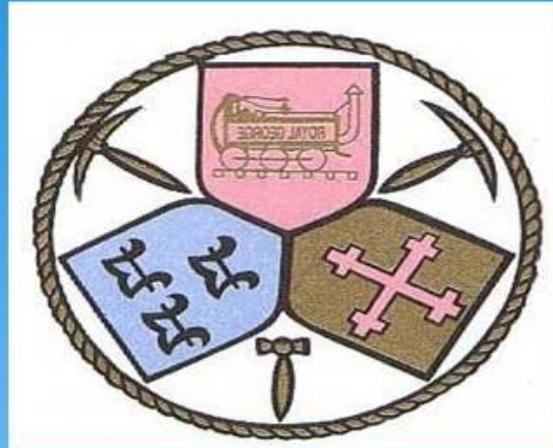


SHILDON TOWN COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2015

AND

PERFORMANCE PLAN 2016

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 2015/16

Local Government continues to be subject to significant change as the austerity measures continue to impact upon the finances of local government, with the inherent implications on service delivery.

The localised council tax support scheme continues to impact on the finances of the Town Council, whereby the Council is no longer financially independent and is reliant upon central government grant support being redistributed to the town and parishes by the County Council.

The Town Council has continued to develop its working relationship with the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership by attending Task and Finish Group Meetings (including the Children and Young People's Task and Finish Group which is currently chaired by the mayor of Shildon in her role as a County Councillor. The Town Council continues to support projects that will benefit Shildon residents, including reinstating the Town Youth Council.

There have been some challenges to face, not least the closure of the Morrisons supermarket. However this was balanced to some extent by the opening of the B&M store. We also lost our mayor, Matthew Burdess, to a new challenge as a policeman. The greatest sad loss however was that of our deputy mayor at the start of the year as Councillor Muriel Gordon passed away. She is sorely missed.

The last year has seen the Town Council actively and fruitfully involved in a number of projects and activities for the benefit of the local community:

- To our great delight, the new skate park was completed and officially opened in October 2015. This was an £80,000 project and was partly made possible by significant funding from Sport England. This money would not have been secured but for the persistence of our Town Clerk. The park was opened by the then Mayor, Matthew Burdess, with Sport England and invited guests present. Over 100 young people took part in the event. The celebration was so noteworthy that the Chief Executive was made aware of it. We are currently supporting training for young people to improve their skate boarding skills.
- A further £50,000 has been secured towards the cost of a new play area for young people. They were consulted on the design and work should begin in the not too distant future.
- The Town Council has provided financial and administrative support for the Remembrance Sunday parade and ceremony
- We are also delighted at the reaction from the public to the work completed to improve the cemetery road
- The Shildonbury Music Festival took place in the park for the benefit of residents and was again generally well received – it will be taking place again this summer

- A series of summer events took place in conjunction with our friends at Shildon Alive and Jubilee Fields Community Centre and other statutory and community partners
- Scypan (the Shildon Children and Young People's Network) continues to flourish and Shildon Communities First is in the process of metamorphosing into a slightly different organisation
- We have been working with Parklife (which is partly funded through the AAP) to provide health activities within Hackworth Park to improve the health and well being of the residents of Shildon
- This has been supported by working with Parkrun on running activities in Hackworth Park – one of the best achievements of the last year is the efforts that have gone into really using the park for the benefit of the community
- We have been supporting Shildon Alive with Guerrilla Gardening projects throughout the community
- We have also supported the Shildon Horticultural Society
- We were instrumental in the launch of the Shildon App in May, which provides information to children, young people and families in Shildon and beyond eg about what activities are currently available to them
- We have been able to make small donations to community groups for their work in Shildon eg to help a group of 10 students from Sunnydale Campus take part in a visit to Parliament last November which they reported back on through a presentation to the Town Council
- We have contributed to the funding of the Citizens Advice Bureau so that there continues to be a fortnightly advice session in Shildon which is well attended
- We also contribute funding to support the Shildon Community Safety Group so that it can continue to provide safety advice to the residents of Shildon
- Representatives have regularly attended PACT meetings on behalf of the Town Council
- Representatives have also attended meetings of the Chamber of Trade, and worked in partnership with its members
- Jubilee Fields Community Centre has received funding to help it sustain its services to the people of Shildon
- We have supported the display of the art work of students from Sunnydale Campus
- We have provided advice, support and information to local community groups
- We have helped raise awareness of dog fouling and have supported residents to keep Shildon clean and tidy by supplying 170,000 dog bags
- We have helped support Health Express to manage events in the park
- We have taken a role in educating young people on the importance of keeping our environment free of litter by organising, along with partners, an annual litter pick
- We have helped celebrate events such as Christmas eg by putting up the Xmas tree and organising the annual parade

- We have continued to work with Durham County Council as part of a consultation and development process to improve the Town Square

Sildon remains an attractive town in which to live and work and to visit, and the Town Council continues to work effectively on behalf of its residents.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Matthew Burdess for his service to the town and thank our new Deputy Mayor, Councillor Shirley Quinn, for her support over the last few weeks since I took office. I would also like to thank everyone who works for the Town Council for their hard-work over the last year and for making my transition to the role of Mayor so smooth.

