

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 20 October 2015, at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Marjorie Chambers (Vice-Chair) Les Alderson
Louis Brown Vicky Brown
Avril Chisholm Glyn Davies
Stephen Fenwick Liam Lavery
Ely Turnbull

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer
Members of the Public – 0

E&A15/285 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Victor Bridges, Keith Chambers, Lawrence Henderson, Maggie Lang, Kris Lavery, Mark Purvis, Wyn Stewart, Pauline Thompson and Bob Walkinshaw.

E&A15/286 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllrs. Louis Brown and Marjorie Chambers made disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest with regard to any discussions pertaining to allotments.

E&A15/287 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2015 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

E&A15/288 4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

E&R15/289 5. ASHINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

The Leader of the Council explained that a meeting of the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board scheduled for 13 October 2015 had been postponed as a result of a restructuring exercise which had been carried out within the Northumberland County Council (NCC) Neighbourhood Services Management Team. The Partnership Board meeting had subsequently taken place on Monday, 19 October.

The Leader informed members that he had requested further clarification from NCC regarding the resources being utilised within the Partnership and schedules of work. Cllr. Avril Chisholm had also attended the meeting and reported that she believed that no real progress had been made.

The Town Clerk reminded members that in July 2015, it had been agreed that the Town Council would implement a reporting system so that complaints and comments would be passed immediately to NCC Neighbourhood Services Management for action. The Town Clerk reported that this system had now been established and appeared to be working successfully.

The Town Clerk explained that the agenda for the meeting held on 19 October covered the following points:-

- Operational issues which might impact on service delivery
- Clarification of litter bin provision – ATC resources were for replacement and new requests
- Market Day – need to have Neighbourhood Services Officers employed after hours to address issues arising after the closure of the market
- Introduction of the communal bin system being introduced in the Hirst Ward.

The Town Clerk also reported that he was currently in dispute regarding payment of NCC invoices for costs related to the provision of floral displays and public conveniences. Members were reminded that these costs had been included in the Neighbourhood Services Agreement.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the current situation and members queried whether the ATC contribution made to the Neighbourhood Services Partnership was actually supporting the delivery of enhanced services. There appeared to be a distinct lack of trust being expressed as members believed that the services were not being delivered in accordance with the Partnership Agreement.

Following this discussion, the Town Clerk reminded members that the Town Council's budget preparation process would begin very shortly and this would be an appropriate time to consider certain changes to the Partnership Agreement. In addition, the Town Clerk suggested that the Town Council may wish to refresh the Residents' Survey which had been carried out in 2012 and reminded members that the findings of that survey had resulted in the decision taken to enhance core services via the Neighbourhood Partnership Agreement with NCC.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) the Town Council as part of the 2016/17 budget process discuss and consider any proposed changes to the Neighbourhood Services Agreement and financial provision; and that**
- (ii) The role, function and membership of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board be reviewed.**

E&R15/290 6. ALLOTMENTS

The Town Clerk reported on the current situation regarding the Allotments Capital Works Programme. Members were informed that significant capital works had recently been completed at Green Lane Allotments and at Woodhorn Road Allotments. It was reported that external funding had been secured to support much of the financial costs involved and work was now being undertaken with the Allotment Associations to complete Monitoring Reports for the funders.

E&R15/291 7. ASHINGTON MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Town Clerk reported that it was expected that all capital work on the Memorial Garden Project would be completed in advance of Remembrance Sunday.

The Town Clerk took the opportunity to remind Members of the Re-dedication Service arranged for 6 November 2015 and the Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service on 8 November 2015. Members were informed that the official opening of the Memorial Garden would take place in Summer 2016 once the garden planting had matured and any remedial contract work undertaken.

E&R15/292 8. WORKERS' MEMORIAL GARDEN

Cllr. A Chisholm reported that, following meetings with the Neighbourhood Services Team, it had been agreed that the apprentices would undertake the landscaping and planting work in the Workers' Memorial Garden.

E&R15/293 9. BUS SHELTER CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk reported that the three bus shelters listed as formal requests had now been erected and the work completed. Members were reminded that the locations were at adjacent to the Elephant Pub on Newbiggin Road; at Briardene and adjacent to the Northern Social Club.

The Town Clerk informed members that on two recent occasions, the bus shelter opposite Bothal Cottages had been vandalised, and the ATC Neighbourhood Services Officer had carried out maintenance works in order to make the shelter safe. The Town Clerk reminded members that concerns had been expressed that the shelter type was not appropriate to the location but that there was little scope for alternatives given the footpath type and also the fact that raised kerbs had been installed for direct disabled access to the bus.

