

**AGENDA 6, Enc i) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, AGREED Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX**

**CLLRS PRESENT:**

Cllr Mark Purvis (**Chair**), Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Paul Wright, Cllr John Allen, Cllr Steven Roberts, Cllr David Coyle, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr Bob Walkinshaw, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Karl Green, Cllr Scott Amery, Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Glynn Davies, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Kerry Davison

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer, Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant, Alan Bunker – Allotments Officer, Mark Air – Senior NSO, Ryan Appleby – NSO, Sharon Parmley – Communications & Engagement Officer

**FC2526/001 ELECTION OF BUSINESS CHAIR**

Pursuant to section 15 (2) of the Local Government Act 1972, nominations for Chair of Ashington Town Council were **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to elect Cllr Mark Purvis as Business Chair of Ashington Town Council.

**FC2526/002 ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Newly elected Chair of the Council, Cllr Mark Purvis accepted office and said,

Newly elected Chair of the Council, Councillor Mark Chair, said:

"I am honoured to be re-elected as Chair of Ashington Town Council and look forward to working with all my fellow Councillors in this new term. The Annual Meeting marks an important point as we welcome our new Council and set our agenda for the coming period.

Ashington is experiencing significant positive change, and this Council will embrace these developments wholeheartedly. With the new Rail Station, enhanced public realm, redevelopment at the former Wansbeck Square, a cinema, and our new college, we are witnessing a transformative period in our town's history.

Our commitment is to work collaboratively to enhance Ashington as a great place to live, work, visit, and learn. Ashington Town Council has a great team, and in this new term we will work together for the good of the community we serve."

**FC2526/003 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Tully,

**FC2526/004 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Louis Brown disclosed an interest in allotments in relation to item 14f) Allotment Liaison Committee, as an allotment holder. Cllr Louis Brown indicated that Cllrs Mark Purvis and Jim Lang should also declare an interest. Cllr Jim Lang and Mark Purvis confirmed they were helpers on plots.

**FC2526/005 DISPENSATIONS**

Cllr Louis Brown requested a dispensation and to say a few words in relation to the allotments.

**FC2526/006 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were four members of the public present.

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A member of the public (Resident A) was invited by the Chair to address the meeting. They were reminded that there were protocols in place for public questions but were permitted to speak.

Resident A enquired about the attendance of a ward Cllr to Council meetings, and also the plans of a newly elected Cllr for the ward.

The Chair responded that any questions to individual Cllrs could be taken up by the resident at the end of the meeting.

**FC2526/007 DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the last Full Council meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were **RECEIVED** and **AGREED**.

**FC2526/008 ELECTION OF BUSINESS VICE-CHAIR**

Nominations for Business Vice Chair of Ashington Town Council were **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to elect Cllr John Tully as Business Vice-Chair of Ashington Town Council.

**FC2526/009 ELECTION OF CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON**

Nominations for the position of Civic Head of Ashington were **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to elect Cllr Pauline Thompson as Civic Head of Ashington Town Council.

Newly elected Civic Head, Cllr Pauline Thompson, said:

“Thank you, Chair, and thank you to my fellow Councillors for electing me as Civic Head of Ashington Town Council.

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Councillor Caroline Ball for her exceptional service as Civic Head during the previous term. Caroline represented our town with great dignity, warmth, and dedication, attending numerous community events and has set a high standard.

I am truly honoured to take on this important role representing Ashington. Having been involved with community groups in our town for many years, I've witnessed firsthand the incredible work being done by volunteers and community organisations across Ashington. These groups are the heart of our community, providing support, connection, and enrichment to the lives of our residents.

As your Civic Head, I am looking forward to going out and about to visiting as many community groups and organisations as possible throughout our town. This wasn't possible the last time I was Civic Head, in 2021 due to Covid.

Thank you once again for your trust and support. I look forward to serving you and our community in the coming year.”

**FC2526/010 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON**

Nominations for the position of Deputy Civic Head of Ashington were **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to elect Cllr Victor Bridges as Deputy Civic Head of Ashington Town Council.

