



Council Introduction

This is the Annual Report for Bishop Auckland Town Council Civic Year Ending 31st March 2024. During the year the Council has continued to be actively involved in the management of the areas in its control, especially the areas of public open space. Investment is continuing in the parks and play areas, and this is supported by grant funding applications to ensure that our Town provides a wide range of facilities that help our residents, both young and old, to develop to their maximum potential, keep fit and active and make new friends at the same time. We will continue to do all that is possible to maintain our facilities and are open to all new ideas and suggestions from residents that will help to further improve our Town for our residents and visitors. Community Consultation has taken place during the year and our Action Planning for the coming year will be in response to the ideas and suggestions the Community has made.

The Town Council's aims and values are set out in the following Mission Statement:

“Working in partnership to improve the quality of life for all those who live, work, visit or invest in Bishop Auckland.”

In doing so, the Council will:

Conduct business openly and democratically, and consult with local people.

- Act in the best interests of local people in making appropriate representations to Durham County Council and other appropriate private and public sector groups.
- Deliver services to the highest quality in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money.
- Continue to build relationships with the community and voluntary organisations and with the statutory, public and private sector.
- Encourage and promote economic and commercial long terms plans for the town through partnership working.
- Recognise and support diversity and seek to strengthen the inclusion of all residents of Bishop Auckland.

In 2022 Bishop Auckland Town Council signed up to the Civility and Respect Pledge. The Civility and Respect Pledge is being introduced by the National Association of Local Councils because there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. It shows that Bishop Auckland is committed to standing up to poor behaviour and to drive through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.



Bishop Auckland Town Council has an office based at Kingsway Court, 54 Kingsway Bishop Auckland. It currently employs a full time Town Clerk, a full time Assistant Town Clerk, and full time Admin Assistant.

Message from Sam Zair, Mayor of Bishop Auckland 2023-24

"Being the Mayor of Bishop Auckland for 2023-24 has been a great honour. I have enjoyed the variety of engagement this role has given me. I have worked with some wonderful people and raised some well needed funds for good causes on a local and national level.

I have hosted a number of events throughout the year but the wine and cheese day on the Weardale Railway was definitely the highlight and a talking point. Those who took part were reminded of how beautiful our countryside is and reminded everyone of what a lovely place we live in. What is wonderful is that people are still talking about it and that the railway received private bookings following the event.

Last year the mayor said he 'could see how Bishop Auckland has gone from strength to strength over the past 12 months and look forward to the completion of the regeneration works and for new life to be brought back into the town'. I believe this is now all starting to come together and the progress being made is much more visual and this gives people the encouragement and belief that the developments taking place will be of benefit to the local economy and town as a whole.

Other events I have represented the town at have included Bishop Paul leaving celebration, St John's ambulance re-dedication service as well as the re-dedication service at St Andrew's for the 750th anniversary celebrations.

This year has shown how Bishop Auckland is truly on the map for the correct reasons. The Rugby Club 2nd team became the 2024 winners of the XV Men Candy Division II. The Football Club became the Northern League champions and promoted to the Northern Premier League East Division for the next season. This month also sees the Bishop Auckland Rotary Club celebrate their 100th year and are celebrating with a dinner at the Golf Club with the Lord Lieutenant Sue Snowdon being the guest speaker. The great work done by the local Stoma Support Group was also recognised as I attended an afternoon at the Town Hall where the group received the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

The events I have hosted have been very well attended and helped raise money for charity. The Mayor at Home took place at the Town Hall, my Valentine Civic Dinner was held at the Golf Club and the Irish night celebrations at the Rugby Club. I would like to say the support we received from all the staff at these venues was excellent and I would not hesitate to use any of the venues again in the future.

I was donated some prizes which truly helped the funds increase. Firstly, we had the signed Chris Rea gold disc, then we had the donated print called Little Treasures from the House of Smudge. Again, this not only raised £325 the winner went on to purchase a second print from the shop to match it. Lastly, I was donated a signed Manchester United football which I sold raffle tickets for and picked the winning ticket at the Durham Amateur Football Trust event which was celebrating the 70 years anniversary of the 1954 FA Amateur Cup of Bishop Auckland FC versus crook Town AFC. Through joint fundraising I have supported DAFT with £150 donation from the ticket sales.

I hope my fundraising donations for both the Angel Trust and the Alzheimer's Society will help both organisations go from strength to strength I am delighted to have raised £2513.22 each. A special thank you goes to all those who supported my fundraising efforts by attending events and donating prizes.

I wish the incoming Mayor the best of luck."

Looking back 2023-24 Services

The Council continues to deliver allotment provision across the town council area. Sites are predominantly managed by the Town Council, with some having associations in operation, and one site being self-managed.

