

**Ashington Town Council**

**AGREED Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm  
on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022, in The Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Caroline Ball, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Glyn Davies, Lawrence Henderson, Jim Lang, Sophie Robinson and Pauline Thompson.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sarah Eden – Clerk/RFO, Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Facilities Manager, Sharon Parmley – Administration (Minute taking)  
Janet Murphy – Chief Executive, Escape Family Support  
Brian Charlton – Deputy CEO Business & Finance, Escape Family Support

**FGS 22/279 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Eleanor Armstrong, Michelle Brannigan, Victor Bridges, Matthew Cuthbert, Lawrence Henderson, Liam Lavery and Mark Purvis.

**FGS 22/280 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Louis Brown declared an interest in item, FGS 22/292 ALLOTMENT CLEARANCE AND IMPROVEMENT WORKS – WOODHORN ROAD.

Cllr Pauline Thompson declared an interest in item, FGS 22/291 NEW BUS SHELTER – WOODHORN ROAD

**FGS 22/281 DISPENSATIONS.**

There were no requests for dispensations.

**FGS 22/282 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public.

**FGS 22/283 MINUTES OF FGS MEETING HELD ON 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 as a true record.

**FGS 22/284 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a verbal report from the Clerk, which was tabled.

***Public Access Defibrillators***

Slower than expected progress has been made on this project. This relates to the time available to officers and responses from building owners/proposed guardians.

**Cllr Caroline Ball**

Police – expecting a response in the next couple of weeks.

Asda, no longer viable.

Advance – not suitable as locked.

Hatch Meadow Sheltered Housing – would be keen.

Consulting with Caroline before firming up other suggestions.

**Cllr Mark Purvis**

Spiritualist Church confirmed and all forms completed.

Co-op – no response in regards Newbiggin and Milburn Road

*Signed Chair:*

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Cllr Jim Lang

North Seaton Spar – positive response, awaiting completion of forms.  
 North Seaton Colliery Allotment Association – no response

Cllr Brian Gallacher

Block & Tackle have installed their own.  
 Nursery Park Health Centre - positive response, awaiting completion of forms.  
 Co-op – no response in regards Remscheid Way  
 Seaton Hirst PO other option but awaiting response from Co-op.

Cllr Ken Parry

Hirst Welfare Centre confirmed, and all forms completed.  
 Hirst Park Pavilion - positive response, awaiting completion of forms.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw

Ashington Sea Cadets confirmed, and all forms completed.  
 Wansbeck River Caravan Park - positive response, awaiting completion of forms.

***Jack Charlton Statue/Ashington's Football Heritage***

Officers are delighted that the project has been realised and welcome the positive feedback. The Council committed to an additional £25k, however only £19k is required. The quote for maintenance of the environs for the first 12-months, if agreed, could come from this heading, but would be better taken from the Environmental Enhancements Budget, again, if agreed.

***NCC Climate Change Team***

Carbon Literacy Trust, in collaboration with Save Our Shropshire have completed the Carbon Literacy Training for Town and Parish Councils. The Clerk has been pushing for this, and to be able to cascade training across Town and Parish Councils in Northumberland. As of last week, the Clerk has been booked and paid for to attend two half days that will include 'train the trainer' so Cllrs and Officers can be trained, and this can be delivered to Northumberland Clerks.

***Tree Planting Target and Website Illustration***

Sharon has completed the webpage and it is now live. Have a look [Ashington Town Council - Search](#). The next step is to contact groups and put the information in the public domain to seek trees planted.

Stephen has ordered the trees agreed last month, they are expected in December/January.

***EV Van***

The van will be collected, and the livery done this week. We are collectively seeking the best price for the existing van. We have an offer from the dealer and three other buyers to pursue.

***Bus Shelters***

Stephen has firmed up costs for the replacement bus shelter agreed for outside Sports Direct with £2k contribution from County Cllr Caroline Ball's MLIS.

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As per the delegated authority agreed, Stephen has prioritised and sought costs to replace the shelters on the A197 Pegswood Entrance and Alexandra Road, outside Berrymoor. These will be ordered and installed at the same time.

