

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING,
HELD ON TUESDAY 28th JULY 2026, AT 6:00PM AT ASHINGTON TOWN HALL**

CLLRS PRESENT

Cllrs Mark Purvis (Chair), Scott Amery, Jessica Appleby, Caroline Ball, Louis Brown, Marjorie Chambers, David Coyle, Glyn Davies, Kerry Davison, Melanie Fox, Lynne Grimshaw, Jim Lang, John Tully, Sonia Simm and Bob Walkinshaw.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer, and Gary Holmes – Administration and Communications Officer

FC2627/033 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Paul Wright, Steven Roberts and Karl Green.

FC2627/034 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (DOI)

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw and Cllr David Coyle declared an interest in Item 10 - ANNUAL GRANTS 2026-27 – APPLICATIONS OMMITTED – Hirst Welfare Centre

FC2627/035 DISPENSATIONS

Cllrs Grimshaw and Coyle requested a dispensation to discuss Item 10 - ANNUAL GRANTS 2026-27 – APPLICATIONS OMMITTED, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw as a Board member would not vote.

FC2627/036 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was 1 member of the public present.

The Chair noted that questions submitted in advance of the meeting were best suited for the Police and were not question for the Town Council. The questions had been shared with Sergeant Burt who may answer during item 7.

FC2627/037 DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETING

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23rd June 2026 as a true record.

FC2627/038 NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING NORTHUMBERLAND

Sergeant Christopher Burt, Neighbourhood Policing, was welcomed to the meeting and gave the following report.

He advised that a key neighbourhood priority remained business and commercial crime, with the team's focus directed at retail and commercial offences, including prolific shoplifters, to deter repeat offending and take swift action where necessary. Work with the probation service was assisting in reducing repeat offending, and the team had been successful in obtaining criminal behaviour orders, allowing for stronger sentencing options. Several known offenders were currently in custody, and a reduction in offences had been noted in the town centre.

Drug-related criminality remained a concern in the town, and associated violent crime, though not typically posing a wider threat to the public, remained a priority for the neighbourhood team, who were working closely with partner agencies. Considerable work had been undertaken to obtain orders preventing offenders from cuckooing vulnerable residents. He emphasised that public support remained vital, and residents were encouraged to report any information that could help identify and stop offenders. Multi-agency days of action would continue to target those causing the greatest harm to the community, and Operation Horizon continued to play an important role in supporting vulnerable individuals through rehabilitation opportunities, housing assistance and other support, with several success stories already achieved.

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Anti-social behaviour remained a priority across Ashington, with e-bikes and scooters continuing to be the most common concern throughout the year, not solely during the summer months. The team was working with Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, using drones, uniform, and plain-clothed officers to track and locate illegal vehicles, with drones proving particularly effective in identifying and stopping offenders. He confirmed the team was aware of ongoing issues at Hirst Park and Peoples Park and noted that engagement work with young people was proving very effective and delivering excellent educational outcomes. CCTV, in partnership with Asset Watch, remained key to this work, along with information-sharing with schools and other partners. Prevention and education formed an important part of the response, including close work with Ashington Town Council in sharing messages via social media and with local schools.

He confirmed the team had a clear strategy for tackling e-bike misuse and would continue to stop and charge those posing a danger to the community, removing vehicles and taking appropriate action where possible. He stressed that all reports were acted upon and that every piece of information contributed to building intelligence, noting that this remained a national issue without a single solution, though the neighbourhood team remained committed to keeping Ashington safe. Operation Meridian was ongoing and was supporting community safety at Hirst Park and the surrounding area through increased presence and patrols, alongside engagement with park users and residents. He thanked the Town Council for its support of the operation via social media in keeping the public informed.

He thanked Cllr Simm for the additional investment secured for CCTV in Hirst Park and for her support. Illegal off-road motorcycles remained a key concern, and community outreach remained essential in addressing this. He encouraged continued community engagement with the police to ensure positive action, and confirmed that the CCTV system across Ashington, via Asset Watch, remained essential to identifying offenders and gathering intelligence, with the town centre considered well covered and safe. He gave an example where footage had enabled officers to identify an offender's routes and movements, resulting in a charge, with the case now before the Crown Court. A further example was given of an incident outside commercial premises in which a fight broke out and a weapon was produced; CCTV footage had again allowed the offender to be identified and charged.

He asked that members continue to act collectively on core issues and pass on to their constituents the positive work taking place, encouraging residents to report all incidents, however insignificant they may seem, as each contributed to the overall picture. Sergeant Burt explained that whilst all incidents, if not happening at the time, may not see an immediate response, all are followed up.

Cllr Amery asked about a police Facebook post regarding the seizure of e-bikes, and whether the number confiscated could be published so the public could see the action being taken. Sergeant Burt confirmed this was possible, though noted the figures might cover several areas and therefore may not be entirely accurate, agreeing that the police could do more to promote their work. He advised that members of the public could sign up to the Nextdoor app to receive updates directly from the police. Cllr Amery suggested sharing outcomes could encourage greater public reporting if residents were able to see the results of police action.

Cllr Grimshaw asked whether figures could also include the number of e-bikes destroyed as well as those seized. Sergeant Burt agreed to raise this, describing it as a good message to convey.

