

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee,**  
**held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**  
**at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Graeme Wright, Paul Wright, Marjorie Chambers, Caroline Ball, Pauline Thompson, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davies, and Bob Walkinshaw.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, Sharon Parmley – Communication and Engagement Officer, Stephen Humprey – Assets and Development Manager, Alan Bunker – Allotments Officer and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant.

**FGS24/162 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Welcome by the Chair Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

**FGS24/163 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Louis Brown, Mark Purvis, and Cllr Sophie Robinson.

**FGS24/164 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

**FGS24/165 DISPENSATIONS**

No dispensations were received.

**FGS24/166 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present.

**FGS24/167 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

**FGS24/168 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES**

The following update was **RECEIVED** which had been sent out in advance of the meeting.

***Regeneration Updates***

Public events have been arranged for Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 10am-1pm, (Cllrs can attend from 9:30am), and Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 4pm-7pm. The online consultation is not live yet but expected.

***Ashington Market***

Considering concerns raised about the market, Sarah has contacted the NCC Markets Manager highlighting the general concerns. In response,  
*“Generally, we don't allow market vans on the stall side to trade. This trader has a refrigerated van and we had decided to let him try the market again. We do have space for 2 or 3 traders with a van in the space. This was always part of the plan for the market when it was to be refurbished. We will keep an eye on the issue, and it may resolve itself should the trader use the market side for his stall.*

*In terms of cones and closing the road, yes this has been the case. I'll raise it with the area manager again to see if there are alternative options to closing the road.*

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*Generally, I haven't found stall encroachment being much of an issue. Although if you have a specific stall in mind, please let me know. Parking bays shouldn't be occupied although I do know that poor weather, which we have had since the start of the year, can bring traders on earlier. I have also asked the traffic warden to issue tickets if traders abuse the parking.*

*We have just about enough stalls to erect again although we also plan to purchase some more stalls to replace old and broken ones. Anchor points for the stalls have been purchased. Although wind has been particularly problematic, and we will have to keep a close eye on when we can erect. A large part of the weather so far this year would have meant erecting stalls wasn't possible although we have previously found that the wind has reduced going into Spring and Summer.*

*I hope this answers your points although if you have anything else, please let me know."*

It was mentioned that some of the stall traders use more space than allotted for the same price as 1 lot. It was also mentioned that the road closures had stopped, but this was due to pricing and that due to the time of the traders closing during Market Day, that a road closure would not be needed.

#### **Allotments (Capital Works)**

Woodhorn Road Allotment Site - roadways, due to the inclement weather the start of the road works has been delayed but work commenced on 13<sup>th</sup> May and works should be completed w/c 20<sup>th</sup> May. Seaton Hirst Allotment Site – works have commenced on the water works.

#### **Allotments (General)**

Agreements, two agreements outstanding for HEE. Incorrect details for one and a home visit carried out for the other plot holder.

Working with volunteers at High Market Allotment Association the road which leads to here and Wansbeck Road Allotment sites has been improved. Several potholes have now been repaired. Work has been carried out on plots at North Seaton Colliery with help from volunteers, new tenants to receive their agreements in the coming days.

New Town Centre CCTV has identified a fly tipper at the Woodhorn Road Site, NCC have been informed, we await an update.

Clearance of long-standing fly tipping at Woodhorn Road site, assistance from NCC staff has removed several bulky items and litter in preparation for new roadways.

New Poultry Rules – Signage displayed on sites and all site representatives have been made aware. All bird owners to complete online form however are encouraged to contact us if they have any difficulties accessing or using the service.

CCTV has been installed at our Hirst East End allotment after several arson attacks. Unfortunately, the CCTV was recently damaged but is now fully working again.

Road leading into North Seaton Colliery has been cleared, issues with rubbish believed to be from a nearby resident has now been rectified.

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Four have areas identified for wild flowering, Hirst East End, Woodhorn Road, Orchard on Wansbeck Road and a long-term plan for our Seaton Hirst Site.

Our second allotment week is scheduled for the second week of June.

### ***Ashington Town Centre CCTV***

The Town Centre CCTV system is now up and running with several incidents being passed to the local Northumbria Policing team.

