

# Annual Report 2022-23

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## Make-up of the Council

There have been no local elections held during the period of the report. Our ward councillors are:

- Hartley Ward – Susan Dungworth, David Ferguson and Jill Henderson.
- Holywell Ward – Les Bowman, Eva Coulson and Ann Stanners.
- Seghill with Seaton Delaval Ward – Sue Bowman, Eve Chicken and Graham Eastwood.

## Neighbourhood Partnership with Northumberland County Council (NCC)

The work of the partnership is firmly embedded within the workings of the council. The relationship between NCC and Seaton Valley is very good, and the standard of work provided is well-regarded by most residents.

Through the partnership agreement, there is additional grass cutting during the summer months, additional weed spraying, and a 3-year rotational program of edging and hedging to make sure all villages look their best.

The council is now well into its second five-year neighbourhood partnership with the county council – the current contract runs until March 2024. In keeping with good practice, the council will tender for the new contract later this year.

## Village Action Plan

Our last village plans exercise was carried out in 2015. As part of the 2022/23 budget planning, it was agreed to commission an update of these plans.

Your Back Yard, a community interest company, was commissioned to carry out this work which, through focus groups and questionnaires compiled feedback from residents about their priorities.

From this feedback, we have produced a Seaton Valley Action Plan that we will use to target our resources at the priorities identified by residents.

## Floral Planting

The council is pleased with the county council's performance in this area of work. Both the previous summer displays and this year's spring planting were exceptional, and we received a lot of good feedback from residents and the RHS Northumbria In Bloom judges.

Given the success of the current Floral Planting contract, the council has taken the option to extend the contract for an additional year and work has begun to prepare the tender for a new contract which will begin in April 2024.



## Promoting Seaton Valley

We continue to share content about news and events on our website and social media channels, and our quarterly Futures magazine remains well-received by residents.

At the start of this year, we held our annual photography competition to encourage residents to share photographs of where they live. This year's competition attracted over 250 entries across the five competition categories, and we were pleased to see an increase in the number of young people who entered.

## Play Parks

We now have 14 play parks that we maintain in Seaton Valley. The council's play parks are inspected and maintained on a regular basis with repairs being carried out as and when required.

This year, a new metal fence was installed around the Dunes Play Park in Seaton Sluice after the wooden fence suffered a lot of damage. The council installed Froggo novelty litter bins in most of our younger children's play parks to encourage children from an early age to get more enthusiastic about litter prevention. And in November, we formally opened our new 'pocket' play park on the grassed area at the top of Northside Place in Holywell.

## Seaton Valley in Bloom

We have continued to work with the Valley's community groups to support the In Bloom initiative with support from the NCC Local Service Partnership Team and using our modest budget to help with purchasing bulbs, plants, tubs etc. We also coordinate the activities of the various village groups and help to share best practice.

Once again there were a number of notable achievements for Seaton Valley in the 2022 Northumbria In Bloom competition.

In the Large Village category, Holywell in Bloom received a Silver Gilt and Best in Class. Seaton Delaval in Bloom received a Silver Gilt in the special category of Best Town Centre Retail Area and Business Improvement District. And Concorde House Patio Group received a Silver Gilt award in the special category of Best Care / Residential / Convalescent Home / Hospice or Day Centres.

## Gardening Competition

Our Gardening Competition returned to the pre-pandemic format in 2022. We had an excellent response to the competition, and we were delighted with the standard of the entries.



A small awards ceremony was held in October 2022 to recognise the efforts of everyone who had entered the competition.

## Christmas Events

Our village Christmas events returned to our original format following two years of Covid restrictions. We were pleased to see an increase in the number of residents attending the events that signal the arrival of the festive season with entertainment for all the family.

We run our Christmas Garlands competition with the village's first schools. The winners have their designs made into garlands and at the event, the winners turn

on their lights, the village lights, and the Christmas tree lights.

Work is already underway for the 2023 Christmas events in each village.

## Christmas Present Appeal

We started an annual Christmas Present Appeal in 2020 to help families in Seaton Valley who might need extra support during the festive season.

