ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING, HELD ON TUESDAY 27th JANUARY 2026, AT 6:00PM AT ASHINGTON TOWN HALL

CLLRS PRESENT
Cllrs Scott Amery, Jessica Appleby, Caroline Ball, Louis Brown, Marjorie Chambers, David Coyle, Glyn Davies, Kerry Davison, Melanie Fox, Lynne Grimshaw, Steven Roberts, Sonia Simm, John Tully, Bob Walkinshaw, Paul Wright,

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

FC2526/089 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR
Welcomed by Cllr John Tully

FC2526/090 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Karl Green, Jim Lang, and Mark Purvis.

FC2526/091 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS
There were no disclosures of interest.

FC2526/092 DISPENSATIONS
Cllr Louis Brown declared an interest in matters pertaining to allotments, and a dispensation was approved.

FC2526/093 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
There were no members of the public present, or questions submitted in accordance with standing orders.

FC2526/094 DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETING
It was AGREED to RECEIVE the minutes of the meeting held on 25th November as a true record.

In regards pages 2-3, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw asked the Chair to reflect on the motions put forward by Cllrs in respect of public questions, that a written response is given when the questions are deliberately rude. Cllr Grimshaw asked the record to reflect the request.

The Chair responded that he agreed deliberate rudeness in questions should not be tolerated, but there was a fine balance between allowing members of the public their opportunity to speak and acting democratically and closing people down. He agreed that on that occasion they were permitted to go on longer.

Cllr Louis Brown commented that there was no rule of thumb, but if people are nasty they should be cut short. Cllr Glyn Davies noted the difference in questions from a member of the public, and questions from an ex-Cllr during a pre-election period.

Chair share response and it shouldn't be tolerated. Balance between allowing MOP to put views forward and acting democratically. Perhaps he was allowed to go on too long, but difficult balance.

FC2526/095 VACANCIES ON COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS
The Council considered and **AGREED** the following new members on committees:

- Partnership Board – Cllr Jessica Appleby

- Climate & Environment Committee – Cllr Melanie Fox
- CCTV Meeting – Cllrs Caroline Ball, Marjorie Chambers, and Kerry Davison
- Allotment Liaison Meeting – Cllr Sonia Simm

FC2526/096 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE – MEMBERSHIP *(placed on the agenda by Cllr David Coyle*)

Councillor David Coyle presented a proposal to amend the Personnel Committee Terms of Reference to include two additional members appointed by Full Council, in addition to the existing membership of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Full Council, Finance and General Services Committee, and Climate Change and Environment Committee. The proposal sought to ensure broader representation on the committee ahead of significant personnel work, including recruitment. The Executive Officer confirmed the Council's authority to make this amendment under Section 101(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

By a majority, **it was AGREED:**

- to amend the Personnel Committee Terms of Reference to include two additional members of the Council, to achieve broader representation.
- agree to appoint Councillor Kerry Davison and Councillor David Coyle as the additional members.
- agree to review the committee membership again ahead of the Annual Meeting in May 2026.

FC2526/097 NORTHUMBERLAND TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL CONFERENCE

It was AGREED to receive an invitation to Northumberland Town and Parish Council Conference at County Hall on Thursday 5th March, commencing 5:00pm. Cllrs Louis Brown and Melanie Fox agreed to attend.

FC2526/098 FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT

The Financial and Management Risk Assessment was tabled. The Executive Officer acknowledged that there were updates to note that members would want to properly digest and advised they should come back with question prior to receipt at the March meeting.

FC2526/099 BUDGET AND ANNUAL PRECEPT 2026/27

It was AGREED to RECEIVE an updated draft budget report with recommendations from the FGS Committee. The budget presented was formally **AGREED**.

RESOLVED that the Council approve the Revenue Budget for 2026/27 totalling £1,007,621, together with Earmarked Reserves transfers totalling £183,072.

It was AGREED to make a precept demand to Northumberland County Council of £1,007,621.

In reaching this decision, Members noted:

- The precept increase equates to £2.54 per year for a Band A property, the most common band in Ashington
- The grants budget has been maintained at £120,000 to continue supporting local groups, charities, and youth initiatives
- The Contingency Reserve has been increased to £200,000, demonstrating progress towards the Council's adopted target of holding one-third of precept in general reserves, in accordance with the Reserves Policy and audit best practice
- Earmarked reserves demonstrate prudent planning for the future, including setting aside funds for the 2029 full council elections

- Significant investment in assets is planned, with £85,000 allocated to the Play Areas reserve for capital improvements and £38,072 to the Allotments reserve to support infrastructure works across sites
- The Climate Change Projects and Initiatives budget of £25,000 has been maintained, reflecting the Council's continued commitment to environmental sustainability
- The events budget has increased to £99,500, including enhanced provision for Christmas lights and the switch-on event, responding to public feedback and community aspirations for celebrations that bring residents together

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance on such a horrible night.

FC2526/101 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday 31st March 2026, 6:00pm at Town Hall.

DRAFT