

In the meantime, following successful periods of fixed term contract working, an Executive Officer (Cameron McGhee) and Clerical Officer (Nicola James) were appointed on permanent contracts during 2012-13, (pictured page 34). Cameron is a professionally qualified accountant and experienced auditor, and; Nicola brings a wealth of customer service experience, a 'can do' attitude and excellent organisation skills.

Now that Cameron and Nicola have found their feet, the Town Council also acted during 2012-13 to clarify the role of the "Stanley-Civic Pride Officer". Accordingly negotiations between the Town and County Councils were successfully concluded and James Harper (pictured page 34) will transfer at no extra cost to the public purse or to the Town Council as of the 1st of April 2013. James will continue his Civic Pride role but will begin to link up and improve the coordination of all of the Town Council's environmental and clean and green activities going forward.

I would also like to thank the Council's many partner bodies and contractors for their commitment during 2012-13 and confirm that we shall continue to strive to get more for less by working in mutually beneficial partnership with others. A few examples include the Police, LMAPS, the County Council, Groundwork

North East, the Area Action Partnership and numerous local businesses who provide goods and services etc.

As my predecessors have stated in previous Annual Reports, the Town Council has sought to balance front-line service improvements and new projects on the ground with behind the scenes corporate development in readiness for the future. In this regard a Constitution has been drafted which includes a comprehensive committee structure and scheme of delegation of authority or powers to committees and certain employees. The aim is to adopt the constitution for use from the beginning of 2013-14, which in effect means from after the local elections on the 2nd May 2013.

As enshrined in the draft Constitution, the Town Council is accountable to the residents and electors of the area it serves. Accordingly, although its meetings are not 'public meetings', they are normally held in, and open to, the public in the interests of transparency and community engagement. In addition, a specific slot is included within each agenda so that the press or public can raise questions or make comments on any matters about to be discussed. The decisions taken by the 'full' Council or its Committees are recorded in the 'minutes' of the meeting which in turn are placed in the public domain via the website.



The Town Council

The Town Council was formed by Statutory Instrument (No: 1185, Local Government, England) dated the 11th April 2007 and began to operate on the 1st April 2009.

The Town Council has a full complement of twenty Members, i.e. Town Councillors. Thirteen were elected in the 2008 local elections and the remaining seven were co-opted between 2009-10 and 2011-12. However, none of the Town Councillors who held office at the beginning of 2012-13 vacated office during this year, (see page 35).

Local Elections are scheduled for the 2nd May 2013 and thereafter, each full term of office will be four years.

The whole Town Council area is divided into seven wards which are based on population size. During 2012-13 Annfield Plain; Craghead and South Stanley; Havannah; South Moor; Stanley Hall, and; Tanfield were each represented by three Town Councillors whilst Catchgate ward had two Members.

Following a review by the Boundary Review Committee (England), after the election Catchgate will be joined by the Craghead and South Stanley ward in being represented by two Town Councillors. Annfield Plain; Havannah; South Moor, and; Tanfield will retain three, whilst Stanley Hall will have four Members.

The Town Council's seven wards are co-terminous with the four County Council electoral divisions of Annfield Plain; Craghead and South Moor; Stanley, and; Tanfield.

Although the two organisations are entirely unconnected, the Town Council is based in the offices previously occupied by the Green Corridor Neighbourhood Partnership (GCNP) at 57-61 Lenin Terrace, South Stanley, DH9 6LW.

In accordance with local government reorganisation, GCNP which was part of the former Derwentside District Council ceased operating on the 31st March 2009. This presented the Town Council with an opportunity to instantly access reasonable premises at a relatively low cost with effect from 'day one'. However, the Town Council is now looking for premises more suited to the longer term.



On an annual basis the Town Council elects a Chair and Vice-chair. During 2012 - 13 these positions were held by Councillors Peter McLaughlin and Christine Weightman respectively. The Chair, or the Vice-chair in their absence, preside over meetings of the 'full' Council. When necessary the Chair used his 'casting' vote, but, otherwise the Chairs have the same role, responsibilities and obligations as other councillors.

During 2012-13, the practice of taking most official decisions, known as RESOLUTIONS, at full Town Council level was continued. The exception being that planning and development decisions were delegated to the Planning Committee. The following Committees focused on the themes of:

- Communications and Events;
- Crime and Community Safety;
- Finance and General Purposes, and;
- Planning.