A meeting will take place on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May to discuss the proposed monitoring and evaluation framework for the new system with senior representatives of Asset Watch and Northumbria Police.

### ***ATC Neighbourhood Services***

Improvement and repair works have taken place at North Seaton Colliery and Seaton Vale Play areas including new paving. Further works to replenish and tidy town centre planting will take place w/c 13<sup>th</sup> May. The summer planting of planters and troughs will take place w/c 20<sup>th</sup> May. Work will also include the placing of hanging baskets on the one-way section of Station Road.

Three bus shelters in the Seaton Ward (close to the NCEA) will be repainted w/c 27<sup>th</sup> May, during the school holiday period, following on-going graffiti issues. The four new bus shelters, as agreed, at High Market and on the A1068 (Ellington Road) will be installed in June.

### ***Projects and Development***

#### ***Ashington Cricket Club Commemorative Tree Project***

A meeting of NCC staff and Ashington CC took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, to discuss the ongoing maintenance of the area when the project is hopefully completed in 2025.

A meeting of the Working Group will also take place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May. The group are in the process of pulling together quotations for works in preparation of funding bids that will be sent in June.

#### ***Ashington Community Woods – Improvement Project***

A meeting will take place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May with Friends of Ashington Community Woods, to discuss a number of improvement projects in the woodland.

#### ***Bird Boxes***

Following the excitement of the bird box project at the Climate Change meeting, the initial x60 woodland bird boxes have been made. Work is starting this weekend to make the bird box kits that will be available to schools and community groups.

The letter to community groups and schools is ready to be sent once we have an initial stock of kits. Initially 200 bird box kits for groups to assemble and install locally. This hands-on activity combines nature appreciation, practical skills, and environmental stewardship.

A few key details members should note:

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- Kits will be assembled by groups using provided instructions, this will not be supervised by ATC.
- Initially kits may be limited per group, but more will be available over time.
- Groups are responsible for conducting risk assessments and ensuring safe assembly/installation, although safe working guidelines will be included in the box.
- Great opportunity for inclusive groups, and disconnected individuals.
- Groups will be asked to express interest and request the number of kits they would like.

While kit distribution will be staggered, this is an excellent chance to get involved in wildlife conservation. We will distribute kits fairly, prioritising groups that serve individuals with protected characteristics in line with our equality duty. Our aim is to promote inclusivity and inspire the next generation of environmental advocates through this hands-on learning experience.

It was noted that Park Head should be included.

### **Events and Engagement**

#### **St Georges Day Parade**

*The event was a big success with a good turnout to support the armed services taking part. Featured in the Northumberland Gazette; [13 pictures from the Fifth Fusiliers' St George's Day parade in front of a bumper crowd in Ashington \(northumberlandgazette.co.uk\)](http://northumberlandgazette.co.uk)*

#### **Work Experience**

Maddie is enjoying the work experience and is now designing some activity sheets for the Action of Insects campaign. Maddie is to join Sharon for an interview on Koast Radio on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May. Sharon will be promoting upcoming events for Ashington Town Council and Maddie will have an induction of the Koast Radio Studio.

#### **Youth Services Gathering**

Sharon attended a meeting on Thursday 25th April at Hirst Welfare. Notes from the meeting include:

#### **Community Voice Network**

Martin Conway and the team are setting up the Ashington Voice community network to give the community a voice and encourage wider collaboration in Ashington. More information to follow.

#### **Policing Updates**

- Police have a large focus currently on shoplifting and motorbike-related anti-social behaviour.
- Attendees were encouraged to share any information on suspicious behaviour and encourage the community to report incidents.
- Additional cameras have been added in the town centre.
- There is now a neighbourhood police team available every day in Ashington.

#### **College Updates**

- A successful future proofing finance roadshow has taken place at the college.
- A student council has been set up with aims to fundraise for Global Teacher, including a sponsored beach clean, car wash, international sports event and more.

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### Teen Bar

- The Teen Bar had a successful Easter holiday with enjoyable and educational trips out for young people.

