

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 6:00pm
on Tuesday 28th November 2023
at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllr Mark Purvis (Chair), Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr John Tully, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr Liam Lavery, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Graeme Wright, and Cllr Matthew Cuthbert

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant.

FC23/062 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcomed by Cllr Mark Purvis.

FC23/063 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Lynne Grimshaw and Cllr Vicky Brown.

FC23/064 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

Members are also reminded that they need to regularly review their declarations of interest forms and ensure they remain up to date.

FC23/065 DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations.

FC23/066 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one member of public present.

FC23/067 REPORT FROM THE CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON (CLLR VICTOR BRIDGES)

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a verbal report from the Civic Head of Ashington on engagements since the last meeting.

- Attended the Community Groups Recruitment Event
- Attended the Blossoming Communities Macmillan Coffee Morning
- Attended the Hjem Preview Event by Jamie Sinclair
- Attended the Community Day by Cycle for Everyone
- Attended the Hate Crime Open Day by Northumbria Police
- Attended the Friends of Ashington Community Woods Small Grant Cheque Presentation
- Attended the Pride Action North Small Grant Cheque Presentation
- Attended the Wansbeck Climate Action Small Grant Cheque Presentation
- Attended the North East Immediate Care Small Grant Cheque Presentation
- Attended the Charity Concert at County Hall with Cllr Seymour
- Attended the Pashler Physiotherapy Community Drop-In Afternoon
- Attended Ashington Memorial Garden for Armistice Day and 2 Minute Silence
- Attended Remembrance Sunday at Ashington Memorial Garden
- Attended the Children in Need Pudsey Event at Asda Carpark

FC23/068 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (CLLR JOHN TULLY)

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a verbal report from the Leader of the Town Council.

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Cllr John Tully mentioned he had a meeting with neighbouring councils a few weeks ago which he was delighted to attend. Representatives from Blyth, Newbiggin, Pegswood, Cramlington and West Bedlington. It is to become a regular event every 2 months to discuss common problems and solutions. The response was delightful from all parties present. It may become an agenda item if it becomes a regular occurrence.

Cllr Tully reminded members that the budget process will begin shortly, and all members have been asked to be involved. Last year it was identified the key priorities and Councillors are asked to engage as early as possible with any ideas.

FC23/069 DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETING, 26TH SEPTEMBER 2023

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN** as a true record, the draft minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26th September 2023.

FC23/070 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE, 19TH SEPTEMBER 2023

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** draft the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19th September 2023.

FC23/071 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE, 24TH OCTOBER 2023

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** draft the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2023.

FC23/072 ASHINGTON REGENERATION

Members were provided with a further update that all Town and County Cllrs were invited to an Ashington Regeneration Programme update on Friday 8th December. Members were pleased to have received the invite, but upheld the proposal, and **AGREED** to write to Cllr Glen Sanderson, Leader of Northumberland County Council, to request an update on the status of the Ashington Town Centre Regeneration Project.

It was discussed that whilst there is some understanding of the complexities of managing a multi-year regeneration program, Cllrs remained concerned by the lack of transparency and communication surrounding the delays to this critical £600,000 investment in the town centre. Furthermore, the project's new unfinished timeline and the temporary reallocation of funding to other strategic projects has raised doubts over whether the intended outcomes will still be achieved by the March 2025 target.

Cllrs were unanimous in their disappointment about this and past investment plans, which have either stalled or been revoked in Ashington. Members voiced distrust and agreed that open reassurance was needed from the County Council that this project remains a priority and that the reasons for the delays are justified.

Members agreed that a firm revised timeline would provide helpful clarity, especially noting that the Ashington North-East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2), appears to now be behind schedule and funding has been temporarily reallocated to other strategic projects in 2023/24.

The Council **AGREED** to seek clarity from Cllr Sanderson on:

- a) The specific delays that have impacted on the project timeline.

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- b) The reasons and contributing factors for these delays.
- c) A promise that the funding will be protected in the Strategic Regeneration Projects budget 2024/25.
- d) Reassurance that delays will not impact on external funding achieved.
- e) A revised project timeline and expected completion date.

Following a proposed amendment by Cllr Caroline Ball, **it was AGREED** to add to the list of questions:

- f) Why has the "Accelerate Ashington" business support program been opened to non-Ashington businesses when it was presented to specifically aid Ashington businesses?
- g) What is the status of the "Animating Ashington" cultural and events planning? When will key local stakeholders like our Council be brought into that process?

FC23/073 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 30th January 2024, 6pm, Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX. This will include the agreement of the 2024/25 budget and precept.

The meeting ended at 18:37pm