

Annual Report 2020/21



Sedgefield Town Council





Welcome to Sedgefield Town Council's Annual Report 2020/21

The purpose of this report is to explain how the Town Council has operated during 2020/21 and the work it has undertaken during this time.

Further information regarding the Town Council can be found at our website www.sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk.



Sedgefield Town Council

Sedgefield Town Council serves the Parish of Sedgefield which includes the town itself and Thorpe Larches, Foxton and Embleton. The Council comprises of 15 elected Councillors. Each year in May at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) the Council elects a Chair of the Council and a Mayor. Due to the coronavirus pandemic central government enacted legislation instructing Town and Parish Councils not to hold AGMs in 2020/21 but instead for officials in roles to continue with those for a further 12 months. In May 2020 Cllr Mel Carr was elected as Chair of the Council and Cllr Leo McCormack as the Mayor, roles which they both continued during 2020/21.

The Council conducts its business through a Committee system as follows:

Committee:	Meetings Held:
Monthly Meeting	2 nd Monday of every month
Policy & Resources	After each Monthly Meeting
Community Development & Engagement) Environment)	*
Personnel	As required
Sedgefield Extra	As required
Community Chest	As required

* Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the requirement for Council meetings to take place virtually the decision was made for all Environment and Community Development & Engagement matters to be progressed via the Policy & Resources Committee agendas.

Please note: in some instances dates are changed because of Bank Holidays. No Committee meetings are held in August. An annual meetings calendar is displayed in the Council Offices, Town noticeboard and on the Council's website.

Details of the work of each of these Committees is contained later in this Report.

In addition to the Committees are a series of Working Groups which undertake research and investigation to propose recommendations for consideration by all Councillors at the relevant Committee. During 2020/21, the Council had Working Groups covering Estates, Finance, Policy & Records Management and Butterwick Road Cemetery.

How To Contact Sedgefield Town Council

In line with central government advice in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, during 2020/21 the Town Council has not been able to operate its usual walk-in facility for the public. The Town Council has operated throughout the pandemic with contact being via email to: town.clerk@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk . The Town Council has used this time as an opportunity to extensively refurbish its offices at Front Street. During 2021/22 the Town Council will resume being open to the public when coronavirus restrictions permit. Notices will be displayed in the Town Council Offices windows, noticeboards, website and Twitter regarding future changes. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the public for their understanding in these changed circumstances and for working with us in new ways.

The Town Council also operates a residents email database through which we cascade information including planning updates, road and footpath closures, neighbourhood watch information etc. If you would like to register with this database please contact jane@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk



Sedgefield Town Councillors

During 2020/21 the following Councillors held office:

Cllr Allan Blakemore 32 Beacon Avenue, Sedgefield 01740 621820	Cllr David Brown Town Farm House, 3 West End, Sedgefield 01740 622894	Cllr Mark Cant Mordon Moor Farm, Sedgefield 07818 243774
Cllr Vanessa Carmichael 47 Cunningham Court, Sedgefield 07889 219195	Cllr Ann Carr 3 The Square, Sedgefield 01740 629070	Cllr Mel Carr 3 The Square, Sedgefield 01740 629070
Cllr Paul Heasman Joined 8th February 2021 Contact via Town Clerk	Cllr Chris Lines 41 White House Drive, Sedgefield 01740 623090	Cllr Leo McCormack 30 St Luke's Crescent Sedgefield 01740 621037
Cllr Julie Towler 6 Mitford Court Sedgefield 07979 376997	Cllr Alf Walton New Dawn, Low Hard- wick Farm, Sedgefield 01740 620640	Cllr Fiona Warrant 14 Hawthorn Road Sedgefield 07452 939238
Cllr Mavis Wayman 32 White House Drive Sedgefield 01740 620337	Cllr Gloria Wills Hare Hills Lodge, Sedgefield 01740 622447	Cllr Kathrine Winter Resigned 12th August 2020
Cllr Stephen Winter 3 Millner Court Sedgefield 07916 228929		

Message from the Chairman of Sedgefield Town Council - Cllr. Mel Carr



It is over a year since the Covid 19 pandemic started in the United Kingdom and changed everyone's way of life but at last the situation appears to be improving.

Due to Government restrictions, measures were taken to ensure that our Clerk, Dr Jane Ayre, and all Council staff complied with them and have been able to work remotely or in a covid secure way. This has enabled Councillors to receive secure and swift information from Government, Durham County Council, and other sources as it is issued.