The Council has sites at

Tindale Crescent, Woodhouse Close, Edge Hill, Pollards, South Church, Mill Race, Broken Banks and West Mills.

The annual inspections took place at all allotment sites in June and July 2023. Whilst on the whole the plots met the requirements of the council's rules and regulations two plots were issued with a notice to quit due to the lack of cultivation and not appropriately used. This decision is never taken lightly.

The management and maintenance plans for each site were reviewed and investment has meant that pot holes could be addressed and essential works could be carried out. This investment is well under way and will continue throughout 2024-5 starting with 8-10 new allotments in some previously disused land at the Woodhouse Close site. This has also built a good rapport with tenants and they now feel they have a voice.

Bishop Auckland Food Festival 2024

With fine weather the now legendary food festival saw thousands of people attend across the weekend. The Town Council are a proud sponsor of this event as it continues to go grows each year. The food festival continues to attracts large crowds and this is fantastic for the local economy and small businesses in the town. Although the Town Council did not have a physical presence at the event this year, the event was well attended and in addition the Council also sponsored the photography competition at St Anne's church and there were some great entries from teenagers in the town.



Bishop Auckland Remembers



Bishop Auckland Market Place was awash with people gathering for the Annual Remembrance Sunday Service 2023 in order to pay tribute to those who had fought and lost their lives in war. The day was planned by the town council staff in collaboration with Rev'd Matt Keddilby of St Anne's Church. The staff spoke to the DLI and RBL in advance of the service and ensures any of their comments and observations from the year prior were taken into consideration. Once again, the parade was led by Captain Dave Ridley 8th Battalion the Rifles, followed by Army Cadet Force, Royal Air Force Cadets, the Scouts, Guides, veterans and members of the public, the 8th Battalion the Rifles set off from the Newgate Centre and marched to the War Memorial in the Market Place. Two minutes' silence was impeccably held at exactly 11.00am marking the Anniversary of the end of World War One.

Christmas Town 2023

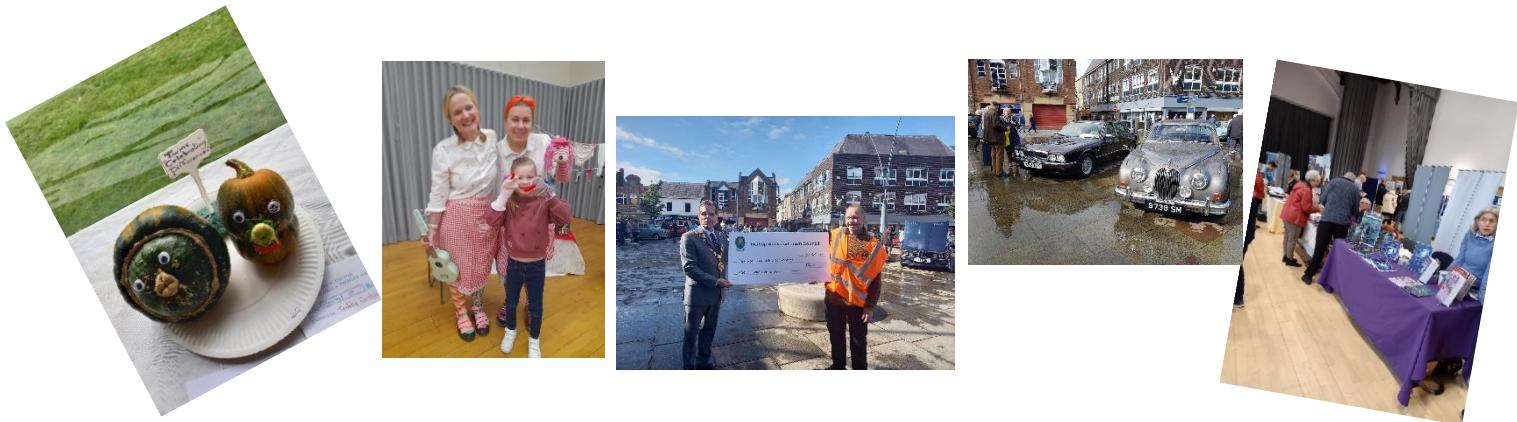
Due to the continued success of Christmas Town the Town Council once again partnered with Bridge Creative CIC and Baccanalia CIC to host a weekend of Christmas Activity. It sounds repetitive but once again the event was bigger and better than the previous year and footfall as huge with an estimated 35,000 people in attendance. The snow globe remains a hit with event goers as does the ice-skating rink, but the introduction of a Ferris wheel topped it off.

There was something for everyone and data shows that some people even travelled from outside the county to come along. This event alongside Aglow at The Auckland Palace put Bishop Auckland a place to go through that weekend.