We had a great response from residents who donated new toys, games and books to the appeal. We were also able to buy extra toys thanks to additional funding from the county council. The presents were given out to families and were distributed through the village First Schools and through referrals from family support workers.

We are planning to continue our Christmas Present Appeal in 2023.

## Allotments

The Council ringfences the income it collects from allotment rents to spend on allotment repairs and improvements. Allotments proved to be very popular during the Covid 'lock-down' and this demand has continued. We have re-let several vacant plots at all of our sites, and we are pleased that our occupancy rates have increased.

We have continued to maintain our allotment sites and carried out perimeter fencing work at several sites. Work has taken place this year to reduce the number of under-used plots by increasing planned and ad hoc allotment inspections during the year.

## Bus Shelters

One of our bus shelters on Beresford Road suffered considerable damage during storm Arwen and a new bus shelter has now been installed.

Due to incidents of criminal damage, we have started to replace some of the lower and rear panels of the shelters with metal sheets.

We plan to repaint all our bus shelters in 2023.

## Environmental Enforcement

Residents have identified dog fouling and fly-tipping as two of their biggest areas of concern. Whilst impossible to completely eradicate these problems, the council has taken steps to actively address the matter by funding a part-time Environmental Enforcement Officer with Northumberland County Council.



This initiative helps to increase the resources of the county council to tackle environmental issues in the Valley, including fly-tipping and dog fouling.

### Leisure Activities

We continue to fund services from the NCC Sports Development Team to help provide school holiday activities and leisure activities within our villages.

School holiday activities are held during every school holiday except for Christmas. The Sports Development Team provides multi-sports, football, and cricket camps in all our villages that are free of charge to attend. We have also funded free lunches for all the children that attend the camps.

Our funding also helps to finance The Sports Development Teams' support of the village events held during the summer and a series of regular weekly activities for young and mature residents, including some campaign work to establish which activities are most attractive to residents.

### Youth Service

The council's contribution to this service enables the County Council's Youth Service to deliver a weekly youth club in Seaton Delaval and outreach work in the other villages where necessary.

### Public Toilets

We have continued to provide funding to ensure that the public toilets in West Terrace in Seaton Sluice and Avenue Head in Seaton Delaval remain open. The council has now embedded this support into its base budget and has agreed to provide additional funds to keep both public toilets open all year round.

### Food Parcel Distribution

The council, in partnership with Blyth Food Bank, is providing a food parcel distribution service from our offices in Seaton Delaval giving residents access to a more local and convenient collection location.

We also have several food bank donation points in shops, community centres and Seaton Delaval Hall that are emptied on a regular basis and the donations are taken to the Blyth Food Bank.

In 2022-23, we gave out 372 food parcels to support families and individuals in Seaton Valley which is an increase from 333 in 2021-2022.

## Queen's Platinum Jubilee

We celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth II with the lighting of the Seaton Valley Beacon in Seaton Sluice as part of the Commonwealth Jubilee Beacons event.



The beacon was lit at sunset, along with beacons across the Nation and the Commonwealth, and was accompanied at our event by a piper, bugler and a choir to celebrate this momentous occasion.

As a lasting commemoration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Jubilee Flower Beds were created in all the villages. The flower beds have a blossom tree at the centre which is surrounded by colourful planting. The beds have been adopted by the village In Bloom groups.

### Cost of Living Support

In response to the cost-of-living crisis and with funds provided by the county council, Seaton Valley council made available small grants to community groups to support them in setting up Warm Hubs in the villages. The council gave out a total of nine Warm Hub grants in 2022-23.