I would like to say thank you to all the Town Councillors and Town Council staff who continue to work together during this difficult situation.

While the Town Council Offices were closed to the public the decision was made to upgrade and improve the building. Despite difficulties at times with supply of materials and labour this refurbishment should be completed in early 2021/22.

The Parish Hall had to close and many groups have been unable to meet as well as various Town Council events having to be cancelled or curtailed. The fireworks event was cancelled, however, the virtual Halloween Howler was well supported.

Message from the Chairman (continued)

The excellent Christmas window display by the local businesses helped to add some cheer to the festive season, as did the arrival of Santa Claus to switch on the tree lights.

The Citizen of the Year went ahead and was awarded to Howard Smith who is well known for his work with the Sedgefield in Bloom

Town Council gardeners Stephen Young and Ben Gray continued to work at the cemetery and throughout the Town ensuring that, despite very different circumstances to other years, the Town once again looked its stunning best allowing us all to enjoy the floral displays as we were forced to stay near to home.

The village greens are the responsibility of the Town Council and during 2020/21 a number of issues have developed. While not always obvious, a great deal of discussion and legal work has been carried out and in some cases continues so that we can seek a satisfactory conclusion for all concerned.

Section 106 money (developer's contributions paid to Durham County Council to mitigate the impact of their development on the community) is still being monitored to ensure that Sedgefield benefits from it.

Our project to expand Butterwick Road Cemetery, is progressing well with a planning application having been submitted to Durham County Council.

It's good to see that volunteers and organisations have all been supporting the Town over the last difficult 12 months.

We now know that in 2021/22 Sedgefield Town Council will have an uncontested election. Many Town Councillors will be returning to their role while some have made the decision to leave and some new faces will join us. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to outgoing Councillors Gloria Wills, Vanessa Carmichael, Leo McCormack, Chris Lines and Fiona Warrand.

2020 / 2021 Mayor's Report

Cllr. Leo McCormack



It has been a tremendous honour and privilege to have represented Sedgfield as Mayor for the past two years - albeit nominally for the past year.

Overall, it has been a fantastic experience that has taken Sandra and I to places which we would never have encountered, and experiences that will live with us forever. Moreover, it allowed us to meet many wonderful people who are at the heart of their own respective communities. I have nothing but respect and great admiration for their commitment and achievements.

I would also like to pay tribute to the 56 volunteer groups who generously give of their time and provide the heartbeat of the Town. I found it extremely humbling to be welcomed so generously by the groups that I visited and, as we awaken from this terrible pandemic, hopefully they will all be back up and running as soon as possible. They really do make Sedgfield such a vibrant community and an excellent place to live.

I would also like to thank all the local businesses who are constantly called upon, but unstintingly give freely to charitable appeals. Without their support very little could be achieved, which would be much to the detriment of our voluntary groups. Sadly, there can be no Mayoral charitable donations this year which is disappointing for all the groups and organisations that depend upon it for financial help. However, I must emphasise that there are funds available from the Council's Community Chest, and I would encourage any organisations in need of help to consider applying for grants.

Finally, I would like to thank the Council staff and all the Councillors for their commitment and support. A great deal of Council related work goes unseen, and I am sure that few residents are aware of the hours that Councillors dedicate beyond the regular monthly meetings. Councillors have roles on the various committees which often make great demands on their time, attending site meetings, appeals etc. I applaud them and take my hat off to them. Moreover, the systems that have been introduced over the last few years have made the Council a very efficient and well organised team. It is quite reassuring to know that the daily running and the future of Sedgfield is in extremely capable hands.

Chair of Committee Reports:

Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee - Cllr Gloria Wills (Chair)

The Policy and Resources Committee is an extremely important committee in terms of the decision making process. It is usually held on the same night as the Monthly Meeting and all councillors are automatically members of this committee. Minutes of the meetings are available on the Sedgefield Town Council website alongside those of all of our other committees.

Over the last year we have had to deal with the effects Covid has had on our ability to meet as a Council, and that has meant the use of video conferencing using Microsoft Teams, to allow us to continue to perform our duties, and to make decisions, and deal with council business as usual. We have had to implement a huge raft of government policy and procedures which have had an impact on our staff and our income. The Parish Hall has remained closed and our staff have been working, for the most part, from home with the exception of our gardening staff and Parish Hall staff. None of our staff have been furloughed throughout this disruptive period.

