of organisations supported by S137 grant aid	19
Cost of grant aid	£1,412

## Financial Information 2010/11 and 2011/12

The outturn financial position for 2010/11 is as follows:

	£
Parks and Open Spaces	232,688
Civic Hall	144,193
Cemetery	48,972
Highways	4,123
Public Conveniences	5,379
Fishing Area	(10)
Miscellaneous	1,705
Allotments	1,950
Gardens Guild	(1,105)
Section 137	11,151
Recreation	14,649
Citizens Advice Bureau	500
Skill Centre	1,490
Town Centre	17,594
Loans and Leases	103,946
Corporate and Democratic Core	88,463
Investment Income	(285)
	-----
	675,403
Less Contribution form Reserves	9,983
Double Taxation Grant	14,050
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Precept 2010/11	651,370
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The level of reserves and balances at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 were as follows:

	£
General Reserve	17,103
Capital Receipts Unapplied	19
Earmarked Reserves	35,161
	-----
	52,283
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The Town Council has approved a precept of £660,380 for 2011/12 which represents an increase of £9,010 or 1.4% over 2010/11. This results in a Band D council tax requirement of £229.02 which represents an increase of £3.94 per annum or 1.75%.

Details of the approved precept are as follows:

	£
Parks and Open Spaces	235,170
Civic Hall	120,920
Cemetery	49,440
Highways	4,330
Lighting	410
Public Conveniences	5,940
Fishing Area	(10)
Miscellaneous	1,190
Allotments	2,830
Gardens Guild	(620)
Power of Well Being	10,550
Recreation	16,590
Citizens Advice Bureau	500
Skill Centre	1,620
Town Centre	17,710
Loans and Leases	104,540
Corporate and Democratic Core	88,170
	-----
	659,280
Less: Double Taxation Grant	14,050
Contribution to Reserves	15,150
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Precept 2011/12	660,380
	=====

## Conclusion

The future will continue to provide some considerable challenges particularly as the new coalition government continues to seek to address the budget deficit with the obvious consequential impact on public sector expenditure.

However there may also continue to be opportunities for the Town Council particularly as the new single unitary authority for County Durham continues to develop. The Town Council needs to ensure that it does all that it can in its representative role to ensure the needs of the town are adequately addressed by the principal authority.

The development of the Parish Plan and a vision for Shildon will provide the Town Council with the opportunity to undertake an informed review of its aims and objectives in order to ensure that the services provided in the future are appropriate to meet, or to contribute towards the achievement of, the aspirations for the town.

In addition, under the current provisions of the Localism Bill opportunities may arise for an enhanced service delivery role for the Town Council and consequently the Council will need to consider, in the future, services that could be appropriate for delivery by the Council to ensure that they are as responsive as possible to the needs of the local community.

The Town Council would welcome comments on this Plan or any aspects of its services and if you wish to comment please contact us by either:

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E-mail	<a href="mailto:council@shildon.gov.uk">council@shildon.gov.uk</a>
In writing	Shildon Town Council Council Offices Civic Hall Square Shildon Co Durham DL4 1AH