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**FC2526/011 RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

It was **CONFIRMED** and **AGREED** that Sarah Eden shall be appointed as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

**FC2526/012 STANDING ORDERS**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the NALC Model Standing Orders (2018) England (updated in 2022)

**FC2526/013 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the NALC Model Financial Regulations (updated 2025)

**FC2526/014 STANDING COMMITTEES**

**a) Finance and General Services Committee (FGS)**

The terms of reference of the Finance and General Services Committee were **RECEIVED**, **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

**b) Personnel Committee**

The terms of reference of the Personnel Committee, including members, were **RECEIVED**, **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

The Executive Officer reminded the meeting that the membership of this committee, as stated in the terms of reference were the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council, as elected, the Chair and Vice Chair of the FGS Committee, and Climate Chair Committee – to be elected at their first meeting.

**c) Climate Change and Environment Committee**

The terms of reference of the Climate Change and Environment Committee were **RECEIVED**, **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

It was **AGREED** the membership of this committee will be, Cllrs Louis Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Paul Wright, Glynn Davies, Pauline Thompson, Karl Green, and Caroline Ball.

**d) Partnership Board**

The terms of reference of the Partnership Board, including members, were **RECEIVED**, **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

Following some discussion, the Executive Officer reminded the meeting that the agreed terms of reference included a Cllr from each ward, but the Council could agree to anything outside of that if that was their majority decision. The potential conflict of interest for dual role Cllrs was discussed and those County Cllrs previously having shown interest resolved the suggestion of town Cllrs as a preferred option.

It was **AGREED** the membership of this committee will be, Cllrs Kerry Davison (Central), Jim Lang (Seaton), Louis Brown (College), Pauline Thompson (Hirst), David Coyle (Haydon) and Marjorie Chambers (Haydon). Bothal Cllrs resolved to have other ward Cllrs represent.

**e) Youth Co-ordination Group**

The terms of reference of the Youth Co-ordination Group, including members, were **RECEIVED**, **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

It was **AGREED** the membership of this committee will be, Cllr Caroline Ball, Lynne Grimshaw, Kerry Davison, Paul Wright, Louis Brown, and Karl Green.

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**f) Allotment Liaison Group**

The terms of reference of the Allotment Liaison Group, including members, were **RECEIVED, CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

It was **AGREED** the membership of this committee will be, Cllrs John Tully, Pauline Thompson, Glyn Davies, Marjorie Chambers, Kerry Davison.

It was suggested that the meeting should be held more often than twice a year. The Chair advised that this could be considered.

**g) CCTV Group**

The terms of reference of the Allotment Liaison Group, including members, were **RECEIVED, CONSIDERED** and **AGREED**.

It was **AGREED** the membership of this committee will be, Cllrs Pauline Thompson, Lynne Grimshaw, Scott Amery and Steven Roberts

Cllr Ball recommended a trip to Asset Watch for all new councillors to see the town's CCTV in operation. Cllr Louis Brown agreed.

**FC2526/015 ASSETS REGISTER**

The updated documents were **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

**FC2526/016 INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Confirmation of arrangements for insurance was **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

**FC2526/017 BANKING ARRANGEMENT**

The Executive Officer advised that Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw and Pauline Thompson were able to access and approve online payments, but it would be helpful to have a further two Cllrs. Cllrs should be fully conversant with online banking arrangement and able to receive and process invoices and payment via email. It was **AGREED** Cllr Karl Green and Louis Brown would be added to the banking mandate.

