

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee,
held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 10th October 2023
at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Vicky Brown, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davies, Pauline Thompson, Caroline Ball, John Tully, Mark Purvis, Jim Lang, and Sophie Robinson.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sharon Parmley – Communication and Engagement Officer, and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant

FGS23/075 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by the Chair Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

FGS23/076 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Victor Bridges and Cllr Pauline Thompson.

FGS23/077 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Caroline Ball – Wansbeck Christmas Appeal (Small Grants)

Cllr Glyn Davies – Newbiggin Juniors FC (Small Grants)

FGS23/078 DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were requested.

FGS23/079 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no items for consideration from members of the public and there were no members of the public present at the meeting.

FGS23/080 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12th September 2023.

FGS23/081 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES

The following update was received, and had been sent out in advance of the meeting.

Hirst Park Liaison Meeting

A meeting has been scheduled for Monday 9th October, which will be reported at the November FGS meeting.

Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Meeting

A report of the meeting held on 19th September will be brought to the November FGS meeting. At that meeting it was agreed to hold the meetings more frequently; the next meeting is 21st November.

At that point there should be feedback on the impact of altered schedules for cleansing. It was discussed that LEQ inspection by the senior leadership team had fallen behind schedule, which did not reflect the work carried out, but understandably these need to be picked back up.

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ATC Neighbourhood Services

The programme to repaint a number of public seats in the town is complete this year and three bus shelters will be painted in the North Seaton area before the winter season.

The warm and wet weather has provided challenges with weeds on the planting on Station Road and entrance features but as planting develops and fills out it is expected that this work will not be as onerous in future summer seasons.

A focus for work in the coming month will be the cleaning of a number of the towns bus shelters.

Speed signs

Thanks to County Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw and Brian Gallacher, speed signs have been installed; Sarah will complete the reclaim via MLIS Funding as soon as all invoices have been paid. This now takes the total of speed signs in the town to 15.

The speed sign on North Seaton Road is currently with the supplier and under repair and expected to be back in position by the end of October.

College Shops

Works to the College Shops area was completed in September. Work includes repainting of fencing, rendering to walls and public seats. New litterbins have been installed as well as new shrubbery planting and the replacement of a dead tree with a new silver birch.

Litter Bins

Work to update litter bins continues, also thanks to County Cllrs Caroline Ball and Mark Purvis further bins have been purchased to expedite replacements and new bins in their wards. The reclaim via MLIS Funding will be completed on receipt of the paperwork, all invoices have been paid.

Work has taken place to replace some of the older litterbins around the town as well as repairs to damaged bins in the Peoples Park area.

We are consulting with NCC on the possibility of replacing future bins with larger bins were possible. Therefore, replacement may not always be like for like, but depending on the potential for a larger bin. We need to bear in mind the impact of larger bins where waste is more likely dog bags, space available and visual amenity.

Planting and Enhancements

Bulbs have been ordered to enhance the gateways and station road beds. We are seeking costs to establish a more substantial border at the town gateways (in keeping with the structures, and ground level to remove the issue of untidy grass), as well as cleaning the structures in place.

New bulb planting and wildflower schemes have been ordered as agreed, a start date is expected soon.

The old summer planting has been removed from troughs and floral towers and winter planting will be installed by the end of the month.

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Memorial Garden

Plans are being investigated to enhance the memorial garden. Additionally, in view that the train station will instigate changes in this area, we are looking at entrance and exit points and if these remain functional.

A weed and tidy of the Memorial Garden will take place in the run up to the Remembrance Day Service in November.

Events and Engagement**Engagement Event at YMCA**

Verbal update will be given.

Remembrance Sunday - 12th November 2023

Plans are underway in consultation with Ashington Branch of RBL and Churches Together. The service will include the usual act of remembrance and wreath laying, and hymns supported by the band and choir. There will not be a parade this year.

Sharon is contacting all groups to coordinate the ordering of wreaths and is drafting the order of service. The Council will ensure the Memorial Garden is set-up with gazebos, chairs, and sound system. As usual the Ashington Branch of RBL will host afterwards in the cricket club. Further information will be updated as soon as it is available.

Christmas Lights Switch-On – Thursday 30th November 2023

The first planning meeting for the event was held on 3rd October.