I am proud of the way our Town Clerk and all staff and councillors have risen to the challenges brought about by this pandemic.

It has been even more important for the Council to have a sound financial and governance structure, with robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that the Council meets its fiduciary duties in terms of spending of public money, in line with the need for openness and transparency in its decision making process.

This has been an underlying theme which this Council has always endeavoured to achieve on behalf of its residents, particularly in the allocation of public funds. It is also responsible for ensuring that all policies and procedures are in place to fulfil our legal obligations in this regard, including all governance and personnel policies and procedures.

Every year we must ensure compliance with our Audit and Accountability role, and this year is no exception. We employ an independent Internal Auditor to fulfil this role. This will be our fourth year with our external auditors Mazars. Our Town Clerk and Financial Assistant continue to use the financial package provided by EDGE. This package is designed for local government use. It is also important to note that our Internal Auditor has also been able to use this Financial Package in order for him to fulfil his role within this Council. This has been an extremely important additional bonus in terms of the value this financial package provides, as it has been designed with local authorities in mind. The investment in this package remains excellent value for money and has proved to be an excellent tool to enable precise, accurate and timely information to be available to all Councillors on a monthly basis ensuring they are given the most up to date figures upon which to make all financial decisions.

Two years ago an additional module named Epitaph, was added to the package. This package is tailored to Burial and Cemetery procedures to enable us to process and store legal documentation which is necessary by law, safely and securely.

Over the last few years Town Councils across the country have had to deal with austerity measures, and a variety of directives from Central Government. We have already seen several small village dwellings becoming businesses and these changes are continuing, and all have had an add-on effect on village life, particularly on parking. The Central Government Housing Policy has meant an increase in dwellings of over 10% for us, and we as a Council must consider the long term impact of these changes on our services within the village.

Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee (continued)

As a matter of course over the year we have reviewed our Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and other policies as they become due for revision and adoption. Once again our Town Clerk has been instrumental in the up-dating and in some cases adapting these policies to our Town Council and this has taken considerable time and dedication. The Policy and Records Management Working Group continue to monitor all of our policies and procedures and make recommendations to this Committee for their adoption.

This year we have been working hard to ensure that our budget is balanced. We have also set aside capital as earmarked reserves for investment in the Cemetery expansion, which is now moving forward at a pace. Planning permission has been applied for and a contractor has been appointed to oversee all matters appertaining to that permission. Whilst several staff were working from home due to Covid restrictions, the Council considered it prudent to up-grade the Council Offices. This has been found to be quite a challenge given the age of the building and its poor build quality, however, the transformation is really quite amazing and has brought the standards up to the quality we believe our staff deserve.

General Data Protection Regulations, (GDPR) came into force on May 15th 2018. Since then the Town Council have taken the opportunity continue to contract with an IT company, Evolve, to provide safe and secure storage for all the data which we hold, much of which is required by law. This has also required a substantial investment from our revenue budget, however, Councillors felt it was their duty to ensure we were compliant in this regard.

The Finance Working Group continue to meet throughout the year to consider spending against budget and any proposals coming forward which require funding, making recommendations to this Committee.

The Group also have the added value of having our Internal Auditor in attendance to present any reports and take any questions from members about his findings. We would like to acknowledge the significant progress the staff have made on the day to day procedures which have been put in place as a consequence of these audits i.e. full assurance being given by the auditor. This provides assurance to members that the day to day processes are robust, and assurance to staff that they are doing an excellent job for the Council and the general public that proper controls are in place.

The day to day delegation to our Responsible Financial Officer is set out in our Scheme of Delegation.

This Working Group is open to all councillors and provides an opportunity to discuss in detail any proposals which will have a financial impact on the Council. Where possible spending is planned for, when the budget is set the previous year, together with an assessment of risk using a traffic light system of coding i.e. High, Medium and Low Risk, shown as Red, Amber and Green.

In line with our code of Openness and Transparency, no decisions are taken by Working Groups, only recommendations, which are taken to the Monthly Meeting of the Council or Policy & Resources Committee, for additional debate and approval, i.e. Resolution.

Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee (continued)

All Town Council members receive comprehensive minutes to ensure they are informed of all debate and discussion which takes place within the Working Groups, and this enables all Councillors to make an informed decision when presented with a proposal.

