

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at**  
**6:00pm on Tuesday 18 January 2022**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Michelle Brannigan, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Avril Chisholm, Matthew Cuthbert, Jim Lang, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis, Sophie Robinson, Pauline Thompson, John Tully, Bob Walkinshaw.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE.**

Sarah Eden – Clerk/RFO  
Mike Slaughter – Project Support Officer  
Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Facilities Manager  
Sharon Parmley – ATC Administration Officer (minute taking)

County Cllr Brian Gallacher – Northumberland County Council  
County Cllr Ken Parry – Northumberland County Council

**FGS 21/123 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Eleanor Armstrong, Caroline Ball, Lawrence Henderson and Victor Bridges.

**FGS 21/124 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.**

There were no declarations of interest on items for agenda discussion.

**FGS 21/125 DISPENSATIONS.**

There were no dispensations received or to consider.

**FGS 21/126 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

**FGS 21/127 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** and **SIGN** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December as a true record.

**FGS 21/128 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES.**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the following reports, which were sent out in advance of the meeting.

**Balloons and Sky Lanterns (Climate Change Working Group)**

Following agreement, a press release and communication was published on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

[Balloon and Sky Lantern Releases \(ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk\)](http://ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk)

**Applications for Funding Support**

Funding to Wansbeck Gymnastics Club was sent.

Gift vouchers to the Toy Appeals at Real Deal Plus and Heart of the Hirst were received in time for Christmas.

**Community Orchard at Seaton Hirst Allotment Site**

Terms of reference for a Feasibility Study on the project are being developed. These will be discussed with the Climate Change Working Group and Seaton Hirst Allotment

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Association, prior to being brought back to the FGS Committee.

### **Alexandra Road Play Area**

The working group will meet on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to discuss consultation on the scheme, and an initial brief. It is expected that the scheme will include a recommendation for CCTV and that consultation will include neighbouring properties and Sure Start Children's Centre.

### **New Website**

The new website is up and running but is also being further developed and improved. Any feedback would be warmly welcomed.

### **Christmas Lights Displays**

The Christmas Lights displays have been removed and are with the current contractor. Tender documents will be drafted and brought to the February/March FGS Committee Meeting for approval. The new contract will hopefully include new displays (following budget approval in January).

### **NCC Partnership Agreement**

The Clerk has met with the Southeast Area Manager, Ray Wealleans. A meeting of the ATC Partnership Group will be held as soon as possible, to be closely followed by a meeting of the group, to include NCC Officers.

### **Environmental Enforcement**

NCC has shared with ATC a couple of enforcement issues that have led to prosecution; fly-tipping and garden accumulations. Comments attributed to ATC, via the Chair, have been included with the press release issued by NCC, and shared on our website and social media.

### **Seat Plaque in People's Park**

A plaque commemorating those who lost their lives to COVID is being installed in People's Park. A photograph and press release will follow.

## **FGS 21/129 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2021/22.**

### ***a) Updated Budget Report***

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated Budget Report, sent out in advance of the meeting.

### ***b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid***

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the schedule of accounts and to endorse those accounts paid via delegated authority, and approve those accounts to be paid, since 18<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

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**FGS 21/130 DRAFT BUDGET.**

**a) Draft Budget**

**It was AGREED to RECOMMEND** the draft Annual Budget for the 2022/23 Financial Year for approval at the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 25 January 2022.

The total budget recommended was £1,089,400 with £264,500 being used from balances.

Members discussed that underspend had been redirected throughout the year, due to COVID altering plans, and the Council was now able to better plan for spending in the coming financial year.

The budget presented commitments to assets, climate change and grant aid funding.

**b) Precept**

**It was AGREED to RECOMMEND** a Precept Demand of £824,900 which would maintain the precept payment by residents at the same level (based on Band D information received from Northumberland County Council).

Members agreed that in the current climate, it was right not to make any increase in the precept paid by residents.

**FGS 21/131 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.**

The next Finance and General Services Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 6:00pm, at North Seaton Community Centre, Manley View.

**FGS 21/132 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Town Council **AGREED** to pass the following resolution:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, permitted under Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Exempt Information) (England) Order 2006) Act; as the matter is confidential, for reason of 'terms of tenders, and proposals and counter proposals in negotiations for contracts'

County Cllrs. Parry and Gallacher left the meeting.

**FGS 21/133 TREE PLANTING SCHEMES.**

Members received tenders for tree planting as follows:

**i. Tree Planting Scheme A197 / A1068 Junction**

The following quotes were received for the tree planting scheme A197/A1068.

Contractor 1 - £1064.64

Contractor 2 - £695.76

**It was AGREED** to proceed with the scheme and that Contractor 2, D S Wright Tree Surgeons be awarded the contract totalling £695.76 to be allocated from the Climate Change budget.

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**ii. Tree Planting Scheme at Woodhorn Villas**

The following quotes were received for the tree planting scheme at Woodhorn Villas.

Contractor 1 - £2,968.24

Contractor 2 - £2,319.23

**It was AGREED** to proceed with the scheme and that Contractor 2, D S Wright Tree Surgeons be awarded the contract totalling £2319.23 to be allocated from the Climate Change budget.

**iii. Tree Planting Scheme B1334 Roundabout to North Seaton Industrial Estate**

The following quotes were received for the tree planting scheme B1334 Roundabout North Seaton Industrial Estate.

Contractor 1 - £7,983.36 (including the first years' maintenance)

Contractor 2 - £4,800.00 (unable to deliver first year' maintenance)

**It was AGREED** to proceed with the scheme, and that Contractor 1, Brambledown Landscapes Ltd, be awarded the contract totalling £7,983.36 to be allocated from the Climate Change budget.

Cllr Brannigan asked that the minutes reflect that she felt strongly that the Council should be actively seeking local contractors in order to help support local businesses and build relationships, and that the Council's support could enable local business to grow.

Additionally, Cllr Brannigan discussed that as the scheme had come as a recommendation from the Climate Change Working Group, with a budget set aside to reduce Ashington's carbon footprint, the Council should consider travelling distance and the carbon footprint of suppliers.

As a final point, Cllr Brannigan informed members that when a contract is awarded to a local contractor, 76% is then spent in the local area which could potentially create employment

Members agreed with the points raised but commented that the carbon footprint of local or more regional contractors was not known.

In response to the Chair, the Assets and Facilities Manager explained that on this occasion a local contractor was not viable for the larger scheme, due to their inability to deliver maintenance in the first year, but that local contractors were able to deliver the smaller schemes and maintenance could be delivered in-house.

**The meeting ended at 6:55pm.**