Councillor Trish Pemberton

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 2nd May 2013.

Town Councillors are unpaid and, with the exception of the Mayor, do not receive any attendance allowance or payments for their duties, which they undertake purely on a voluntary basis.

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
- Closed Churchyards
- 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 Communities First , Shildon Alive (A St. John's Church Project), Shildon Community Safety Group, CAB, Shildon Ignite, Shildon Children and Young People's Network, Bishop

Auckland and Shildon AAP, Shildon Health Express, Shildon Chamber of Trade etc

- Hackworth Park CCTV system

Corporate Aims and Objectives

It is clear that the Town Council's primary aim is, in partnership with others, to improve the quality of life for the people of, and visitors to, the town. The Town Council has also given a commitment to strive for continuous improvement in the level of services provided based upon outcomes and has previously successfully sought re-accreditation of Quality Town Council Status.

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

The Parish Plan has been completed and provides 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.

Direct Works

The following performance targets were introduced following the Best Value review of Direct Works some time ago and remain applicable for 2015/16:

Target	Achievement
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 services e.g. winter maintenance	Ongoing

The following specific targets were set for 2015/16:

Target	Achievement
To continue to provide dog bags free of charge	Achieved
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 inspection of allotment sites	Achieved
To complete the installation of coal tub features at key entrance points to the town	Ongoing
To utilise the Capital Equipment Fund effectively to renew plant and equipment	Achieved
To successfully recruit an apprentice for the Direct Works section	Achieved
To complete the replacement of the existing skatepark with a new concrete alternative	Achieved

The following specific targets have been set for 2016/17

- To install a new play area to include the upgrade of certain footpaths and replace litter bins along with seating
- To continue to review Health and Safety and working practices
- To continue to provide staff training
- To continue to upgrade footpath system at West Road Cemetery
- To continue Santa Tours
- To continue to promote and support organisations using Hackworth Park
- To carry out a fire risk assessment and review every 3 months
- To review and update COSHH and Risk Assessment

Key Performance Information 2015/16

a)	No. of interments	29
	No. of ashes interred	13
	Net cost of cemetery per head	£4.51
b)	No. of football fields provided and maintained	3
	No. of football fields occupied	2
c)	No. of public conveniences provided and maintained	2
	Cost of public conveniences per head	£0.65
d)	No. of bus shelters provided and maintained	24
	Cost of bus shelters per head	£0.50

e)	No. of parks provided and maintained	1
	Net cost of parks and open spaces per head	£22.73
f)	No. of allotment sites provided	11

Civic Hall

Performance against the targets set for 2015/16 has been as follows:

Targets	Achievement
To continue to improve the trading position of the Civic Hall	Whilst meal sales were marginally below the budget for the year bar sales were significantly below budget. However costs were also significantly below budget resulting in a surplus against budget for the year.
Deliver programme of live music events	Achieved
Work in partnership with independent promoter to deliver live music festival in Hackworth Park	Achieved

The performance targets for 2016/17 are:

- To take all steps to improve the trading position
- Deliver programme of live music events
- Work in partnership with independent promoter to deliver live music festival in Hackworth Park
- Provide regular catering promotions
- Upgrade Shildon Civic Hall website
- Continue to review catering suppliers
- Promote the Civic Hall through social media and advertising
- Produce a new Wedding Brochure
- Continue to review Health and Safety and working practices
- Continue to provide staff training
- To erect fencing to secure the southern side of the Civic Hall to alleviate anti-social behaviour

Key Performance Information 2015/16

i) Income generation

	<u>Budget</u> <u>2015/16</u> £	<u>Actual</u> <u>2015/16</u> £
Bar sales	182,740	169,161
Food sales	171,620	170,890

ii) Overall trading position (76,370) (71,095)

Central Services

Performance against the targets set for 2015/16 has been as follows.