### ***Remembrance Sunday***

The final order of service will be sent out on Thursday. The parade will leave from People's Park at 10:30am and the Service, Act of Remembrance and laying of wreaths will be in the Memorial Garden as usual. Ashington Branch of RBL have arranged a buffet in the Cricket Club afterwards.

The service will be conducted by Father David Twomey, with readings by Mayor Eric Pearce (Salvation Army).

We are pleased that Ashington Camera Club will be taking photographs, and we have LukLuk Films doing a live Facebook stream, as well as Keepsake Production of the event, this will be shared afterwards and kept as a lasting record.

Ashington Colliery Band and Ashington Music Society will be providing musical accompaniment, as well as our very own Stephen Humphrey who is keeping the parade to time. Graham is providing PA as usual.

### ***Christmas Lights Switch-On***

All traders were contacted about being involved and Sharon has a good response. As well as some decorating windows, there will be a fun Christmas Trail, that we would love Cllrs to be at the end of to give the young people a selection box on the night. Selection boxes are more expensive than in previous years, and we want to source without plastic so this will be the biggest expense.

Community Groups are delighted to be involved and we have everything from rowing to the North Pole, games, tombola's, crafts and refreshments. We have Santa as well as Sarah Rayson from the Dumping Ground. The event will centre around the stalls, rather than the stage, and families will be able to enjoy what is on offer at no cost. The stage will come into it's own for the opening by Churches Together and the Countdown to switching on the lights. Our Civic Head Cllr Bob Walkinshaw will join Santa and Sarah for the Countdown and will give the closing address. The event will start at 3:30pm with the lights coming on at 6:30pm. LukLuk Films will create a further celebratory video that will include videos and photographs from the event, interviews and also singing from local schools.

### ***Clerk's Conference***

The theme was very definitely Climate Change, with sessions by Save our Shropshire and Ben Fogle. Additionally, Dr Carlton Brand talked about devolution and levelling-up and the implications for Town and Parish Councils, quite a heavy session. There was a very interesting session about problem solving, hosted by the Peterlee Clerk which will hopefully feature in the SLCC Northumberland Day Event, that I am helping to arrange. The highlight was Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson who talked about 'seizing the day'.

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NALC and SLCC reconfirmed their commitment to working together for the sector and promoted the Civility and Respect Campaign. Training Courses for Cllrs should be available to book through NALC very soon.

Cllr Chambers thanked all of the staff for the work carried out on the Jack Charlton Statue and Footballing Heroes Project, from start to finish a brilliantly executed event and realist statue.

The Chair also read three letters of thanks for the Jack Charlton event reveal from the Chairman of Newbiggin Town Council who was delighted to be invited to such a mementos event. Sarah Robinson of Full Circle Food Project and David from Northumberland FA, for being involved in such a very worthwhile project.

**FGS 22/285 ESCAPE Family Support**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a verbal update on work this year to date.

The Chair invited Janet and Brian to give an update on work this year to date and congratulated them on their recent success in winning the North-East Small Charity of the Year Award.

All members received a copy of Escape Family Support's Autumn 2022 Newsletter.

In addition to the newsletter updates included;

- Escape Family Support are also finalists for The Investors in People Awards 2022
- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, [About Us – Escape Family Support](#) the 25 years of ESCAPE.
- Currently training four people through peer mentoring training
- Case load system, 17 open cases in Ashington, which is 13% of their total case load.
- High Sheriff of Northumberland is going to pay a visit and the Crime Commissioner. It is planned to share some anonymous case studies with the Crime Commissioner and have the opportunity to talk about County Lines and its impact on Ashington. Cllr Grimshaw also suggested applying for funding from the Crime Commissioner.
- Currently working on a number funding bids for Ashington. Deprivation is high in the Ashington area which does benefit when applying for grants. Janet has been successful in writing several bids and tenders in the past.
- Escape Family Support has a funding plan for next year, the total budget for the year is £280k, of which they have only a tenth of that budget.

Cllr Ball suggested possibly holding a corporate event to help raise funds for Escape and offered to lobby Northumberland County Council to increase funding for such an essential service.

- External evaluation report is available for the service, with feedback from refers in schools very positive.
- The pandemic has forced many services to deliver online, however some are working well.

The Chair thanked Janet and Brian for attending the meeting and congratulated them once again for gaining such a prestigious award.

