

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee,
held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 11th July 2023
at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer and RFO, Stephen Humphrey – Assets and Facilities Officer, Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant

FGS23/032 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by the Chair Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

FGS23/033 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Victor Bridges, Bob Walkinshaw, Lawrence Henderson, Michelle Brannigan and Liam Lavery.

S23/034 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Pauline Thompson declared an interest in **FGS23/043 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – JULY 2023** regarding funding for Koast Radio.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers declares an interest in **FGS23/043 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – JULY 2023** regarding funding for 1110 Squadron A.T.C.

FGS23/035 DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were requested.

FGS23/036 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.

FGS23/037 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13th June 2023.

FGS23/038 LEAVE OF ABSENCE DUE TO HEALTH**a) Cllr Bob Walkinshaw**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a leave of absence request from Cllr Bob Walkinshaw and in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to agree a dispensation that constitutes approval by the authority to accept non-attendance outside of the expected 6-month period for reason of ill health and recovery.

b) Cllr Lawrence Henderson

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a leave of absence request from Cllr Lawrence Henderson and agree in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to agree a dispensation that constitutes approval by the authority to accept non-attendance outside of the expected 6-month period for reason of ill health and recovery.

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FGS23/039 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** an update on items actioned since the previous meeting.

Basic Parish Allowance and Expenses

Northumberland NALC will poll all Northumberland T&P Councils as per the Council's request.

Annual Grant Aid Awards

Members will have seen the publicity relating to awards on our website and Facebook page. We will investigate plaques, but in the meantime, we have ensured all groups have been requested to take part in cheque presentations, and they have been asked to ensure there is public acknowledgement of the Council's contribution.

Children's Lighting Features

The Council suggested that we might like to invite those who designed lighting features, which have been removed from the scheme due to failure, to have the lights at home. Administratively, this should be possible when time allows, however there are transport costs and safety factors to consider, so before any action is taken, this will be brought back for proper consideration.

Hirst Park Liaison Meeting

No further update.

Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Meeting

A report of the meeting held on 19th June is on the agenda. A meeting of the Negotiating Group is scheduled to be held on Friday 18th August. Those Cllrs attending are Cllrs Mark Purvis, John Tully, and Pauline Thompson, along with Sarah Eden, and from NCC, Greg Gavin, Stephen Wardle, Ray Wealleans, and Peter Bowman.

ATC Neighbourhood Services

Floral Planting

Work to replenish the planting on Station Road was completed w/c 19 June.

The dry weather is continuing to provide challenges in terms of the watering of the summer and some of the sustainable planting as well as a number of recently planted trees that are now out of the maintenance schedule.

Play Areas

Work to install the new play areas at Aintree Close and Epsom Drive commenced w/c 19 June with works expected to be completed in early July in preparation of the school holiday period. Disappointingly, there has been significant graffiti at People's Park Play Area which has required significant NSO time to address and we have appreciated NCC support in providing specialist equipment to address some of these issues. We are liaising with Northumbria Police, our CCTV providers (Assetwatch) and a local school in trying to tackle this issue.

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Bus Shelters

We are continuing to have significant damage to bus shelters with graffiti and windows being broken. Disappointingly, a number of the recently installed shelters have been targeted with graffiti. The Police have been informed and NSO's are addressing issues. Given the demands of watering and the recent vandalism and ASB issues some non-urgent tasks, such as cleaning of bus shelters, are behind schedule but will hopefully be addressed in coming weeks. Work will also take place to repaint a number of shelters that have suffered from recent vandalism.

Litterbins

Twenty-four litterbins have recently been purchased and NSO's have commenced a programme of replacing ageing and damaged bins across the town. If members are aware of any issues with ageing litterbins, please inform the Assets & Facilities Manager who will add to the programme.

Additionally, as with other ASB issues in the town, NSO's have been addressing significant graffiti on litterbins as well as a number that have been pushed over and now require new bases.

Public Seats

A summer programme to repaint public seats in the town is underway with all public seating on Station Road having recently been repainted. Work to repaint public seating in the College Shops area will take place in July as part of the improvement works in the area, as agreed. Works to install new public seating, as previously agreed, has recently been completed, adjacent to the B1334 cycle path. Works to install a further memorial set, in the Seaton Ward, will also take place in coming weeks.

Allotments

Work to install a new water system at Green Lane Allotment Site has been completed. This has identified an unusual pipe system that NWL have been asked to investigate.

Work to Woodhorn Allotment site water system will commence shortly.

Sarah and Stephen have meetings scheduled with all allotment site representatives on 14th and 25th July. We expect to bring some finality to both management agreements with associations and site representative, and tenancies and rules, to the September FGS meeting.

Events and Engagement**Ashington Fair Day**

A very good day although the weather did take a turn. There are many images on Facebook of the day. We received feedback at the event, and some via Facebook, and will take these into consideration in advance of event planning next year.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers thanked the staff for their hard work. Cllr Lynne Grimshaw commented that it was very pleasing that there were no complaints received by neighbouring residents.

Stephen Humphrey confirmed the theft of fencing and a portalo. This was reported to the police, asset watch attended following images on CCTV. The Council will make a claim on the insurance as will be invoiced for the loss.

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Ashington Hirst Running Club – Fell Em Doon (5 miles)

A reminder that this race is being held on Friday 14th July at Ashington Woods and we are co-hosting/helping Ashington Hirst Running Club. The event starts at 6:00pm if anyone would like to be there to give out prizes and water.

