

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL - SEASONAL NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES OPERATIVE

JOB TITLE	Seasonal Neighbourhood Services Operative
EMPLOYER	Ashington Town Council
RESPONSIBLE TO	Executive Officer (EO/RFO)
CONTRACT	Fixed-term, June to October 2026 (approximately 22 weeks)
SALARY	LC1 (SCP 6) — £25,989 per annum (pro rata), £13.47 per hour
HOURS	37 hours per week, Monday to Friday
LOCATION	Ashington, Northumberland (NE63)

JOB PURPOSE

The Seasonal Neighbourhood Services Operative will work alongside the permanent Neighbourhood Services Officer (NSO) to deliver Ashington Town Council's neighbourhood services programme during the high-season period from June to October. The post exists because the Council's programme during this period — particularly the sustainable bed maintenance across six wards, the seasonal planters and hanging baskets programme, and grounds maintenance — cannot be delivered within the permanent NSO's working week alone.

The postholder will contribute to maintaining and improving the appearance and environmental quality of Ashington's public spaces, amenity areas, and key community assets, working to agreed schedules and standards and under the day-to-day direction of the Executive Officer.

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Seasonal Planters and Hanging Baskets

The Council operates 22 seasonal planter sites across the town at key locations and gateways throughout Ashington. The watering and maintenance programme is led by the permanent NSO. The postholder will support this programme and will:

- Assist the NSO with the weekly watering programme across all 22 seasonal planter and hanging basket sites as directed. The full round, including vehicle loading, travel between sites, watering, and associated checks, takes approximately two working days per week. The postholder may be called upon to support this programme particularly during periods of hot or dry weather when frequency increases.
- Carry out top-up watering of seasonal planters and hanging baskets between full rounds as directed.
- Report defects, vandalism, disease, or watering problems at any seasonal planter or hanging basket site promptly.
- Assist the NSO with the spring planting programme.
- Assist the NSO with the autumn transition programme, including removal of summer bedding and compost refreshing across all 22 sites. This programme also takes approximately three working days for each operative and is the postholder's final major task before the contract ends.

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Sustainable Bed and Horticultural Maintenance

The Council maintains a programme of sustainable planting beds and horticultural features across all six wards. All sustainable beds are maintained on a weekly basis throughout the high season. The postholder will take primary ownership of the following sites and carry out weekly maintenance including weeding, deadheading, edging, litter removal, and general upkeep:

- Station Road beds — weekly joint visit with the NSO. This is the Council's principal street-facing planted area and a weekly attendance commitment for both members of the team throughout the high season.
- Jack Charlton Memorial area and Mining Wheel Memorial — weekly maintenance as a combined half-day visit covering both locations. The postholder takes primary ownership of both sites throughout the high season.
- Doves Corner and St John's Workers Memorial — weekly maintenance as a combined half-day visit covering both locations. The postholder takes primary ownership of both sites throughout the high season.
- Four Gateways — weekly maintenance of all four landscaped gateway entrances to the town, at half a day per gateway (two days total per weekly visit). The postholder takes primary ownership of the Four Gateways throughout the high season.

The above is subject to change depending on the weather and changing priorities.

Grounds Maintenance and General Environmental Work

- Carry out litter picking, sweeping, and general cleansing of public open spaces, footpaths, and amenity areas across the town as directed.
- Assist with grounds maintenance tasks including weed removal, and clearance of accumulated vegetation and debris.
- Support the NSO with the maintenance of litter bins, dog waste bins, and public seats across the town, carrying out repairs or reporting damage or emptying requirements.
- Assist with general environmental enhancement tasks as directed.
- Support the NSO with routine checks and minor maintenance of bus shelters, notice boards, and other Council street furniture as required.

Equipment, Vehicles, and Health and Safety

- Operate all allocated tools, machinery, and equipment safely and in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines, Council risk assessments, and any relevant manual handling requirements.
- Complete pre-use vehicle and equipment checks and report defects, damage, or maintenance requirements promptly.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) as required and maintain it in good condition throughout the contract.
- Work at all times in accordance with the Council's Health and Safety Policy, and Safe Work Practices.
- Report accidents, near misses, hazards, or unsafe working conditions to the Executive Officer immediately.
- Drive Council vehicles as required. A valid UK driving licence is an essential requirement of this post.

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Community Engagement and Communication

- Engage with members of the public courteously and professionally at all times, acting as a visible representative of the Council in the community.
- Respond positively to reasonable enquiries from the public, directing more complex matters to the Council Office.
- Report community concerns, issues, or defects observed during duties as a priority.

General Responsibilities

- Complete daily task logs, timesheets, and basic records as required by the Executive Officer.
- Attend any team briefings, training sessions as directed.
- Support with cover arrangements during periods of annual leave, ensuring priority duties are maintained in line with the duty planner.
- Undertake such other duties as may reasonably be required.

GRADE AND PAY

The post is graded at LC1, Spinal Column Point 6 under the NJC for Local Government Services (Green Book) pay scale as applied by Ashington Town Council.