### Cygnus Updates

- Cygnus (Wansbeck Community Links) have now moved out of Hirst Welfare.
- Wellbeing Wednesdays have moved to Hirst Park Pavilion on Wednesdays from 9:30-11:30am.
- They are trailing a community drop-in at the Bothy on Friday mornings.
- They have a 1-year agreement to be based in Bedlington Community Centre.
- Their neurodiverse sessions for ages 18-30 are running successfully.
- They have noticed a gap in youth provision in Bedlington.
- They are linking with the Elizabethan Hall in Newbiggin - more updates once in place.

### YMCA Updates

- The YMCA is adding structure - Creative Mondays with Mortal Fools.
- Due to successful funding, Young Changemakers will take place on Tuesdays focused on social action led by young people.
- Wednesdays will focus on 16+ volunteering with no upper age limit. Participants do not need interest in volunteering for YMCA/youth work specifically. Sessions will provide certified training benefiting many organizations' volunteers (term-time only).
- Thursdays are Girls Only Nights for ages 13+.
- Fridays are the Youth Cafe.
- The YMCA aims to have food provision at all sessions in the near future.
- They are also working on a project with Dukes Academy around peer-led research for the local area.

### Other Updates (including our own)

- The Family Hub now has period packs available to combat period poverty. Attendees should go to main reception and ask for a PH pack.
- The fitness sessions for girls on Fridays need a boost - attendees should promote on their platforms.
- Police would like to be included in local events.
- A youth calendar is to be put together led by CT - all to send CT their activities/offerings for young people.
- June 11th is Big Green Week with an event on Station Road with market stalls.
- There will be poster designing for climate change awareness - the college to link to ATC.
- ATC is looking for event volunteers.
- Wansbeck Climate Action are creating an orchard and may require volunteers.
- The college will start a clothing bank and vape battery recycling initiative.
- Jane to look into book creation with the neurodiverse session.

### Upcoming Events

- June 29th - College event (more info at next meeting)
- July 7th - Ashington Community Fair

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- July 28th – Heart of the Hirst Summer Fair at Hirst Park

### ***Army Engagement Event***

Sharon received an invitation to attend the event at Duke's Primary School on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May.  
[Ashington Town Council](#)

### ***Newcastle United Foundation***

On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May Sarah and Sharon had a very productive meeting with Paul Yeadon from the NUF. The meeting highlighted several potential areas for collaboration between our organisations on upcoming projects.

Some key opportunities discussed include partnering for activities and programming during the upcoming school summer holidays as well as the half-term breaks. The discussions were positive, and working together with NUF seems promising for engaging young people through activity-related initiatives over the holiday periods, as well as extending into supporting family members with other projects.

The NUF are enthusiastic about the prospects for joining forces on these projects in the coming months and will make an application for annual funding.

### ***Detached Youth Group***

A meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> April. The focus has changed so a revised purpose, objectives and outcome has been drafted and shared with those Cllrs put forward, prior to any action being taken.

During the meeting, a request was made to compile a distribution list that would identify the various groups or organisations that have expressed interest in participating in the revised initiative. Obtaining this information would enable the organisers to understand the involvement and ensure that all relevant parties are kept informed and engaged as the updated purpose, objectives, and desired outcomes are finalized and acted upon.

### ***Annual Grant Funding***

We have almost 30 applications, with 20+ seeking £3,000 or more and requiring a presentation slot. The suggested dates for presentations are 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> June. We would usually recommend that members attend all presentations to ensure consistency, but if members wished to split the obligation and attend one day or the other, and then come together with findings, that could work.

It was mentioned to ask the groups that are applying to the Annual Grant to submit a 5–10-minute video presentation, as an alternative to the in person presentation if they would prefer that option.

The following information was included in the report:

News Items (with links)

Facebook Page Overview

Top Post for Reach – how many people saw it.

Top post for engagement – commented upon, reacted, shared or clicked.

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**FGS24/169 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24**

**a) Updated Budget Report**

It was **AGREED** to receive the updated budget report, there were no questions for the RFO.