Janet and Brian left the meeting at 6.40pm

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It was **FURTHER AGREED** to release the 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment of annual funding.

**FGS 22/286 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2022/23**

**a) Updated Budget Report**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated budget report sent out in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk advised that a pre-budget meeting could be held, as indicated by the Chair of Finance and General Services.

There was a discussion as to how any pre-budget meeting would be taken forward.

The Clerk advised that a skeleton budget would be produced, with all known costs included, and that this would make clear those budget decisions to be made by the Council, and any balances available to off-set the budget and resulting precept.

**b) Accounts Paid**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the Clerk's tabled schedule of accounts paid since the October Finance and General Services meeting and endorse those accounts paid according to the Council's Financial Regulations.

**FGS 22/287 REPORT OF THE ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the report for information only.

Cllr John Tully proposed the Council start planning for the end of the partnership agreement and set up a working group for after the Christmas Holiday period.

The Clerk reminded the meeting that the Partnership Agreement was part of a contract and there were built in reviews within that agreement. The make-up of the board and their responsibilities were part of the contract.

**FGS 22/288 REPORT OF THE HIRST PARK MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT MEETING HELD ON 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the report of the Hirst Park Maintenance Agreement meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022, for information only.

**FGS 22/289 WARM HUB FUNDING**

There had been no applications for funding currently. Officers will continue to share on social media and make contact with the Locality Co-ordinator to ensure that opportunity has been shared via those signed up to NCC Warm Spaces and Places.

**FGS 22/290 MAINTENANCE OF LANDSCAPING AT JACK CHARLTON STATUE AND ASHINGTON'S FOOBALLING HERITAGE**

It was **AGREED** to receive the cost of 12 month's maintenance by installing contractor.

It was **FURTHER AGREED** to commit to the costs from November 2022 to November 2023.

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**FGS 22/291 NEW BUS SHELTER – WOODHORN ROAD**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a proposal from Cllr Pauline Thompson to install a bus shelter on Woodhorn Road outside Abbey Tandoori.

**a) Location**

The Assets and Facilities Manager has spoken to the chosen contractor, and they see no issues with the location of the new bus shelter.

**b) Permission and Consultation**

It was **AGREED** that the Assets and Facilities Manager further consult with NCC Technical Services as to the appropriateness of a shelter in this location, and with neighbouring residents.

The Assets and Facilities Manager updated that NCC no longer carry out public consultation on bus shelters, but have provided the letter they previously issued.

**FGS 22/292 ALLOTMENT CLEARANCE AND IMPROVEMENT WORKS – WOODHORN ROAD****a) Update on work agreed at the September Finance and General Services meeting**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** an update on further fly tipping that renders the quotes previously agreed invalid.

**b) Revised quotes**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the revised quotes for plot clearance work at Woodhorn Road, and to accept the new quotation and order that the work is carried out.

The previous quotation from Northumbria Recycling of £1,560 was updated to include the removal of further fly-tipping, to a cost of £2,470.

Members discussed the issues with allotments and the formation of an allotment liaison committee, and were reminded that any proposals would have to be placed on an agenda for consideration and agreement. **It was decided** that the formation of an Allotment Liaison Committee, with associated terms of reference should be brought to a future meeting.

**FGS 22/293 NCC CONSULTATION – NORTHUMBERLAND GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS, AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE – LOCAL PLAN**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** Northumberland County Council Consultation

Councillors discussed the consultation at length but agreed that as Ashington Town Council does not own any land of which could be used. **It was AGREED** to respond with the following:

*“Ashington Town Council understand the need to provide support and welcome the work being undertaken to achieve this. However, members were unable to suggest anywhere in Ashington that would offer appropriate facilities. It was suggested that nearer to the A1 may be preferable.”*

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**FGS 22/294 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE REVIEW PANEL**

**It was AGREED** to establish a Complaints Review Panel for any future formal complaints that are received and cannot be resolved by the Clerk in the first instance. This was informed by the Council's long-standing Complaints Procedure.

**It was AGREED** Cllrs Sophie Robinson, Bob Walkinshaw, Lynne Grimshaw and Vicki Brown be appointed.

**FGS 22/295 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 13<sup>TH</sup> December 2022, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

Meeting ends 7.55pm

Signed: .....

Date: .....

AGREED