The introduction of Working Groups has given an opportunity to all Councillors who have special areas of interest to get involved in issues upon which they feel they can add value and expertise.

For 2021 we increased the precept by 5.4%. This was as a result of funding necessary to support the expansion of the Cemetery which is nearing capacity; also proposals to upgrade the Council Offices and to cover the loss of a substantial amount of funding which was lost as a result of the Local Council Support Grant being withdrawn.

The expansion of the Cemetery, to ensure we can provide for future needs, will be a major piece of work, however, looking ahead work will need to commence on looking for additional land for the future as the population increases. Medium Term Financial Plan will inform our future spending.

This year we have managed to work within our budget, keeping the funding set aside for the cemetery expansion and continuing to provide services to the public.

During the pandemic the Parish Hall has been closed for the majority of 2020/21 which will inevitably affect the budget figures. This occurrence could not have been foreseen.

I would like to thank our Auditor Mr Gordon Fletcher for his work to date and to our RFO and Town Clerk, Dr Jane Ayre and our Financial Assistant Julia Rowsby for their commitment to this very important aspect of our work.

The progress we have made would not have been possible without the support and commitment of my fellow Councillors, and I would like to thank them personally for their contributions, and in particular Councillor Mel Carr for his invaluable contribution, particularly on the financial aspects of this Committee.



Community Development & Engagement Committee –

Cllr Allan Blakemore (Chair)

During the course of the last year we seem to have had a stop-go scenario that everyone has been constantly juggling with. Numerous events were arranged throughout 2020 and it did seem that all of them would be cancelled because of the pandemic. However, this would have created an enormous vacuum and Sedgefield Town Council Members were of the opinion that we needed to be more creative and consider what we could achieve whilst adhering to the lock down and social distancing.

We did lose the opportunity to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe day and that was something that a great deal of hard work went into, not only by the Town Council but also by Sedgefield Community Association, Churches Together, Veterans, Scouts, Guides and other community groups. I think this was the main activity that we did lose, however, I also think that this is a theme that we could pick up and work with, if not this year but sometime in the near future.

There is no doubt that we all missed being together for the Halloween Howler, when we also have the firework display in Ceddesfeld grounds. Another big miss was not having the Christmas Snow Party when we have Santa's Grotto, Craft Fayre, Church Service and Snow Parade prior to the Christmas lights being switched on.

Putting that to one side we have learned a lot about what we can achieve virtually and how to engage our community in other activities, some of which we will undoubtedly continue with. Once we realised that the usual activities could not go ahead and that meeting in large groups was not achievable, we put our minds to thinking about what could be achieved, bearing in mind that whatever we did would have to be done virtually.

In order to try to create a Christmas atmosphere around the village we invited businesses to enter a Christmas window display competition. Shops, Public Houses and other business premises decorated their windows with a Christmas theme. We had many entries for this competition and the winner was chosen by on line voters. In all this brought a festive atmosphere to the village centre and was well received by residents.

Continuing the on-line theme, we had a Christmas activities page for festive ideas on the Council website with activities submitted by local community groups. There was a Christmas quiz to be completed, which also created a great deal of interest. Santa also turned up to switch on the lights on-line.



Community Development & Engagement Committee –

Cllr Allan Blakemore (Chair) - continued

Whilst all of this was a new experience and only went ahead because of the pandemic, there has been a very real learning experience and some activities will continue. In particular the Christmas tree, which has always been donated by the Rotary Club and placed in the centre of the Church Turning Circle was not achievable. Consequently, the fir tree near to the Ball Game plaque was adorned with lights and this is also something to be considered for future years.

I would like to outline events for this year but at this time I am uncertain about what can be achieved. As soon as we are certain about what can go ahead this year, we will advertise on our website and in the Sedgefield Extra.

Personnel Committee - Cllr Gloria Wills (Chair)

The Personnel Committee, set up in 2014, has once again been extremely busy and proactive and forms an essential and valued part of our governance structure.

This year our attention has been even more focussed on the safety of our staff due to the COVID situation and we have ensured their safety at all times by allowing staff to remotely where possible or with COVID secure arrangements when not possible. We have continued to employ all our staff and no staff have been furloughed throughout this period.

We have continued with our complete overhaul of our Human Resource Policies which in turn will form part of our Staff Handbook, with now over two thirds of Policies adapted and adopted by this Council.