# Desktop Analysis of the Council's Income and Expenditure

## Where Does Our Money Come From?

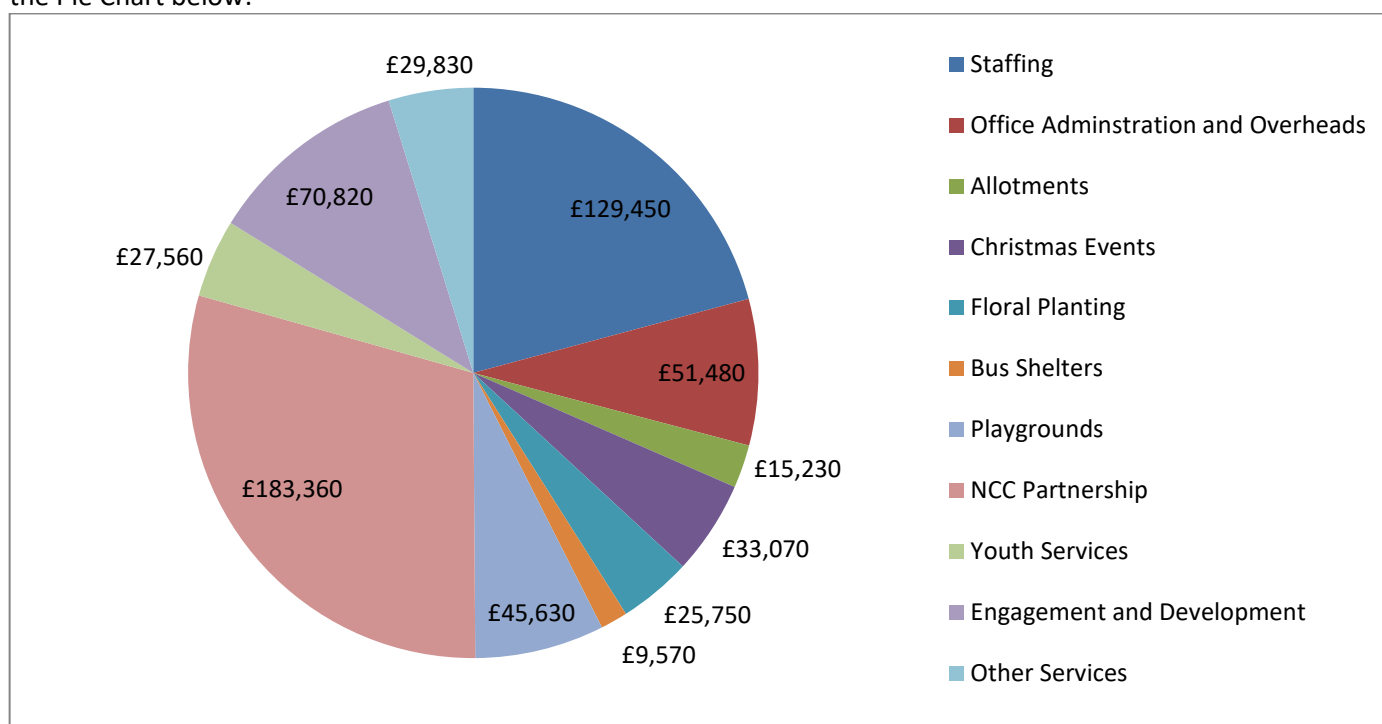
Approximately 91% of the Council's total income of £643,225 in 2022/23 came from its annual precept which it served on Northumberland County Council. The Council's precept was £586,350 which is collected via residents' Council Tax bills. Seaton Valley Community Council's Band D Equivalent Council Tax for 2022/23 was £123.52, which equated to approximately £2.37 per week.

The Council received external grant support of £10,000 to help with the cost-of-living crisis. Additionally, the Council collects rent on the two flats it owns above its offices (£11,850) and on the allotment sites it manages throughout the Valley (£24,480). In total this income amounted to £36,330 in 2022/23.

Miscellaneous income amounted to £2,545 and the Council processed internal recharges to services of £8,000 giving a total income for the year of £643,225.

## Where Do We Spend Our Money?

In 2022/23 the Council spent £621,750 on a range of services, salaries and running costs. These costs are summarised in the Pie Chart below:



## Reserves

As of 31 March 2023, the Council's useable reserves totalled £227,510 a breakdown of which is shown in the table below:

Type of Reserve	£
Playgrounds – repairs and renewals fund	86,300
Flats – building and maintenance fund	5,000
Unallocated reserves	136,210
<b>Total Useable Reserves</b>	<b>227,510</b>

Should you require any further information relating to the Income and Expenditure of the Council then please contact the Clerk, Sarah Aldridge via telephone at 0191 2379870 or via email at [clerk@seatonvalleycommunitycouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@seatonvalleycommunitycouncil.gov.uk)