**FC2526/018 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**a) Code of Conduct**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Code of Conduct for Ashington Town Council (previously adopted May 2024)

**b) Complaints Procedure**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Complaints Procedure of the Council (previously adopted May 2024)

**c) Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

**d) Press and Media Policy**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Press and Media Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

**e) Social Media and Email Policy**

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Social Media and Email Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

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***f) Data Protection Policy***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Data Protection Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

***g) Model Publication Scheme***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Model Publication Scheme (previously adopted May 2024)

***h) Safeguarding Policy***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Safeguarding Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

***i) Employee Code of Conduct***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Employee Code of Conduct (previously adopted May 2024)

***j) Disciplinary Procedure***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Disciplinary Procedure (previously adopted May 2024)

***k) Grievance Procedure***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Grievance Procedure (previously adopted May 2024)

***l) Health and Safety Policy***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Health and Safety Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

***m) Working from Home Policy***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Working from Home Policy (previously adopted May 2024)

***n) Councillor Officer Protocol***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Model NALC/SLCC Councillor Officer Protocol (previously adopted January 2025)

***o) Reserves Policy***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Reserves Policy (previously adopted November 2024)

***p) Whistleblowing Policy***

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Model NALC Whistleblowing Policy

**FC2526/019 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

***a) Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC) (includes Town & Parish Liaison Working Group)***

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Kerry Davison will represent on the NALC County Committee of Northumberland. Cllrs were advised by Cllr Louis Brown that they would all be welcome to attend.

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE and NOTE** the Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee held on Saturday 1st March 2025.

***b) Ashington Town Board***

It was **AGREED** this item would be **DEFERRED** until full details of the terms of reference were received. The Executive Officer advised that it was likely the arrangement of the Town Board would be reconsidered in the round by Northumberland County Council.

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**FC2526/020 EMERGENCY ITEM - Summer Planters – Recommendation to Deliver In-House Planting**

Mark Air delivered a report recommending that the Council proceed with sourcing plants for the 2025 summer planter scheme from Wansbeck Garden Centre, while delivering the planting in-house using the Council's Neighbourhood Services team.

Mark Air explained that this revised approach follows a review of operational delivery, timelines, and associated costs. The Council has historically worked in partnership with Wansbeck Garden Centre to deliver seasonal planter schemes across 23 floral displays throughout the town. However, following changes within the Council's internal staffing structure and closer oversight of Neighbourhood Services operations, the team's capacity and confidence had developed significantly. Mark Air highlighted the strengths and enthusiasm of the team to deliver this in-house.

Mark Air presented the financial savings and greater stewardship over planters that are maintained by Ryan.

Mark Air outlined that this approach would provide immediate cost savings without compromising quality, retain trusted plant supply through the long-standing partnership with Wansbeck Garden Centre, utilise internal resources for planting, with the team already responsible for aftercare, enhance team ownership and delivery of visible public-facing services, and finally begin transition to greater control over seasonal planting schemes as the Council looks at reducing planters in favour of landscaped beds, and more sustainable planting.

Mark Air confirmed that open and honest conversations had taken place with Wansbeck Garden Centre regarding the need to ensure value for money and effective use of public funds. The strong working relationship remained valued, and there was goodwill on both sides regarding this revised approach.

Cllr Scott Amery asked if some of the towers could be removed to save money that way. Mark advised that would be the plan and to potentially add a landscaped bed instead, with planter utilised where beds are not possible.

Cllr Caroline Ball asked if the savings could be moved to the environment budget.

In response to a question from Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Mark confirmed that the tower near the black bridge would be one likely selected for removal to this being a target for theft of plants.

In response to a question from Cllr Pauline Thompsom about the possible use of one or two allotments to grow their own plants from seed, Mark responded that the time and effort were very high, and the success rate would likely be much lower than purchase from reputable experts. Adding that getting plants in the numbers required was challenging for garden centres without notice. Mark confirmed that whilst possible it would require more staff due to the labour intensity.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw said it was a wonderful idea in terms of sustainability and that she hopes the flowers will attract butterflies and bees. Mark confirmed they would.

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**It was AGREED** to proceed with ordering plants for the 2025 summer planter scheme from Wansbeck Garden Centre, with planting to be delivered in-house using the Neighbourhood Services team.

**It was NOTED** the Council's intention to explore greater control of plant sourcing in future years, allowing for improved planning, flexibility, and further cost savings.

**FC2526/021 DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Full Council Meeting (AGAR) – Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

The meeting ended at 18:41

AGREED