During a short discussion, the Town Clerk informed members that should the Council decide to seek to replace the existing shelter with a two-sided structure, Bernicia may need to be consulted regarding the use of a piece of land within the boundary of the West End housing estate. The Town Clerk stated that any funds required

at this stage would need to be taken from the Council's "reserves" in order to meet the cost of a replacement shelter.

The Town Clerk reported that there were no further formal requests for additional or replacement bus shelters at this time with outstanding work to six shelters now haven been undertaken. Members were reminded that the Neighbourhood Services Officer undertook regular safety and maintenance checks as well as a full programme of cleaning and repairs. Members were informed that this work, and the fact that all shelters had now had replacement windows fitted, had resulted in a reduction in public requests for improvements.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) The Town Clerk be authorised to look into the option of a replacement shelter at High Market and to liaise with Bernicia regarding the use of their land as a possible alternative location for the shelter; and that**
- (ii) Any replacement and related works be carried out as part of the Bus Shelter Capital Programme for 2016-17 with the projected costs to be included in the core budget figures for that financial year.**

E&R15/294 10. REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION

The Town Clerk circulated a letter had been received dated 11 September 2015 from the NCC Head of Neighbourhood Services regarding the recent "Review of Public Conveniences" carried out by the County Council. The letter explained that the review had been undertaken to look at public conveniences across the county to assess their suitability, quality of service and value for money. It was anticipated that by implementing actions identified from the results of the review, significant cost savings would be made.

The review document gave details of the key issues, background and implications regarding this area of discretionary service provision. In addition, it described the County Council "You're Welcome Scheme" whereby local businesses were offered a

financial incentive to make their toilet facilities available to the public.

The Town Clerk informed members that the document included the following information relating to public conveniences in Ashington:-

Location	Proposed Review Outcomes	Comments
Station Road	No change to current provision, but due to ongoing vandalism issues supplement with “YWS” at Wetherspoon and Sambuca’s	Review future toilet provision as part of wider regeneration plans
Milburn Road	Full closure	Low levels of usage and town centre public toilet facility and 2 YWS available within reasonable distance

During a short discussion, the Town Clerk informed members that currently, the Station Road public toilets were the full responsibility of the County Council, but that the Town Council was responsible for the revenue cost of Milburn Road Public Toilets with the amount being included within the Neighbourhood Services Agreement.

The Town Clerk reported that, at the request of the Leader of the Council, he had responded to the review and in particular the outcome referring to full closure of the Milburn Road public convenience. Extracts of the letter dated 21 September were read out which stated that a decision to close the Milburn Road toilets should not be taken until after the Town Council had had the opportunity to consider the proposal fully.

The contents of the review and the Town Clerk’s response were duly noted. Members agreed that no action be taken until a formal response was received from Northumberland County Council.

E&R15/295 11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) Community Pride

The Leader of the Council informed members that the “Community Pride” police operation had been launched on Monday, 12 October 2015. Members were informed that the aim of the three-week Operation was to improve the quality of life for Ashington residents, tackling everything from Class A drugs to dealing, rogue landlords, nuisance tenants, anti-social behaviour, littering, dog fouling, illegal money lending, vulnerability and domestic violence.

The Town Clerk reported that the Ashington Neighbourhood Police Inspector Dave Harris had provided statistics from the first week of the operation outlining a wide range of policing activities including raids on eight properties and arrests for drugs offences.

(ii) ***Ashington Investment Plan
- Presentation 19 October 2015***

Cllr. L Brown informed those present that he and other Town Councillors had attended the above presentation given by Arch and Northumberland County Council to Ashington Town Team and Town Council members regarding proposals for the town centre.

During the presentation, it had been reported that the response by traders to a consultation questionnaire regarding the proposed redevelopment of the town centre had been disappointing. The Leader explained that the presentation had been arranged by the Ashington Investment Plan Stakeholder Group. This Group included representation from Arch, Northumberland County Council, Ashington Town Council and Ashington Town Team.

The Town Clerk reported that the County Council was to bring forward traffic proposals for Station Road early in 2016 and it was important that all Town Council members familiarised themselves with the options and in particular any preference outlined by the County Council.

The Leader reported that a decision on the relocation of County Hall to Ashington at a meeting scheduled for December 2015, although there was a possibility that it may be deferred until late February 2016 for budget approval.

E&R15/296 12. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee was yet to be arranged.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.