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

It was **AGREED** to receive a schedule of accounts paid and to be paid; and to endorse those accounts paid, and agree those to be paid, since 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**FGS24/170 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – MAY 2024**

**a) Ashington RVS**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the application for Ashington RVS. It was **AGREED** not to fund on this occasion.

**b) Ashington Veterans and Elders Institute**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the application from Ashington Veterans and Elders Institute. It was **AGREED** not to fund on this occasion.

**c) Bedlington and District Red Squirrel Group**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the application from the Bedlington and District Red Squirrel Group. It was **AGREED** to award Bedlington and District Red Squirrel Group funding of £486 and to invite the group to the Climate Change Committee Meeting.

*Cllr Paul Wright left the meeting at 18:33.*

**d) Cygnus, Wansbeck Community Links**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** an application from Wansbeck Community Links. It was **AGREED** to award Cygnus, Wansbeck Community Links £250.

**e) 5<sup>th</sup> Ashington Brownies**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** an application from 5<sup>th</sup> Ashington Brownies, and to approve a grant of £500.

*Cllr Graeme Wright left the meeting at 18:53.*

*Cllr Graeme Wright re-entered the meeting at 18:56.*

**FGS24/171 NURSERY PARK ALLOTMENT SITE**

**a) Site Security and Parking**

A short report was **RECEIVED** of issues relating to site security and parking.

Concerns about the security of the Nursery Park allotment site were raised. The allotments officer acknowledged that it is the only allotment location without a functioning gate. Currently,

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there is just a small wooden fence surrounding the perimeter, which does not adequately secure the site. It was stated that upgrades to the fencing and installation of a proper gate at Nursery Park had been investigated and costs sought.

***b) Secure Vehicle and Pedestrian Entrance Gates***

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** quotations for the supply and installation of secure entrance gates at Nursery Park Allotment site and agree to delegate to the Allotment Officer to progress any further action, with funding secured from County Cllr Brian Gallacher at 50%, and Haydon Ward Cllrs at 50%.

Quotation A - £2,360

Quotation B - £2,750

Quotation C - £2,517

Quotation D - £4,790

It was **AGREED** to go forward with Quotation A from SJ Purvis Fencing, at a cost of £2,360.

Regarding the pedestrian entrance gates for plot holders, it was asked about the proposed locking system. The allotments officer explained that a secure lock could be installed which allowed for 18 individual keys to be distributed to plot holders. The Council would maintain a master key for oversight purposes. After some discussion, the committee agreed to proceed with procuring and installing the new lock system.

**FGS24/172 HIRST EAST END ALLOTMENT SITE**

***a) Former Hirst East End Allotment Association Outbuilding, and Plot Shed***

An update was **RECEIVED** on the fire damaged outbuilding belonging to former Hirst East End Allotment Association and a fire damaged shed on now vacant plot.

***b) Removal and Disposal***

Quotations sought were presented which included elements of demolition, removal and dealing with asbestos.

Following considerable debate regarding the works required and the best course of action, the Assets and Development Manager advised that there could be asbestos in the former allotment association hut also, and there were safety concerns relating to the roof.

Cllr Glyn Davies commented that if there is any issue with the roof no-one should be entering the building, and we should be assured in regards asbestos before any works take place.

The Executive Officer advised that the quotes received for the hut did not factor in potential asbestos, and neither did they take account of the roof being unsafe. Council staff could not be expected to remove the contents of the hut, prior to demolition, and this should be wholly carried out by professionals.

It was **AGREED** to defer any decision and to seek a comprehensive quote taking into account that contents will need to be removed by contractors, not Council staff, and seeking asbestos survey.



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**FGS24/173 PLAY AREAS - Alexandra Road, People's Park, North Seaton Colliery, Paddock Wood**

**It was AGREED TO RECEIVE** a 25-year 'Draft Heads of Terms' Lease from Northumberland County Council and it was further agreed to approve that the Executive Officer signs on behalf of the Council, noting that the lease will be registered with Land Registry.

**FGS24/174 ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS**

**It was AGREED** to defer the consideration of improvements to Woodhorn Lane, pending two additional quotations for the work.

**FGS24/175 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

**Meeting ended 19.45pm**

DRAFT