We are also fully aware of the complexity of personnel policy. We understand that it is impossible to maintain a level of expertise within our staff which is required in today's society, therefore the Town Council have also agreed to continue with our Service Level Agreement with Durham County Council, to use the expertise of their Human Resource Advisors, to ensure we have the most correct and up to date advice possible when considering personnel matters if and when they arise.

We have consolidated and reviewed workloads and job descriptions to ensure that our staff are being used most effectively and efficiently whilst giving them opportunities for training and development. This is extremely important to us.

Last year we appointed a new member of staff in the role of Parish Hall Security Officer. Adam Heath replaced our long standing employee Les Parrish who retired after many years working for the Council. Adam has proved to be invaluable in his role, particularly during the COVID pandemic, with all public buildings being closed.

We also need to acknowledge the total commitment from all staff members, who have worked together through this new way of working by video conferencing on Microsoft Teams, to ensure that our Council continues to function in its duties. It has been 'business as usual', albeit in a different way of working.

I would like to express my personal thanks to our Town Clerk Dr Jane Ayre, and to all of our staff members and to members of this Committee for their support and commitment throughout the year and in particular the Vice Chair Cllr Ann Carr for her invaluable contribution.

Community Chest Committee - Cllr Vanessa Carmichael (Chair)

Sedgefield benefits from an extremely proactive and invaluable community and voluntary sector many of whom rely on grants and fundraising opportunities to function. With this in mind the Council introduced the Community Chest Fund. The Fund is supported by a ring fenced amount of £500 each financial year, with any unspent funding carried forward.

This grant funding allows local groups and organisations to access small donations. This year the awards limit was increased to a maximum of £100 in any one grant, however this could increase if members judged the need was great, especially given the situation from COVID which has affected many groups in the village.

Organisations can apply by letter to the contact below, setting out why the funding is required and what it will be spent on, together with an explanation of how it will benefit the residents in Sedgefield.

The remit of this Committee is to award grants to good causes, local groups and organisations which add value or have a direct benefit to Sedgefield and its residents.

You do not need to have charity status to apply.

Organisations who bring some kind of benefit to Sedgefield and its community by hosting events; and individuals who by their actions bring a benefit to the community may also be considered.

This year we have awarded £600 in total in grants to the following groups: -

Great North Air Ambulance, Ellen Timney Foundation, Sedgefield Players, Sowers & Growers and provisionally to St Edmund's 2021 Christmas Tree Festival.

If you feel your group or organisation would benefit from a small donation look at the Council's website for details of the Community Chest and its criteria.

Sedgefield Youth Club Management Committee - Cllr Julie Towler (Chair)



Due to the pandemic, and the subsequent closure of the Parish Hall, Sedgefield Youth Club has been unable to run this year. However, Sedgefield Town Council are passionate about providing this service again for the youth of our town and surrounding villages.

Sedgefield Youth Club were successful in being chosen as one of Sedgefield's Co-op local causes and received £1,548.31, this money will be used to fund forthcoming activities when we are able to welcome back both old and new members.

We were also rewarded an AAP grant for Easter holiday healthy eating but again due to the pandemic this did not go ahead so the money was returned.

At the time of writing this report we are still waiting for government guidelines as to when we can reopen. Please keep watching the Town Council's website for more details.

Sedgefield Extra Committee - Cllr Chris Lines (Chair)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we adapted our approach to the publication of Sedgefield Extra during the civic year. With the support of Sedgefield Development Trust, we produced monthly editions (instead of quarterly Extras), changing the format from four-page to two-page, with each issue inserted into Sedgefield News, and also shared in digital form through our own channels and on other community social media platforms. The design and content for each Extra was managed by Projects and Media Co-ordinator Natalie Chowns-Traynor, with support from Town Clerk Dr. Jane Ayre and councillors. We are grateful to the development trust and its volunteers for ensuring that the monthly issues were delivered to households.

Extra content during the year reflected the latest circumstances, with key information on the status of Town Council services, events and premises. Publishing the Extra on a monthly basis allowed us to share more up to date material with residents than in the usual quarterly publication, which was very important in the context of the rapidly changing situation that we faced.

We were very conscious that even with this new approach, the nature of the pandemic meant that information that was published in print could be out of date very quickly. We made it clear in the Extra that everything included in each issue was correct at the time of going to print and encouraged residents to closely monitor the Town Council website and Twitter feed, and other trusted local sources, for the very latest news.