Bishop Auckland Heritage Fair

The 2023 Heritage Fair was at risk of not going ahead, but Bishop Auckland Town Council stepped in to coordinate the day and ensure everything was in place to make it a successful event that it turned out to be. As well as investing a small amount of money into the project the staff at the town council did a fantastic job in the background ensuring all different history groups came together and had the opportunity to display their wares and engage with visitors. Along with the car show outside and the horticulture show in the castle grounds it was another well-rounded successful day for the town.



King Charles II Coronation

In order to help the community groups of the town celebrate the Coronation of King Charles II the Town Council donated party boxes. Donations were made to all six primary schools and the boxes were made to ensure that every child in the school had individually wrapped snacks, juice, books, flags, paper chains, gold crowns and the school had banners. The four care homes in the town received a coronation cake, these were made for us by Longstaff Family Bakery, they were gratefully received and a wonderful opportunity to catch up with the homes and some of the residents. Street parties were also able to enter a competition to win a final cake for their activities, this was drawn live on social media.



Youth Awards

The youth awards were a great highlight to Bishop Auckland Town Council's portfolio. It is a fantastic opportunity to recognize just some of the young people in our town for the great work, help and support they do selflessly for others. The evening was hosted by Channy Thompson who had a great connection with the young people and was a brilliant host. It truly was a tear-jerking evening listening to their stories of survival, support and personal battles.

The young winners arrived to walk the red carpet, drinks reception, had afternoon tea, had their photographs taken in the photo booth and climbed the steps to the stage to receive their trophies, certificates and gift vouchers. The event also had nine sponsors who attended the evening and some of which have gone on to sponsor a category again this year.



Supporting the Community

Bishop Auckland Town Council allocates £5,000 each year to support local organisation working for the benefit of Bishop Auckland residents. Community groups and local charities can apply for grants of up to £500. Applications are considered twice a year. Firstly, in June and then again in December. The Council also provides wider community support via events and core funding, examples of these have been:

- Monthly Street Food Market – a grant was provided to enable the continuation of the markets and each one attracts over 4,000 people to the town which supports the businesses in the town centre.
- Green Fair room hire – a donation was made to pay for the room hire at both venues and also had a staffed stall at the event whereby children could plant seeds and take them home but also to learn more about allotments and availability.
- Bishop Trains Garden – a waste management company was contracted by the council to clear the waste from the site at the train station where volunteers had been working hard on tidying up the area for the new signage and get ready for Bishop in bloom.
- Wear Valley Community Action Community Events – the year-round events take place at Henknowle Community Centre but the group relies heavily on donations and good will. By supporting the venue hire the WVCAG are able to ensure they can put on events for the community throughout the year such as Easter, Halloween, Christmas.
- Lavender Club – Stroke Support Group – a donation to pay for room hire ensures that the Lavender Club can continue its vital peer support for stroke survivors. There are no clubs run by the NHS and the next nearest club is Stanley. Social support help survivors with a greater sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem and is linked to better functional outcomes.
- Woodhouse Close Community Centre - needed a place to ensure they could deliver some vital 1:1 support room. With community help and a donation from the council for blinds for the room they now have a much-needed private space to support the needs of individuals.

The town council also have made donations and sought donations to support other projects such as:

- Hanging Baskets – the Town Council supplies funding to Durham County Council to provide the hanging baskets to 50% of Newgate Street.
- Skate Park Lighting – the Town Council supplies the Lighting to the skate park in the Town Rec so that the facility can be used on the dark evenings.

- Citizen's advice – the Town Council provided additional project funding for a Cost of Living project worker to operate one day per week from the town council premises, in the first 6 months of the sessions an additional £12,000 of benefit and support were awarded to residents in the town.
- International Women's Event at AYCC – was also supported by the Council. They ran a full day of activities and workshops for girls and young women. This was part of a Stronger Together Youth Initiative bringing women from Bishop Auckland, Teesdale and West Auckland together. The workshops included a dance session, hair and beauty and jewellery making and workshops were delivered by County Durham Wellbeing for Life.
- Supplies for Cadets - The army cadets are always a central part of the Remembrance Service in the town. Speaking to Major Brian Burn it was evident the cadets were in much need of some new equipment such as a printer, projector and speakers. The town council were able to donate these items and the Mayor went along to deliver them and was given a warm welcome.