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Cllr Tully was grateful for the report, particularly regarding e-bikes, and asked whether the police were aware of ongoing problems at Nursery Park and Riverside Park. Sergeant Burt confirmed they were aware of the problems in these areas.

Cllr Chambers referred to the Heart of the Hirst Fair on Sunday, during which a dog had been attacked by another, and thanked the police for the swift action of two constables who had run across the park to deal with the situation quickly.

Cllr Fox asked whether e-bikes included e-scooters also. Sergeant Burt confirmed that both were illegal and included within this work.

FC2627/039 TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INVESTMENT OF COUNCIL FUNDS

The Council received a report of the Executive Officer/RFO on the investment of council funds, together with a draft Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Policy 2026/27 and a supplementary note addressing matters raised at the Finance and General Services Committee and considered the recommendation of that Committee made at its meeting held on 14th July 2026 (minute reference FGS2627/019).

The Executive Officer/RFO presented the report, noting that the proposals formed the final stage of the systematic review of the Council's reserves and financial governance under way since 2022, and drew Members' attention to the supplementary note responding to the matters raised in Committee.

Prior to the vote, Cllr Louis Brown noted that some members had not agreed at the FGS Committee. The Chair clarified that the Council agreed by a majority. Cllr Brown stated he was still not in agreement. Cllr Brown requested a named vote:

The vote was taken as follows:

For: (12) Cllrs Mark Purvis (Chair), Scott Amery, Jessica Appleby, Caroline Ball, Marjorie Chambers, David Coyle, Kerry Davison, Melanie Fox, Lynne Grimshaw, Jim Lang, Sonia Simm and Bob Walkinshaw.

Against (3): Cllrs Louis Brown, Glyn Davies, John Tully.

The recommendation of the Finance and General Services Committee was carried, **and it was AGREED** that:

1. the Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Policy 2026/27 be approved and adopted;
2. an account be opened with The Public Sector Deposit Fund, managed by CCLA Investment Management Limited, in the name of Ashington Town Council, with an initial investment of £625,000;
3. Financial Regulation 6.9(iv) be amended to read: "Fund transfers between accounts and investments held in the name of the council (including the council's current account and The Public Sector Deposit Fund) without monetary limit, provided that all such transfers are made in accordance with the council's Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Policy, are subject to the authorisation controls in Regulations 6 and 7, and that a list of all such transfers shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Finance and General Services Committee. Fund transfers to any account or investment not held in the name of the council remain subject to the limits elsewhere in these regulations";

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4. the Executive Officer/RFO be authorised to complete the account opening documentation on behalf of the Council and to operate the arrangement in accordance with the adopted Strategy, reporting to each meeting of the Finance and General Services Committee; and
5. the use of fixed-term deposits be considered by way of a further report to the Finance and General Services Committee once the arrangement is established.

Cllr Fox left the meeting at 18:37.

FC2627/040 STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE COUNCIL, 2025-2029 (placed on the agenda by Cllr John Tully)

The proposal was **RECEIVED** and **CONSIDERED**. Cllr Tully clarified that he wanted to propose that the Council support OPTION C - Agree to set priorities at a dedicated session, with a date fixed in the Council diary before the end of September 2026.

Cllr David Coyle asked for clarification on the proposal as it was set out with several options, not specifically Option C. Cllr Tully proposed Option C, which was seconded by Cllr Louis Brown.

Cllr Tully noted that several years previously the Council had agreed a set of priorities and had acted upon these and observed that a significant amount of work was currently being undertaken in relation to youth, which he felt should be added to the priorities. He stated that the Council needed a clear strategic direction and should agree its priorities.

Cllr Chambers asked whether this would include the Six C's. The Executive Officer advised that this could be discussed as part of the meeting, but that this related to how the work was carried out by officers, rather than the priorities.

Cllr Ball stated that limiting the Council to four priorities would hinder its work at a time when it was already delivering a great deal of good for the community, and that the Council should not restrict itself to four priorities. Cllr Ball favoured a simple 'doing what is best for the town'.

Cllr Brown stated that Option C was the best option.

Cllr Grimshaw stated that she agreed with Cllr Ball, noting that the Council operated with an open approach and open views, and that recommendations including the Six C's were more than sufficient to reflect the good work carried out by the Council for the community, and that a vote on this matter was unnecessary.

Cllr Davies stated that the Council should simply hold a meeting to discuss the priorities, and that he did not see any issue with the Council discussing priorities.

A vote was then cast on the motion, clarified as "To agree to set priorities at a dedicated session, with a date fixed in the Council diary before the end of September 2026, with the result recorded as follows:

For: 7

Against: 7

The Chair exercised his casting vote against the motion, and the motion accordingly **FELL**.

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FC2627/041 ANNUAL GRANTS 2026-27 – APPLICATIONS OMMITTED

The Council **RECEIVED** the report from the Executive Officer concerning two Annual Grant applications, from Hirst Welfare and Ashington Community FC, which had been received before the closing date but not considered in the June round due to an administrative oversight.

It was **AGREED** that the application from Hirst Welfare, in the sum of £5,000, be approved, with funding to be drawn from the Climate budget.

It was further **AGREED** that the application from Ashington Community FC be approved, with funding to be moved back from the Youth budget into the Annual Grants budget.

The Full Council Meeting was formally closed at 18:41.

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