

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, AGREED MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING, HELD ON TUESDAY 31st MARCH 2026, AT 6:00PM AT ASHINGTON TOWN HALL

CLLRS PRESENT

Cllrs Mark Purvis (Chair), Scott Amery, Jessica Appleby, Caroline Ball, Marjorie Chambers, David Coyle, Glyn Davies, Kerry Davison, Melanie Fox, Lynne Grimshaw, Steven Roberts, Bob Walkinshaw and Karl Green.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer, Alan Bunker – Allotments Officer and Gary Holmes – Administration and Communications Officer

FC2526/102 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcomed by Cllr Mark Purvis

FC2526/103 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Paul Wright and Sonia Simm.

FC2526/104 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

FC2526/105 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations requested.

FC2526/106 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present, however there were two questions put to the Council.

There was one question from the public, which was responded to by the Executive Officer.

Question 1 (rephrased) What goals does ATC have to work with NCC to get funding for a better improved skatepark at pupils park?

Response given - Ashington Town Council does not currently have any plans to seek funding with Northumberland County Council for improvements to the skatepark at People's Park. Should this position change in the future, the Council would engage with residents of Bothal Ward and would look to involve the Youth Advisory Committee in any such discussions, given their role in representing the views of young people in Ashington.

NCC did a survey last year on wheeled sports, you might want to contact them. I have included the link to the survey below which has contact details for the Sports Development Team.

Cllr Grimshaw noted that the pension scheme operated as a separate entity and raised the question of how the Council might contribute to discussions surrounding it. Cllr Ball advised that within her own pension arrangement she has the option to personally opt out of various components of the scheme should she wish to do so. Cllr Grimshaw expressed uncertainty as to whether members of the pension scheme had been made aware of the options referenced by Cllr Ball. Cllr Chambers confirmed that she is a member of the Northumberland County Council pension scheme and stated that she is satisfied with its current arrangements.

In response to a letter from a member of Town Council regarding the Tyne and Wear Pension Fund, members noted the concerns but declined to respond further.

FC2526/107 DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETING

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 27th January as a true record.

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FC2526/108 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING, 24TH FEBRUARY 2026

The minutes of the personnel committee meeting held on 24th February were **RECEIVED**.

FC2526/109 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The revised Ashington Town Council Grievance Policy was **RECEIVED** and **ADOPTED**.

Cllr Grimshaw commented that the policy was comprehensive and expressed her admiration for the work of the Executive Officer in producing it. She confirmed that she was satisfied with the policy and the protections it affords to both Officers and members.

FC2526/110 TRAINING COSTS REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

The Training Costs Reimbursement Policy was **RECEIVED** and **ADOPTED**.

FC2526/111 LONE WORKING POLICY

The Lone Working Policy was **RECEIVED** and **ADOPTED**.

FC2526/112 BUILDING SECURITY AND VISITOR PROTOCOL

The Building Security and Visitor Protocol was **RECEIVED** and **ADOPTED**.

Following a question about the doors to the building out onto the street, the Executive Officer confirmed that these are only accessible with a pass after 5pm.

Cllr Grimshaw expressed concern about a separate incident from the previous year in which two Officers had been followed on their way home and were forced to take an alternative route. She asked whether the policy contained any provisions to protect Officers should a similar situation arise in future.

Cllr Ball raised the question of how staff would be able to sound an alarm if an incident occurred whilst they were located downstairs.

Cllr Davison reflected that the earlier incident had been alarming, noting that the individuals concerned had entered the building directly after the councillors.

Cllr Chambers advised that there is an exit door at the rear of the building which she believed to be alarmed, suggesting this could provide a means of escape should anyone feel threatened.

It was **AGREED** that the new protocol put in place new measures and that it was proportionate, noting that acknowledgement and friendly challenge of strangers remains the best course.

FC2526/113 IT POLICY

The IT Policy was **RECEIVED** and **ADOPTED**.

FC2526/114 FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT

The Financial and Management Risk Assessment was **RECEIVED**.

Cllr Grimshaw noted that the risk assessment was working remarkably well, that the Council was aware of the areas identified as high risk, and that Officers were working diligently to address them. The Executive Officer confirmed that this document is always a work in progress.

Cllr Grimshaw asked about the capacity of the meeting room, suggesting that consideration be given to including within the policy a provision limiting the number of attendees permitted in the chamber. If a meeting expected high numbers to attend the Council would need to explore an alternative venue. She highlighted this as both a health and safety concern and a security

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concern. The Executive Officer advised that it would be necessary to approach Northumberland County Council to establish what their policy states regarding chamber capacity, and that if required, security personnel may need to be engaged.

Cllr Ball raised the question of potential risks arising from Northumberland County Council's move away from the downstairs area, and whether there was any risk of the Council being required to vacate the Town Hall altogether. The Executive Officer confirmed that this was not a concern, but there was a concern about the impact on the Council with queries when NCC Customer Services are not in the building as ultimately this will come to us. The Executive Officer confirmed that she had approached NCC for detailed signage in advance of and advising of the changes.

FC2526/115 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was AGREED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items, permitted under Section 1 (2) LGA 1960, due to the confidential nature of the business being transacted.

FC2526/116 STAFFING MATTER

The Chair updated the meeting that the staffing matter previously reported had been concluded and that the employee's employment had been terminated.

FC2526/117 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 26th May 2026, 6:00pm at Town Hall.

The meeting ended at 18:40