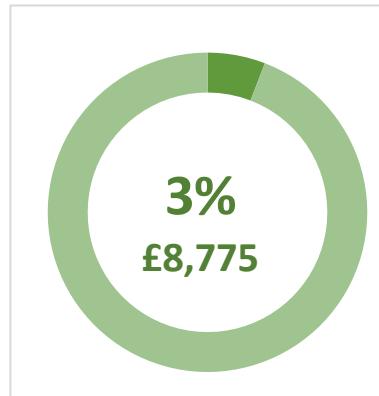
Financial Summary

Total Budget 2022-23 - £281,099

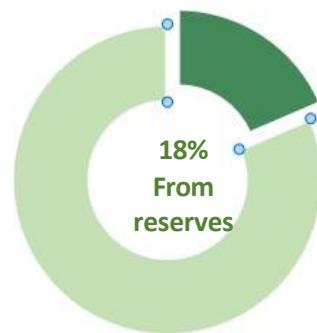


of the budget comes from Council Tax – the parish precept.

The Town Council does not receive any proportion of business rates



of which comes from grants, including Localisation of Council Tax Grant which is passed down from the Government by Durham County Council



The remaining amount of budget is taken from reserves of the council or other renumeration such as rent. .

The 2022 -23 Statement of Accounts, will be added to the Council website, once they have been approved by Town Council and then submitted to the auditor. The Internal audit report and external audit report will accompany them.

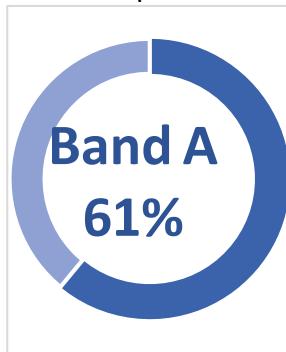
We have service level agreements with Durham County Council (DCC) for IT/HR Services, and building compliance. We now take finance payments by bank transfer, and pay as many of our invoices by bank transfer.

Council Tax – precept 2022-23

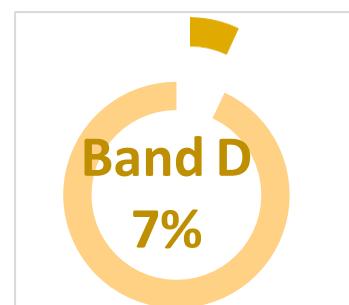
There are eight council tax bands which range from

- **Band A** - Properties valued at below £40,00 on 1st April 1991, to
- **Band H** - properties valued above £320,000 on 1st April 1991

Council Tax is usually quoted at **Band D** so that comparisons can be made with other councils. However, this does not give the full picture as the majority of people within our area live in Band A properties



61% of council tax payers in the Town Council area live in Band A properties. These households will paid £33.14 per year



Only 7% of council tax payers in the Town Council area live in Band D properties. These households paid £52.10 per year

There have been no changes to councillors during 2023-24. Cllr Sam Zair was appointed as Mayor at the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2023. Co-opted Councillors are not eligible to take an allowance from the council unless they are elected as Chair.

Members Allowances

The Local Authorities Members' Allowances (England) Regulations 2003 require the Council to publish details of the actual allowances paid to its elected Councillors for the financial year 2022-23. The Local Authorities Members' Allowances (England) Regulations 2003 require the Council to publish details of the actual allowances paid to its elected Councillors for the financial year 2023-24.

Name	Basic Allowance	Mayoral Allowance	Travel Expenses
Harley Balmer – Howieson	£36.67		
Jamie Blackburn	£440.4		
Katie Fryatt (Eliot)	£440.4		
Mike Harker	0	0	89.10
Kimm Lawson	£440.4		
Andrew Legg	0		
Michael Siddle	£440.4		
David Wilson	£440.4		
Adam Zair	£440.4		
Lesley Zair	£440.4		
Sam Zair	£440.4	£440.4	

Bishop Auckland Town Councillors

Cockton Hill Ward		Woodhouse Ward	
	Councillor Michael Siddle 32 Prescott Way Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 6FL		Councillor Jamie Blackburn 28 Granville Road Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 6UD
	Councillor Andrew Legge 49A Fore Bondgate Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 7PE		Councillor Harley Balmer-Howieson 55 Murphy Crescent Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 6QH
	Councillor Lesley Zair 3 Walcher Gardens Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 7GA		Councillor David Wilson 28 Proudfoot Drive Woodhouse Close Estate Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 6NX
Henknowle Ward		Town Ward	
	Councillor Katherine Eliot 50 Ennerdale Drive Crook Co. Durham DL15 8NU		Councillor Adam J Zair 3 Walcher Gardens Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 7GA
	Councillor Mike Harker 16A Dene Hall Drive Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 6UG		Councillor Sam Zair 3 Walcher Gardens Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 7GA
	Councillor Kimm Lawson 45 Craddock Street Bishop Auckland Co. Durham DL14 6HB	BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL Kingsway Court 54 Kingsway Bishop Auckland Co Durham DL14 7JF TEL: 01388 207110 council@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk	