AGENDA 9, Enc i) Ashington Town Council, Draft Minutes of the Climate Change & Environment Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 24th June 2025, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

PRESENT:
Cllr Paul Wright (Chair), Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr Glyn Davis, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Karl Green, Cllr Glynn Davies, Vicki Morgan (Repurposeful), Ellie Turner (Mortal Fools), Eloise Barber (Mortal Fools), Elinor Bryant (Mortal Fools), Pat Raffo (MOP), Carol Ridley (MOP), Lynne Morris (Climate Action Wansbeck), Margaret Adams (Climate Action Wansbeck), Cathy Sharp (Northumberland Wildlife Trust), Elaine Peverley (Ashington Litter Picking Project).

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:
Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO

CCE2526/001 ELECTION OF CHAIR
Prior to election of Chair, all members in attendance introduced themselves.

In accordance with Standing Orders, **it was AGREED** to appoint Cllr Paul Wright as Chair.

CCE2526/002 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllr Jim Lang

CCD2526/003 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS
None

CCE2526/004 DISPENSATIONS
None

CCE2526/005 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR
In accordance with Standing Orders, **it was AGREED** to appoint Cllr Marjorie Chambers as Vice-Chair. In the event that more than one person is nominated, to take a vote and elect the person with the most votes.

It was **AGREED** to appoint Cllr Marjorie Chamber as Vice-Chair. This followed a vote with 4 votes in favour of Cllr Marjorie Chambers and 4 votes in favour of Cllr Jim Lang. Cllr Paul Wright used his casting vote in favour of Cllr Marjorie Chambers.

CCE2526/006 ADOPTION OF CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS
The Council has an established code of conduct for Councillors and officers. A Code of Conduct for volunteers has been developed to extend this framework to all volunteers working with or on behalf of the Council, including non-council members of this committee.

It was **AGREED** to adopt the code of conduct for volunteers.

CCE2526/007 ADOPTION OF DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY POLICY
The Council adopted its Data Protection and Privacy Policy on 20th May 2025. The Policy applies to all Council activities, including non-council members on committees. Section 13 states that "everyone who works for, or on behalf of the Council has responsibility for ensuring data is collected, stored, and handled appropriately." This includes handling of contact details, meeting records, and correspondence from allotment representatives.

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

CCE2526/008 ADOPTION OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY
The Council adopted its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy on 20th May 2025. Section 9 of the Policy requires funded groups and those working on behalf of the Council, including Allotment Associations, to comply with equality legislation and demonstrate commitment to equality principles.

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

CCE2526/009 ADOPTION OF SAFEGUARDING POLICY
The Council adopted its Safeguarding Policy on 20th May 2025. The Policy applies to "all staff, councillors, volunteers, and contractors working for or on behalf of the Council" (Section 2), which includes allotment site representatives. Section 6.5 specifically addresses Allotments Management, recognising that regular inspections of allotment sites may involve contact with vulnerable adult tenants.

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Safeguarding Policy.

CCE2526/010 ADOPTION OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY
The Council adopted its Whistleblowing Policy on 20th May 2025. The Policy applies to "staff and others working on behalf of the council" (Section 1) and establishes procedures for reporting fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing. Section 3 states that "staff and others working on behalf of the council should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of."

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Whistleblowing Policy.

CCE2526/011 REPORT OF CCE MEETING
It was AGREED to RECEIVE the report of the meeting held on 18th February as a true record.

CCE2526/012 OFFICERS UPDATE
A report form Sharon Parmley was received, the full report is available.

ECO Fair - 25th April 2025

The town's inaugural ECO Fair at Ashington Hirst Welfare Centre was successful despite modest attendance. Nearly 30 exhibitors participated, including Ashington WI, AkzoNobel, and Northumberland Wildlife Trust. Popular activities included wildflower seed bomb making, outdoor art workshops, and free bicycle repairs. The event featured local musical performances and a well-received produce market.

Recommendations for future events:

- Consider moving to Saturday for better attendance
- Use side gate entrance to encourage flow past outdoor activities
- Explore making this an annual event

Great Big Green Week - 10th June 2025

The Community Climate Action event at Ashington Tuesday Market (10am-2pm) attracted enthusiastic crowds. Key participants included Full Circle Food Garden, Climate Action Wansbeck, Citizens Advice Energy Team, and Northumberland County Council teams. The event featured a plant-for-pledge swap, energy advice, and a popular free raffle with eco-friendly prizes.

Creating Nature Towns and Cities Conference - 5th June 2025

Online conference (9:30am-4:15pm) brought together leaders to explore collaborative approaches for urban greening. Key themes included nature's transformative power, community-led change-making, and project showcases from Belfast, Edinburgh, Bradford, Glasgow, and Plymouth.

Potential local initiatives identified:

- Community tree nurseries and orchards
- Nature pockets and rewilding projects
- Sustainable play equipment in parks
- Eco-therapy programmes
- "Nature in the Garden" campaign
- Grey to Green Citizens Assembly

Strategic recommendations include immediate partnership development, medium-term resident engagement systems, and long-term comprehensive rewilding strategy.

CCE2526/013 FORWARD PLAN AND MEMBER-LED PRIORITIES - DISCUSSION

Councillor Paul Wright presented a comprehensive proposal outlining five key priority areas for the Climate Change and Environment Committee's work over 2025-2029. The proposal was well received and discussed by those present.

Five Priority Areas (2025-2029):

1. Community-Led Environmental Engagement
    - Institutionalise annual ECO Fair
    - Expand Great British Spring Clean participation
    - Introduce "Green Champions" scheme with schools
2. Green Spaces and Biodiversity Enhancement
    - Collaborate with Northumberland Wildlife Trust
    - Restore and re-wild Community Woods and green corridors
    - Develop pollinator pathways and wildflower corridors
3. Local Circular Economy and Waste Reduction
    - Support Repurposeful and local reuse/repair hubs
    - Explore community composting schemes
    - Work with local businesses to reduce single-use plastics
4. Sustainable Transport and Cleaner Air
    - Develop "Safe Routes to School" pilot
    - Promote cycle-to-work schemes
    - Install cycle stands and e-bike charging points
5. Council Leadership in Climate Action
    - Conduct Council-wide carbon audit
    - Review sustainability impact assessments
    - Improve energy saving practices in council buildings

Key Discussion Points Raised

Green Spaces and Biodiversity:

- Seed bombing initiatives discussed as practical community engagement
- Swift population and swift boxes identified as priority - good examples of new housing developments that are eco-friendly and include swift boxes noted

- Group in Newbiggin could make swift boxes with template - groups to be linked up

Circular Economy and Waste:

- Welcome that circular economy is included in the proposals
- Scrap store potential discussed - need for more space and presence identified
- Interest in better promotion of re-use and how young people can craft with discarded materials
- Thoughts about how litter picking could be more impactful on recycling

Environmental Monitoring:

- Interest from Climate Action Wansbeck in river monitoring - Sarah to link up with Neil Dawson
- Concerns about air quality on market day raised for investigation

Community Events:

- Huge interest in heritage events and specifically a traditional town show for all generations - Sarah advised about community group in first stages of this, with potential to grow
- Potentially combined with ECO Fair later in the year

Capacity Building:

- Training on carbon literacy and investors in the environment touched upon - links to be shared

Next Steps

1. Adopt framework as working priority plan
2. Establish task groups for each priority area
3. Map funding opportunities and partnership support
4. Agree quarterly milestones for progress review

CCE2526/014 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

21st October 2025, 5:00pm

Meeting ends 7.14pm.

DRAFT