Several Committees also appointed sub-committees or working groups when necessary. The above structure is clarified within the Constitution to be implemented from 2013-14. One of the benefits of clear terms of reference and the delegated authority to take decisions on behalf of the whole council is the swifter ability to take binding decisions and translate them into action 'on the ground'.

By law, a few decisions, such as setting the level of the annual precept, or borrowing money etc, must be taken by the full Town Council.

Whilst the General Power of Competence is to be pursued for use in 2013-14, during 2012-13 the Town Council already had the legal power to, amongst other things: provide community buildings; use a school building; accept property; promote entertainment and the arts; provide allotments; provide public baths and washhouses; acquire, provide and maintain monuments and memorials; contribute towards cemeteries expenses; be a burial authority; provide mortuaries and post-mortem rooms; provide and

maintain bus shelters; provide conference facilities; provide and equip buildings for athletic, social or educational use; provide buildings for offices, public meetings and assemblies; provide public conveniences; provide gymnasiums, playing fields, holiday camps, boating pools and to acquire land for recreation/pleasure grounds and public walks.



£290 to Tanfield Lea & Epworth Care Home Pensioners Events (Tanfield Ward)

The Town Council

During 2012-13, the Town Council continued to take a significant financial, contractual and legal stake in the following:

1. More than doubling the Stanley area's (part of the County Council managed) Neighbourhood Warden service;
2. More than trebling the Stanley area's (part of the County Council managed) Civic Pride service. (Culminating in bringing this service 'in-house' as of 2013-14, see page 31);
3. Funding a (unique to the Stanley area) Community Environmental Caretaker service (under the management of the County Council) whereby two full-time workers carry out numerous environmental jobs that would otherwise go undone to the physical detriment of the public environment. (Based on a programme of zonal working to cover the whole area zone by zone);
4. Funding an Environmental Warden service to free up the Community Environmental Caretakers to focus in on local 'grot-spots' while odd jobs continue to get done on a responsive basis across the whole area;
5. Extending the Environmental Warden service by funding two Trainees, i.e. local young people who get documented and structured on the job training which enhances their long term employment prospects and helps improve and maintain the environment;
6. Delivered winter weather treatment of footpaths and public spaces using specially acquired plant and machinery to 'bring more hands to the pumps' (to increase the base-level of service that would otherwise be provided by the County Council's standard service);
7. The provision of free dog-waste bags to local residents since the ending of the county-wide service due to funding cuts;
8. Using the Town Council's resources in the delivery of its strategy by supporting public, private and voluntary sector bodies able to do the job better than the Town Council. This meant that several hundreds of actions, initiatives, schemes, events, services or projects that would otherwise not have happened, were able to benefit local communities and neighbourhoods across the local area. Some of the local voluntary groups, community partnerships and sporting or social clubs who have benefitted are featured throughout this report.



Corporate Aims and Objectives

Vision:

Your Council is committed to improving your area, improving the quality of life and developing a sense of pride by working together to ensure that our actions reflect your priorities.

The Town Council's vision is expanded upon by the Strategic Town Plan 2009-14 (the Strategy). However the Town Council recognises that by simply having a written 'Strategy' or similar glossy document doesn't necessarily improve things 'on the ground' for 'real' people.

Therefore, the Strategy contains a detailed 'Action Plan' (the Plan) which clarifies what the public have told the Town Council ought to be its priorities (**You said...**) and what action the Town Council intends to take in response (**We will do...**).

The Town Council's strategic priorities are also sub-divided by theme as follows:

- (High) Crime and safety;
- (High) Housing and the environment;

- (Medium) Shopping, leisure, culture and heritage;
- (Medium) Traffic and transport;
- (Medium) Information, communication and services;
- (Medium) Employment, training and education, and;
- Other local service issues.

Each priority theme is then broken down into issues with appropriate actions and timescales, within which the actions are to be taken, set out alongside.

Even though the Town Council stated from the outset that the Strategic Town Plan was in effect a 'living' document, as the consultation upon which it is based was carried out in 2008-09 before the worldwide economic downturn,

local government reorganisation and change of national government, not to mention the Localism Act 2011, it remains committed to reviewing, up-dating and superseding it on an on-going cyclical basis. Therefore provision has been made to consult the public during 2013-14 to up-date the main strategy.

Whilst all plans and strategies are to some extent out of date by the time the 'ink has dried', the above strategic priorities remain of fundamental importance to local residents and the document therefore still helps to focus the work of the Town Council. However, having set the corporate objectives in line with public feedback, as a resident, you have a stake in their achievement and the following sections of this report clarify what has been achieved in terms of performance and delivery .