Annual Governance and Accountability (AGAR)

Information has been published and is open to public inspection as required.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2023-09-28-completion-of-external-audit-for-year-ending-march-2023-a-clean-bill-of-financial-health>

Basic Parish Allowance and Expenses

Northumberland NALC have requested information from the Moderating Team who will report back.

The RFO has advised on the payment of expenses as a rounded sum. Further information has been requested which will be provided.

Jack Charlton Statue and Ashington's Football Heritage

Jack will be professionally cleaned, and rewaxed in the coming months. This is likely an annual maintenance requirement as the copper in the statue oxidises quickly due to being near the coast.

Planting has been maintained externally but will come to ATC after October. We are looking at the capacity of the NSO team, and what could be better sourced externally, whilst retaining and better utilising the skills within.

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Carbon Literacy Training

The Council's achievement in this regard has been published across several forums, including NCC and NALC, and more widely via Carbon Literacy Trust and Save our Shropshire.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2023-09-20-empowering-change-celebrating-carbon-literacy-training-triumphs-towards-a-sustainable-future>

FGS23/082 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

a) Updated Budget Report

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** updated budget report.

b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid (including Bank Reconciliation)

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid and to be paid; to endorse those accounts paid, and agree those to be paid, since 24th August 2023.

FGS23/083 DETACHED YOUTH WORK

a) Report of meeting held on 25th September 2023, and work delivered to date

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a report of the liaison meeting held on 25th September 2023, and a summary of the work delivered to date, and agree any action.

Attendees included representatives from the YMCA, Council, police, and community support officers. Key points included in the report are:

- There have been staffing changes at the YMCA, leading to restructuring of youth program delivery. Detached youth work sessions are being prioritized as per the council contract requirements.
- 36 detached sessions have been held so far. 572 contacts made with young people, about 21 per session on average. Ages range from 7-17, mostly 12-15 years old.
- Common themes from sessions: variability in engagement, concerns about boredom and lack of activities, desire for anonymity, preference for outdoors, community conversations, accountability for ASB, transportation and socialisation, impact of weather.
- Police reported lower youth ASB in areas where detached sessions held. Aiming to increase engagement between police and youth at YMCA.
- Barriers discussed: need for closed sessions at YMCA due to disruptive behavior, impact of weather on detached sessions.
- Upcoming collaborative youth work initiatives highlighted.
- Importance emphasized of maintaining confidentiality and relationships of trust with youth.

b) Cost of delivery

It was **AGREED to PAY** the invoice for detached youth work delivered in quarter two, when received at the end of September.

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FGS23/084 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – OCTOBER 2023

a) Small Grant Applications (October)

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a summary of the small grant applications received between 11th September – 29th September 2023.

It was AGREED to fund the following organisations with the sums listed.

Friends of Ashington Community Woods the sum of £500.

Seaton Hirst Veterans Institute the sum of £500.

Pride Action North the sum of £500.

Climate Action Wansbeck the sum of £500.

Ashington Panto Group the sum of £500.

Cllr Caroline Ball left the meeting at 18:29

It was AGREED to fund Wansbeck Christmas Toy Appeal the sum of £500, and to seek interest in the Council purchasing toys in lieu of the Grant.

Cllr Caroline Ball returned to the meeting at 18:34

A vote was taken, and **it was AGREED** not to fund Newbiggin Junior FC.

It was AGREED to seek further information from Blossoming Communities on their work in Hirst Park to include how many people attended each class up to the end of August, the age range of those attending. Additionally the details of a typical sessions and assurance that this does not duplicate work being delivered at Full Circle.

It was AGREED to seek further information from Newbiggin Junior FC on the number of young people from Ashington, whether football kits would be specifically for young people from Ashington and the percentage of young people attending Newbiggin Junior FC due to incapacity in Ashington.

b) North East Immediate Care (NEIC)

It was AGREED to CONSIDER the small grant application received in July 2023, following further information and presentation to Full Council, and it was **AGREED** of £500.

Cllr Glyn Davies left the meeting at 19:12

Cllr Jim Lang left the meeting at 19:13

FGS23/085 ANNUAL GRANT AID FUNDING UPDATES

a) Wansbeck Valley Foodbank (WVFB)

It was AGREED to RECEIVE an update on work this year to date, and it was **AGREED** to release 2nd instalment of annual funding.