Target	Achievement
To continue to monitor delivery of the Parish Plan Action Plans	Achieved
To develop a policy for e-mail and internet usage	Outstanding
To continue to monitor the impact of the Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) on the taxbase and to continue to campaign for the redistribution of LCTSS grant to parish councils	Achieved
To engage effectively with Durham County Council and 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	Final accounts completed – external audit ongoing
To produce and deliver the Annual Corporate Risk Action Plan	Achieved
To support the Shildon Children and Young People's Action Network and the Shildon Ignite	Achieved
To continue to support the Shildon Communities First	Achieved
To successfully administer the Community Art Exhibition	Achieved
To underwrite the cost, and support the administration, of the Shildon Horticultural Show	Achieved
To continue to promote outdoor events at a reasonable cost including the 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 2016/17 are as follows:

- To continue to monitor delivery of the Parish Plan Action Plans
- To continue to monitor the impact of the Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) on the taxbase and continue to campaign for redistribution of LCTSS grant to parish councils
- To engage effectively with Durham County Council, the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership and Shildon Health Express
- 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 develop a new website and social media page
- To support Shildon Alive (A St. John's Church Project) with Guerrilla Gardening in Schools and the wider community
- To organise with partners a young people's litterpick
- To continue to finance and support Remembrance Day
- To continue to support the Shildon Community Carol Service
- To provide payroll services in-house
- To continue to support the Town Mayor and Mayoral Initiatives
- To support the Shildon Children and Young People's Action Network and Shildon Ignite

- To continue to support Shildon Communities First
- To successfully administer the Community Arts Exhibition
- To underwrite the cost, and support the administration, of the Shildon Horticultural Show
- To continue to promote outdoor events at a reasonable cost including the 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
- To carry out a fire risk assessment and review

Key Performance Information 2015/16

a) No. of organisations supported by grant aid	21
Cost of grant aid	£ 5,885

Financial Information 2015/16 and 2016/17

The outturn financial position for 2015/16 is as follows:

	£
Parks and Open Spaces	235,448
Civic Hall	123,038
Shildonbury	(4,492)
Cemetery	46,744
Highways	5,274
Public Conveniences	6,784
Miscellaneous	791
Allotments	270
Gardens Guild	(805)
Community Support	11,780
Recreation	10,971
Skill Centre	1,416
CCTV	2,480
Loans and Leases	69,730
Corporate and Democratic Core	84,372
Investment Income	(545)

	593,256
<u>Add</u> Transfer to Reserves	52,399
<u>Less</u> LCTSS Grant	145,005

Precept 2015/16	500,650
	=====

The level of reserves and balances at 31st March 2016 were as follows:

	£
General Reserve	91,540
Capital Receipts Unapplied	27,408
Capital Equipment Fund	312
Earmarked Reserves	47,977

	167,237

The Town Council has approved a precept of £541,510 for 2016/17 which represents an increase of £40,860 or 8.16% over 2015/16. The Town Council's Band D council tax requirement has increased by 1.9% from £250.16 to £254.91.

The Localised Council Tax Support Scheme Grant redistributed to town and parish councils by Durham County Council has fallen by £14,890 or 10.27% in line with the fall in the County Council's overall formula funding received from Central Government.

It is anticipated that the Scheme Grant will continue to fall in future years and the Secretary of State has also intimated that the extension of the local referenda provisions for excessive council tax increases to town and parish councils cannot be ruled out.

Details of the approved precept are as follows:

	£
Parks and Open Spaces	251,860
Civic Hall	149,430
Cemetery	45,860
Highways	5,220
Lighting	270
Public Conveniences	6,650
Miscellaneous	380
Allotments	150
Gardens Guild	(690)
Grants to Outside Organisations	6,000
Recreation	18,910
Skill Centre	1,750
CCTV	11,870
Loans and Leases	61,380
Corporate and Democratic Core	93,280

	652,320
Add: Contribution to Equipment Funds	5,000
Electrical Installation Condition Reports	2,520
Contribution to Reserves	11,780

	671,620
Less LCTSS Grant	130,110

Precept 2016/17	541,510
	=====

Conclusion

The future will continue to provide some considerable challenges particularly as the 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 whilst at the same time strives to manage an unprecedented reduction in financial support from Central Government. 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 considered, and where possible adequately addressed, by the principal authority.

In addition, the Localism Act once fully established may provide opportunities 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.

However the introduction of the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme and its impact on the tax raising capacity of the Town Council is a major concern for the future. This concern is compounded by a further impact of the Scheme in that the Town Council is now no longer financially independent and will rely on the County Council continuing to redistribute to the Town Council the proportion of the Support Scheme Grant that relates to the precept levied by the Town Council.

In addition the possible extension of the local referenda provisions for excessive council tax increases to town and parish councils will compound the financial uncertainty for town and parish councils and may ultimately prevent the potential benefits from the provisions of the Localism Act coming to fruition.

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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In writing	Shildon Town Council Council Offices Civic Hall Square Shildon DL4 1AH