Events of the pandemic highlighted the importance of the work that the Town Council has done in recent years to improve its online communications. Thanks to the changes made to the structure of our website, we were able to directly and quickly update it with news and information as developments occurred. Meanwhile, more proactive use of our Twitter account also helped us to keep residents updated with essential content on a timely basis.

As we reached the end of 2020, town councillors agreed that it would be appropriate to return to the traditional schedule and the Extra reverted to its four-page quarterly publication for 2021. However, we will continue to review and refresh our approach to the content and publication of the Extra as circumstances demand.



Review of the Past Year: Dr Jane Ayre, Town Clerk

2020/21 proved to be a very challenging and different year to one which any of us has ever experienced before or could have imagined. The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic were hard hitting for everyone. I want to put on record my thanks to all Town Council staff for the way in which they adapted so quickly to new ways of working, rising to new challenges and overcoming obstacles which we have not had to encounter before but through our collective actions we ensured the Town Council continued to operate right throughout 2020/21. At the time of writing this report we are still subjected to coronavirus restrictions and the legacy of the pandemic will continue to be felt for some time yet, however, we continue to respond daily to those challenges to ensure we serve the Town. I would also like to express my thanks to Town Councillors who have also had to change their ways of working and have all thrown themselves very successfully and effectively into the world of virtual working.

During 2020/21 Council Committee meetings have taken place virtually via the use of Microsoft Teams. I am delighted to report that even though our meetings have taken place virtually we have been joined by many members of the public who have observed or participated in such. I would like to thank members of the public for continuing to be involved with the Town Council. At the time of writing this report we are still awaiting the outcome from a legal challenge to determine whether, and for how long, virtual meetings can continue. The initial emergency legislation enacted by central government expires at midnight on 6th May 2021. Please be assured that whether virtual meetings continue or we revert to face to face meetings in accordance with social distancing that the Town Council has arrangements in place and these will be publicised via our website.

As you will be aware from articles elsewhere in this report, the Town Council made the decision in the early part of the first national lockdown to embark upon a project to undertake some much needed refurbishment work at the Town Council Offices. We look forward to welcoming the public back to the Town Council Offices when permitted. Again, please see our website for details.

Despite the pandemic we have been able to continue to help residents and others with their concerns and very varied enquiries. My thanks go to Julia Rowsby, Jane Young and Natalie Chowns-Traynor for dealing so professionally with all enquiries received.

During 2020/21 the Northumbria In Bloom and Britain In Bloom competitions did not go ahead. However, the Town Council made the decision to still ensure Sedgfield's flower beds, tubs and open spaces looked as stunning as ever. We hope these provided a pleasing backdrop for you all when enjoying your outdoor exercise in accordance with the different coronavirus restrictions. My thanks go to Stephen Young and Ben Gray for their continuing dedication and hard work.

Review of the Past Year (continued)

I would like to express thanks to all our allotment holders at our Winterton and Butterwick Road sites. At the start of the first national lockdown the Town Council made the decision to suspend our normal regime of allotment inspections as we understood the national restrictions would impact upon how people typically visited and worked at their plots. Despite the restrictions it has been fantastic to see plots have been maintained to a very high standard yet again and people have continued to enjoy working on them. My thanks go to Councillor Alf Walton for his role as our Allotments Champion.

Our traditional programme of community events was understandably hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic and the need to keep people safe and abide by the restrictions imposed upon us all. During 2020/21 we were not able to host tub planting, coach trips, fireworks display, Mayor's quiz, carol service and civic ball. Please be assured that the Town Council is fully committed to holding these events in the future when it is safe to do so. We have missed these events as much as you have. As reported by Councillor Allan Blakemore in his earlier article, we ensured the Town paid its respects on Remembrance Sunday by using an array of social distancing measures and virtual means. We also held a virtual Halloween Howler competition which generated some amazing entries as did the array of the festive competitions we held. We have had very positive feedback about the addition of virtual competitions, and we will continue with these in the future, hopefully alongside our more traditional events. At this time it is still very unclear what community events will and will not be possible during 2021/22 but we continue to follow government advice and will keep you updated through our website and the Sedgfield Extra.

Despite the coronavirus restrictions the Town Council has made very good progress with its project to expand Butterwick Road Cemetery. A planning application has been lodged with Durham County Council and we are working with a specialist cemetery designer and the Environment Agency to hopefully progress this as quickly as possible to ensure we can continue to have a burial facility in the Town.

