**AGENDA 4, Enc i) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, AGREED Minutes of the Finance and General Services Committee held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 8th September 2026, at Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX**

**CLLRS PRESENT:**

Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Scott Amery, Marjorie Chambers, David Coyle, Glyn Davies, Kerry Davison, Melanie Fox, Steven Roberts, Mark Purvis, Paul Wright, Karl Green, John Tully, Sonia Simm, and Bob Walkinshaw.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

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

**FGS2627/026 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Welcomed by Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

**FGS2627/027 APOLOGIES**

Cllrs Jessica Appleby, Caroline Ball and Jim Lang.

**FGS2627/028 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

One member of the public present.

**FGS2627/029 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th July 2026 were **RECEIVED** and **AGREED**.

**FGS2627/030 OFFICER'S UPDATES**

***Allotments***

This report provides Members with an update on the management of the Council's allotment sites, including rent collection, site inspections, fire safety measures, plot improvement and re-letting works, scheduled maintenance, and reported incidents of theft.

***Woodhorn Road***

Rent collection for the current period has now concluded. Four tenants failed to make payment, and subsequently their tenancies have been terminated. These plots are expected to be re-occupied in the autumn. Improvement works continue to further more plots to be brought back into use.

***Site Inspections***

Due to the scale of the site, inspections at Woodhorn are carried out in stages. It would not be feasible to inspect all plots and deal with the resulting paperwork and re-inspection in one go – inspections are ongoing. Full site inspections have been completed at North Seaton Colliery, Nursery Park, and Hirst East End. As a result of these inspections, three tenancies have been terminated following due contact and notices to improve in accordance with the tenancy.

***Fire Safety***

Following concerns raised at Seaton Hirst, a fire ban has been implemented at the site, and a meeting with the tenants' association is being arranged to discuss the matter further. A fire ban has also been introduced at Woodhorn Road, in line with recommendations issued by Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

AGREED

***Plot Improvement and Re-letting***

Plot improvement works have commenced across the town council managed sites. I have contacted individuals on the waiting list with a view to allocating vacant plots over the coming months. Plots at Nursery Park have already been successfully re-let, with a further plot being halved to reduce the waiting list and make the plot more manageable.

***Scheduled Maintenance***

Weed spraying has been scheduled at HEE, NSC & NP for September. Metal recycling collection days have also been arranged at North Seaton Colliery, Hirst East End and Nursery Park, with an additional UPVC collection to take place at North Seaton Colliery. Plot holders to be updated.

***Reported Thefts***

A number of thefts have been reported at Hirst East End. Affected plot holders have been advised to report incidents directly to Northumbria Police, and enquiries into available CCTV footage are ongoing.

***Neighbourhood Services and Street Scene***

***Horticulture***

Nothing to report – scheduled maintenance continues according to the planner. Orders for winter plants for towers and planters will be placed, as well as additional bulbs for the Memorial Garden which we are hoping to arrange a planting day for in October half-term.

***Litter Bins***

Residents and Cllrs continue to report litter bins being past their best and less than optimum capacity. The plan remains to review the whole town following the end of summer and new routes developing with College. It would be helpful if Cllrs can explain this rationale where residents feel we are ignoring requests. County Cllrs have been very generous with their available Members Local Improvement Scheme Funding (MLIS) therefore it is hoped a discounted deal can be negotiated with the supplier. This will be brought back to Council prior to ordering.

***Public Seats***

X5 new style seats have been ordered for the Bothal Ward with funding from Cllr Scott Amery. As soon as space for delivery can be made these will be delivered and installed. Some of those being removed cannot be recycled, others will be donated where clubs can refurbish and install themselves.

***Bus Shelters***

Funding has been confirmed for the bus shelters from NCC, via NECA, *BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops.* On confirmation the orders were immediately placed with GS Shelter Solutions. The replacements being installed are at The Northern (North Seaton), and Briardene (Haydon). Funding was also secured for seating to be installed in those shelters without. Seating is being fabricated locally by Websters Workshop who have fabricated seats at North Seaton.

A couple of bus shelters in Haydon were vandalised. This has nee reported to the police as video footage is available.

***Storage and Recycling***

We are looking into the possibility of a container for storage; this would be located at Woodhorn Road Allotments. The unit is appropriately used for tools and equipment, but we also have planters taking up a great deal of space, as well as having no space for the delivery of seats and bins. We will also investigate a compost heap, and recycling station. Presently we have no-where for the movement of waste – this could be a possibility.