Northumberland Miners Picnic

Sharon and Sarah are meeting with Woodhorn on 14th July to review the event. If members have anything to feedback, as per the email sent on 8th June, please let us know.

Annual Governance and Accountability (AGAR)

All 2022-23 year-end responsibilities have been completed and our return has been published and sent to the external auditor.

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Grass cutting for Biodiversity

All members received an email reminder after the meeting, with a request to send any suggestions for discussion with NCC.

Bulb planting and wildflowers

Those suggestions received for bulb planting will be discussed with NCC, and if supported costs will be sought and will be brought back to the September CCE Committee meeting, in time for planting in October.

Any wildflower suggestions received will also be discussed with NCC, if on their land. Due to capacity, bulb planting, which is generally supported and less divisive, will be prioritised.

Carbon Literacy Training for Sports Clubs

We expect to be able to progress speaking with the town's sporting representatives towards the end of July/August.

FGS23/040 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

i) Updated Budget Report

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** an updated budget report and address any questions to the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). There were no questions put to the RFO.

ii) 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 9th June 2023.

FGS23/041 ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MEETING – 19th June 2023

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the report.

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FGS23/042 DETACHED YOUTH WORK

a) Report of meeting held on 29th June 2023, and work delivered to date

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a report of the liaison meeting held on 29th June 2023, and a summary of the work delivered to date, and agree any action.

b) Cost of delivery

It was **AGREED** to pay the invoice for detached youth work delivered to date once received.

FGS23/043 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – JULY 2023

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a summary of the small grant applications received between 12th June – 30th June 2023, and agree any awards.

It was **AGREED to AWARD** Repurposeful CIC £500.

It was **AGREED to AWARD** Koast Radio £250.

It was **AGREED to AWARD** 1110 Squadron A.T.C Ashington £500.

FGS23/044 2024-25 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME CONSULTATION

a) Request for Priorities and Guidance

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a letter requesting the Council's top three highways and transport priority issues for this area (guidance notes included).

b) Last year's priorities and feedback

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a note of the priorities agreed by Ashington Town Council last year, and the feedback received from Northumberland County Council on these priorities, acknowledging that two of the three priorities identified have been included in the programme.

c) Record of NCC requests contained in Directory Database

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and note the requests submitted by residents to NCC Highways throughout the year, which have been put in alphabetical order to identify any repeat requests.

d) Highways and Transport Priority issues

It was **AGREED** to submit the top three priority issues to Northumberland County Council Highways, by 28th July 2023, for considered inclusion in the Local Transport Plan Programme 2023-24.

1. The road surface condition on Hawthorne Road is unacceptable (from Third Avenue to Woodhorn Rd) and requires resurfacing. This is a regularly used route from the Town Centre into the Hirst Ward, and a regular bus route. This supports a priority issue identified by County Cllr Ken Parry.
2. The surface condition of Milburn Road is unacceptable and requires resurfacing. This is a major route through and in and out of the town and is also a main bus route. This supports a priority issue identified by County Cllr Ken Parry and County Cllr Mark Purvis.
3. Pedestrian safety is a major concern at Ellington Road Ends and on the A197 due to speeding traffic and high volumes of traffic, this is a significant concern due to the proximity of

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Bothal School. The Council supports road safety measures and in particular would like to see traffic lights on the junction from A1068 onto A197, and traffic calming measure.

FGS23/045 INTERACTIVE SPEED SIGNS

a) Haydon Ward

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a request from Cllr Brian Gallacher to take ownership of an additional interactive speed sign, to be located at Briardene that he will fund the purchase and installation of via his NCC Member's Local Improvement Scheme (MLIS). Maintenance costs are negligible, and this will become an asset of the Town Council.

b) Bothal Ward

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a request from Cllr Lynne Grimshaw to take ownership of an additional interactive speed sign, to be located at A197 Pegswood entrance that she will fund the purchase and installation of via her NCC Member's Local Improvement Scheme (MLIS). Maintenance costs are negligible, and this will become an asset of the Town Council.

FGS23/046 FURTHER NEW/REPLACEMENT LITTER BINS

a) College Shops

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a request from Cllr Mark Purvis to order and install seven replacement litter bins in and near College shops to further enhance the previously agreed environmental improvements. The bins have not been identified to be replaced this year, however Cllr Purvis will fund the purchase costs of £2,254 from his NCC Members Local Improvement Scheme (MLIS) to progress the replacements alongside other enhancements.

b) Central Ward

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a request from Cllr Caroline Ball to order and install two new, and five replacement litter bins in the Central ward area to tackle issues of litter, and progress replacements due to age more quickly. New bins at the Car Park behind Bubbles, and South View have been agreed by NCC Local Services. The bins have not been identified to be replaced this year, however Cllr Ball will fund the purchase costs of £2,254 from her NCC Members Local Improvement Scheme (MLIS).

FGS23/047 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members are invited to consider passing a resolution to exclude the press and public to allow the consideration of the next agenda item, which requires ongoing negotiation:

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Sec 1 (2) "A body may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business, or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies."

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FGS23/048 PLAY AREAS

a) Legal

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a report on work carried out in respect of play areas and agree to delegate legal decisions relating to the play areas to the Executive Officer, as set out in the report.

b) Financial

It was **AGREED to SUSPEND** Financial Regulation 3e) to allow the Executive Officer to incur spending above £2,000, which may be necessary to progress legal works in relation to play areas.

FGS23/049 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

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

Meeting ended 19:22pm