Unfortunately, for the majority of 2020/21 the doors of the Parish Hall remained closed. Work has been taking place in the building during this time to ensure that as soon as we are able the building will re-open and operate in a covid secure way. Understandably when the Hall does re-open things will be different while covid restrictions and social distancing remain in place. We have liaised with our regular users during 2020/21 and continue to do so in order to get the Hall re-opened as safely as possible when we are permitted. We know that several groups who did use the Hall are sadly no longer in existence but hopefully others will be able to return along with new groups as we all aim to build back after the pandemic. I would like to thank Joyce Stephenson and Adam Heath for their work in relation to the Hall and Town Council Offices.

Review of the Past Year (continued)

In summary, 2020/21 is a year that none of us will forget and I would like to say a very big thank you to all Town Council staff who work tirelessly for this town.

Looking ahead, it is now known that Sedgefield Town Council will have an uncontested election in May 2021. We have several new Councillors who are joining the Town Council and they will introduce themselves to you in the next edition of the Sedgefield Extra. We also have several Councillors who have made the decision not to return to the Town Council and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all their hard work and support over the years of their term(s) of office, they have played an important part in the work of Sedgefield Town Council and we wish them well for the future. Covid restrictions remain in force at the present time albeit central government have set out their road map out of the pandemic.

The Town Council will abide by that road map and will keep you updated about the implications of such, including re-opening of the Parish Hall and future community events, via our website (www.sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk), Twitter (@SedgefieldTC), Sedgefield Extra and residents database.

The P&R Committee met on 11th January 2021 to consider the precept request for 2021/22. Through continued financial vigilance Sedgefield Town Council was able to keep its increase in precept to 5.4% on a Band D rating.

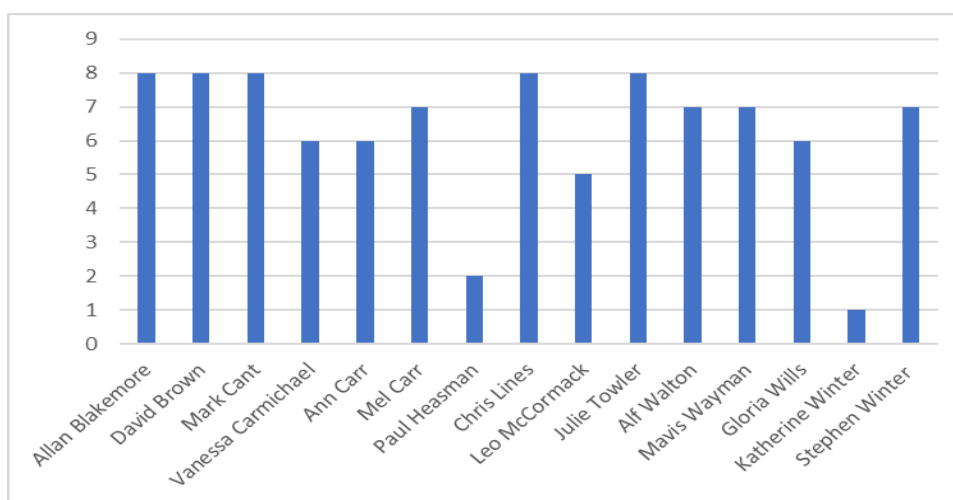
Copies of the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Account and Consolidated Balance Sheet for 2020/21 can be found on pages 20-21 of this Report.

In accordance with legislation, it is a statutory requirement to publish allowances received by members of the Town Council. The agreed allowance per month for Members of Sedgefield Town Council is £25.74. This was claimed over the past civic year by:

Cllrs David Brown, Vanessa Carmichael, Ann Carr, Mel Carr, Julie Towler, Alf Walton, Fiona Warrand, Mavis Wayman, Gloria Wills

Councillor Attendance at Meetings

A request was made to publish the attendance record of Members of the Town Council in 2013/14. This request was agreed and below are the attendance figures for the Council's Monthly meetings (Total 8) for 2020/21 (please note that during 2020/21 in accordance with emergency coronavirus legislation no Annual General Meeting or Annual Town Meeting took place). These figures do not include attendance at Special meetings, Committee meetings, Working Group meetings or other meetings.