***Play Areas***

Sadly, we have suffered vandalism at People's Park and Alexandra Road play areas. Most re-pairs have now been completed following a lengthy lead in time for parts.

Paddock Wood Play Area tender will be finalised and presented to the October FGS Committee.

***Events and Engagement***

***Sound Futures Festival***

The event was hugely enjoyed by those who attended. We have a post-event meeting sched-uled with YMCA next week; a report will be brought back to Council when complete, as well as being followed up with the Youth Advisory Committee who championed this event.

***Full Circle Food Project Packed Lunches***

Following the Council's agreed financial support, and working through the Youth Advisory Com-mittee, the Council supported a free packed lunch offer during the summer holidays with Full Circle Food Project, based at Hirst Park. Rather than limiting numbers, the opportunity was open to all and demand-led, running one day each week across the holidays.

310 packed lunches have been given out throughout the summer. At the outset this was on a Thursday, on week 3 this was expanded to Tuesday also, and some Wednesdays.

Michelle will feed back to the Youth Advisory Committee how the sessions have worked with a view to planning for the future. There is a demand for activities within the park which would help with engagement.

***Free Swim Sessions***

The Free Swim programme is a community initiative funded by Ashington Town Council, deliv-ered in partnership with Ashington Leisure Centre (Places Leisure). The programme provides free, open-access swimming sessions during school holiday periods, welcoming residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy the pool at no cost. Sessions have been booked for the remainder of the year.

| Date | Day | Time | 80 Slots Available |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22 July 2026 | Wednesday | 1pm – 2pm | 36 |
| 25 July 2026 | Saturday | 2:30pm – 3:30pm | 45 |
| 29 July 2026 | Wednesday | 1pm – 2pm | 47 |
| 1 August 2026 | Saturday | 2:30pm – 3:30pm | 39 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 August 2026 | Wednesday | 1pm – 2pm | 48 |
| 8 August 2026 | Saturday | 2:30pm – 3:30pm | 30 |
| 12 August 2026 | Wednesday | 1pm – 2pm | 53 |
| 15 August 2026 | Saturday | 2:30pm – 3:30pm | 23 |
| 19 August 2026 | Wednesday | 1pm – 2pm | 55 |
| 22 August 2026 | Saturday | 2:30pm – 3:30pm | 47 |
| 26 August 2026 | Wednesday | 1pm – 2pm | TBC |
| 29 August 2026 | Saturday | 2:30pm – 3:30pm | TBC |
| | | **Total attendees to date** | **423** |

**FGS2627/031 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2026/27**

***a) Budget Report 2026/27 (July)***

The updated budget and expenditure report was **RECEIVED**. There were no questions to the RFO.

***b) Bank Reconciliation***

The latest Bank Reconciliation, month ending 31st July 2026 was **RECEIVED**. There were no questions to the RFO.

***c) Schedule of Accounts Paid***

The schedule of accounts paid was **RECEIVED** and payments were **ENDORSED**. There were no questions to the RFO.

**FGS2627/032 YOUTH ADVISARY COMMITTEE (YAC)**

***a) YAC Meeting, 17th August 2026***

The report was **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

***b) Wansbeck Community Links – Youth Hub Base Proposal***

The proposal was **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

Cllr Green reported that a briefing had been given in relation to the trial, and it was noted that, at the time, this had been considered good value for money. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the matter, with all members voting in favour.

**FGS2627/033 SMALL GRANTS SUMMARY – ROUND TWO – JULY 2026**

The Small Grants Summary Report for Round Two was **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

**FGS2627/034 NORTHUMBERLAND MINERS PICNIC 2026**

The report was **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**. It was **AGREED** to make a funding payment of £5,000.

Cllr Purvis commented that last year's event had been fantastic, aided by good weather, and that attendance had been up on previous years. The Executive Officer noted that attendance

had not reached 2020 levels, but confirmed that the entry price had been lowered and that attendance was indeed up

**FGS2627/035 THE JOINT AND PARISH COUNCIL AUTUMN CONFERENCE, THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2026**

It was **AGREED** that Cllrs Kerry Davison and David Coyle will attend the above.

**FGS2627/036 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Members are invited to consider passing the following resolution:

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

**FGS2627/037 STAFFING MATTERS**

The update was **RECEIVED**.

The Executive Officer reported that eight applications had been received, with five candidates to be interviewed on 17th September and one on 21st September. The Executive Officer noted that this represented a good number of applications for this role within the council.

The meeting ended at 18:15

AGREED