The following key points were included:

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- Food aid provided in Ashington has increased steadily from 2014-2022, with 5447 adults and children supported in 2022.
- Food days distributed in the first 5 months of 2023 were 14% higher than the same period in 2021/2022, indicating growing need.
- January-July 2023 referrals were up 18.8% and people fed up 23.7% compared to 2022, suggesting higher food need per referral.
- Some people are reluctant to use the collection hub and prefer home delivery, but WVFB wants to encourage hub use to allocate delivery resources elsewhere.
- Donations are still below pre-pandemic levels, requiring more food purchasing. Food price inflation is 14% in 2023, likely leading to a deficit this year.
- WVFB expects to be asked to move from their Northgate Hospital premises soon, causing uncertainty despite plans for alternative space on site.

b) Escape Family Support

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** an update on work this year to date, and it was **AGREED** to release 2nd instalment of annual funding.

The following key points were included:

- ESCAPE Family Support worked with 218 people across various services in the first 6 months of 2023/2024. This includes 17 parents attending 2 Teen Triple P programs and 11 parents attending 2 SPACE programs.
- Questionnaire results from the Teen Triple P and SPACE programs showed improvements for most parents in emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, prosocial behaviour, total difficulties, and total impact scores. Parents provided positive feedback on gaining new strategies and insights.
- For Ashington residents specifically, ESCAPE has worked with 27 people so far. 19 adults and 8 young people ages 8-25. 10 of these cases have been closed after receiving support and showing improvements.
- ESCAPE is ahead of targets for supporting young people affected by substance use (55% of target met), accessing support services for carers (63% of target met), and providing CRAFT programs (67% of target met).
- 72 total cases have been closed, with 61 (84.7%) having positive outcomes.
- 143 of 218 (66%) people worked with have shown improved health and wellbeing, meeting the target.
- 141 people (65%) showed reduced isolation and 140 (64%) accessed respite services.
- Additional activities include yoga, coffee mornings, family events, and promoting services to other organisations.

c) Northumberland Citizens Advice

It was **AGREED to DEFER** the item due to a delay receiving the report.

FGS23/086 A196 NORTH SEATON ROAD, ASHINGTON – WALKING AND CYCLING SCHEME

It was **AGREED to RESOND** as follows:

Ashington Town Council agree to support for the scheme to provide a link from the new Northumberland Line railway station and the shopping area to the north, servicing schools and

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homes along North Seaton Road, and leading to Newbiggin Road to the south. This would see a mix of shared use footway/cycleway and a fully segregated two-way cycle lane will run along the North Seaton Road. The Council noted that residential access and existing parking will remain in place and a series of controlled and uncontrolled crossings will be introduced at specific locations to ensure continuity and for safety reasons.

The Council agreed to support the scheme but further agreed to seek assurance that in doing the works extra care is taken on the corner of the Mortimer Public House. Additionally, that no trees are removed along North Seaton Road as part of the works.

Cllr Glyn Davies entered the meeting at 19:14.

FGS23/087 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In accordance with section 1 (2) LGA 1960, **it was AGREED** to exclude the press and public due to the confidential nature of the business being transacted.

FGS23/088 STATION ROAD CCTV

a) Recommendations and Costs

It was AGREED to RECEIVE recommendations and costs to provide upgraded CCTV cameras and transmission equipment, to supply and install new equipment, and to provide monitoring, in respect of Station Road (including Station Road West and Woodhorn Road).

Following the Council's procurement of a preferred supplier, two separate schemes were presented by Asset Watch.

'Best Fit' Option

Covers 11 locations including Station Rd West, Woodhorn Rd, and Ashington Bus Station. Asset Watch would install, maintain, and monitor for £62/week per location.
 Total 5-year contract value = £177,320
 Annual Cost = £35,464
 (no infrastructure costs)

'Alternative' Option

Covers 5 locations including main street up to Bubbles. Asset Watch would install, maintain, and monitor for £62/week per location.
 Total 5-year contract value = £93,000, plus one-off installation costs
 Annual Cost = £16,120
 One-off Infrastructure Cost = £12,400

b) Agree Contract and Order

It was AGREED 'in principle' to proceed based on the 'best fit' option, noting that additional work is required to seek permissions. **It was AGREED** to seek cost savings on other CCTV packages with the provider.

Cllr Mark Purvis left the meeting at 19:39.

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FGS23/089 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 12th December 2023, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

Meeting ended 19:29pm

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