Notes:

Cllr Kathrine Winter was co-opted onto the Town Council on 17th February 2020

Cllr Katherine Winter resigned from the Town Council on 12th August 2020

Cllr Paul Heasman was co-opted onto the Town Council on 8th February 2021

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

31/03/20		31/03/21
£		£
	INCOME	
1,549.06	Bank Interest	448.60
11,979.60	Mayor's Charity	0.00
3,070.00	Ceddesfeld Hall	3,080.00
285,451.48	Precept	313,996.64
26,286.00	Parish Hall Hire	18,872.11
3,493.41	Community Services	1,742.31
70.00	Open Spaces	70.00
6,304.52	Cemetery Lodge	6,652.16
4,409.00	Cemetery	6,731.00
4,021.45	Events	25.00
3,695.77	Environment	4,178.85
7,352.00	LCTRS DCC Grant	0.00
1,196.22	Income Misc	0.00
358,878.51	TOTAL INCOME	355,706.67
	EXPENDITURE	
10,855.62	Council Offices	6,827.14
0.00	Capital Expenditure	214.58
14,083.29	Community Development	5,735.06
20,080.14	Environment	16,960.61
19,686.73	General Administration	25,654.73
40,575.00	Grants	650.00
8,628.02	Loan Repts	8,628.02
10,846.95	Mayor's Charity	6,340.00
4,904.50	REFURB Parish Hall	0.00
15,150.97	Parish Hall	10,173.68
192,083.75	Personnel	196,871.93
200.21	Civic Hospitality	5.99
1,339.71	Cemetery Lodge	1,464.79
21,213.27	Cemetery	16,163.23
240.00	Sedgefield Plan	0.00
88.35	Sowers and Growers	0.00
0.00	REFURB Council Offices	27,367.94
359,976.51	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	323,057.70
130,405.42	Balance as at 01/04/20	168,807.42
358,878.51	Add Total Income	355,706.67
489,283.93		524,514.09
359,976.51	Deduct Total Expenditure	323,057.70
0.00	Stock Adjustment	0.00
39,500.00	Transfer to/from reserves	5,657.19
168,807.42	Balance as at 31/03/21	207,114.18

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET

31/03/20		31/03/21
£		£
	Long Term Assets	
0.00	LONG TERM Investment Accounts	0.00
0.00	TOTAL LONG TERM ASSETS	0.00
	Current assets	
0.00	Investments	0.00
0.00	Loans Made	0.00
0.00	Investment	0.00
6,472.90	VAT Recoverable	5,312.82
1,329.50	Debtors	50.00
6,245.20	Payment in Advance	5,558.46
331,938.02	Cash in Hand at Bank	368,737.97
345,985.62	TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	379,659.25
345,985.62	TOTAL ASSETS	379,659.25
	Current liabilities	
0.00	Loans Received	0.00
0.00	Temporary Borrowing	0.00
0.00	VAT Payable	0.00
16,049.18	Creditors	17,072.84
43.00	Receipts in Advance	44.00
16,092.18	TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	17,116.84
329,893.44	TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	362,542.41
0.00	Long Term Borrowing	0.00
0.00	Deferred Liabilities	0.00
0.00	Deferred Credits	0.00
0.00		0.00
329,893.44	NET ASSETS	362,542.41
	Represented by	
168,807.42	General Fund	207,114.18
10,481.56	Parish Hall Refurbishment	10,481.56
22,500.00	T Hill—Sedgefield Bowls Club	22,500.00
6,606.54	Mayor's Charity	448.75
997.92	Sedgefield 700+	997.92
120,000.00	Butterwick Cemetery Expansion	120,000.00
500.00	Community Chest	1,000.00
329,893.44		362,542.41

Contact Details

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES

Front Street, Sedgefield TS21 3AT

01740 621273

Dr Jane Ayre	Town Clerk	town.clerk@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk
Mrs Julia Rowsby	Financial Assistant/ Receptionist	julia@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk
Mrs Jane Young	Mayor's Secretary/ Admin Assistant	jane@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk
Ms Natalie Chowns-Traynor	Projects & Media Co-ordinator	Natalie is currently on maternity leave. Please forward any enquires to the Town Clerk.
Mr Stephen Young	Head Gardener & Cemetery Superintendent	Via Council Offices
Mr Ben Gray	Gardener	Via Council Offices
Mrs Joyce Stephenson	Parish Hall Care-taker & Cleaner	Via Council Offices
Mr Adam Heath	Parish Hall Security Officer	Via Council Offices