Grade	Spinal Column Point	Annual Salary (FTE)	Hourly Rate
LC1	SCP 6	£25,989	£13.47

Ashington Town Council is a Real Living Wage accredited employer. The hourly rate of £13.47 meets and exceeds the Real Living Wage rate of £13.45. Salary is paid on a pro-rata basis for the duration of the fixed-term contract. NJC Pay Scales are currently under negotiation and any increase will be applied as agreed.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Employment Status

The post is fixed term for the period June to October 2026 (approximately 22 weeks), subject to recruitment proceeding promptly. The Council intends to revisit the contract annually, subject to budget approval and service requirement.

Hours of Work

The standard working week is 37 hours, Monday to Friday. Working hours will be arranged with the Executive Officer to meet the operational requirements of the programme, particularly during seasonal planting weeks and in periods of high demand. The usual working day is 8:30am – 4:30pm. Occasional weekend working may be required and will be agreed in advance.

Pension

Eligibility to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is subject to the qualifying criteria applicable to fixed-term employees. The Council will provide information about the scheme with any formal offer of appointment.

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Annual Leave

The annual leave entitlement is 25 days per annum (pro rata for the contract period), plus public and bank holidays. Three bank holidays fall within the standard contract period (Early May, Late May, and August Bank Holiday) and will be treated in accordance with NJC Green Book terms.

Driving Licence

A current valid UK driving licence is a desirable requirement of this post. The postholder may be required to drive Council vehicles.

Policy Framework

Employment is subject to the Council's policies and procedures including those relating to equality and diversity, health and safety, data protection, and conduct. The postholder will be required to adhere to all Council policies throughout the contract period.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This job description outlines the main responsibilities and duties of the role. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list, and duties may be varied from time to time to meet the changing needs of the Council without altering the general character of the role or the level of responsibility. The grade has been established on this basis.

The Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all members of the community. The postholder may be required to undertake a Basic DBS check appropriate to the role.

The Council is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified persons regardless of their race, sex, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation, or age.

SEASONAL NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES OPERATIVE — PERSON SPECIFICATION

All candidates will be assessed against the criteria below. Essential criteria (E) must be demonstrated by all applicants; failure to meet any essential criterion will result in the application not progressing to interview. Desirable criteria (D) will be used to distinguish between candidates who meet all essential criteria. The column 'How Assessed' indicates the stage at which each criterion will be evaluated.

1. Qualifications and Training

Criterion	E	D	How Assessed
NVQ Level 1 or 2 in Horticulture, Environmental Operations, or equivalent qualification		✓	Application
Relevant health and safety training (e.g. manual handling, COSHH, or equivalent)		✓	Application
Valid UK driving licence		✓	Application
Any relevant machinery operator certificate (e.g. pedestrian mower, strimmer, ride-on)		✓	Application

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2. Knowledge

Criterion	E	D	How Assessed
Understanding of basic health and safety requirements for outdoor physical work, including safe use of tools and equipment	✓		Application / Interview
Awareness of COSHH, or manual handling regulations		✓	Application / Interview
Familiarity with horticultural maintenance tasks including planting, weeding, deadheading, and watering	✓		Application / Interview
Understanding of the importance of consistent presentation standards in a public-facing environment	✓		Interview

3. Experience

Criterion	E	D	How Assessed
Experience of outdoor physical work in a maintenance, grounds, cleansing, or horticultural setting	✓		Application
Experience of operating pedestrian-controlled or handheld powered machinery (e.g. strimmers, leaf blowers, pressure washers)		✓	Application / Interview
Experience of working to scheduled programmes and completing basic task records	✓		Application
Experience of watering programmes or working with planted displays or horticultural features	✓		Application
Experience of working in a public-facing or community service environment	✓		Application
Experience of driving a works vehicle or light commercial vehicle		✓	Application

4. Skills and Abilities

Criterion	E	D	How Assessed
Physical fitness and ability to carry out sustained manual work outdoors in all weather conditions, including lifting, carrying, bending, and prolonged standing or walking	✓		Application / Interview
Ability to understand and follow written and verbal instructions accurately	✓		Application / Interview
Ability to complete basic written records such as task logs and timesheets	✓		Application

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Criterion	E	D	How Assessed
Good communication skills: able to engage with members of the public courteously and professionally	✓		Interview
Ability to work effectively both independently and as part of a small team	✓		Interview
Ability to prioritise tasks during busy periods and adapt to changing demands		✓	Interview

5. Personal Attributes

Criterion	E	D	How Assessed
Reliable, punctual, and committed to meeting scheduled programme requirements	✓		Application / References
Committed to high standards of work and presentation in public spaces	✓		Interview
Flexible and cooperative approach to work, including willingness to adapt to operational needs	✓		Interview
A genuine commitment to public service values and to the community of Ashington	✓		Interview
Honest, trustworthy, and committed to the Council's standards of conduct	✓		Interview / References
An interest in horticulture, environmental improvement, or community pride	✓		Application / Interview

Important Notice

This person specification outlines the criteria against which candidates will be assessed. It will be reviewed prior to each recruitment exercise to ensure it remains relevant and proportionate to the needs of the Council.

Ashington Town Council is committed to equality of opportunity and will assess all candidates fairly and consistently against the stated criteria.