

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at
6:00pm on Tuesday 15 February 2022

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Caroline Ball, Michelle Brannigan, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Avril Chisholm, Matthew Cuthbert, Jim Lang, Sophie Robinson, Pauline Thompson, Bob Walkinshaw.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE.

Sarah Eden – Clerk/RFO
Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Facilities Manager
Sharon Parmley – ATC Administration Officer (minute taking)

FGS 21/134 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Eleanor Armstrong, Victor Bridges, Lawrence Henderson, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis and John Tully.

FGS 21/135 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

Cllr Louis Brown declared an interest in agenda items, 17. Nursery Park Allotment Site, 18. High Market Allotment Site and 19. North Seaton Colliery Allotment Site.

FGS 21/136 DISPENSATIONS.

There were no dispensations received or to consider.

FGS 21/137 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

There were no questions received from members of the public.

FGS 21/138 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18th January 2022 as a true record.

FGS 21/139 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES.

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the following reports, which were sent out in advance of the meeting.

New Website

The new website is up and running but is also being further developed and improved. The office is prioritising those items that are legally required under the Transparency Code, and recent news items; other items will be added in time.

Christmas Lights Displays

Following the receipt of our inventory from the current Christmas Lights contractor. Tender documents will be drafted and brought March FGS Committee Meeting for approval.

NCC Partnership Agreement

An overall map of cleansing schedules has been received. We have asked for separate maps for each day so that streets can be deciphered.

The Clerk is visiting our neighbouring Clerk at Blyth to research their enhanced services delivered by NCC.

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The Clerk has written to Paul Jones and Stephen Wardle to request information relating to the delivery of Core services county-wide.

Reports received into the office are being input into a new system designed to properly monitor the service received. Reports received are numerous; some can be dealt with immediately via the Neighbourhood Team, whereas Environmental Enforcement issues must follow a procedure and there will be a delay between reporting and a result.

Tree Planting Schemes

The contracts for tree planting at Woodhorn Villas, North Seaton Industrial Estate and off the A197 have been offered and accepted. A press release was put out celebrating the scheme.

[Tree Planting Plans for Ashington \(ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk\)](http://ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk)

The Assets and Facilities Manager is meeting with NCC Tree Officer and contractors this week.

It has been suggested that the Council could consider further tree planting in support of '[The Queens Green Canopy](#)', which encourages tree planting during the official season October – March. Any future tree planting brought forward by the Climate Change Group will be asked to consider this initiative.

Budget and Precept Demand

The precept demand was sent to NCC immediately after the budget meeting. A press release relating to the budget was put out.

[Ashington Town Council is raising the bar, but not the precept](#)

The Finance section of the website is being further developed so information can be added.

FGS 21/140 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2021/22.

a) Updated Budget Report

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated Budget Report, sent out in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk highlighted the following items:

- i) £1,000 funding for the Alligator Klub had been transferred to the events budget as was incorrectly included in small grants.
- ii) There was an overspend in IT.
- iii) Cllr Louis Brown requested the budget for Councillor training is spent and that training required is brought forward. The Clerk responded that Cllrs should forward any training needs they identify and that course can be investigated or developed in-house.

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b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the schedule of accounts and to endorse those accounts paid via delegated authority, and approve those accounts to be paid, since 18th January 2022.

FGS 21/141 APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.

a) ESCAPE Family Support.

It was **AGREED to RECOMMEND** that Escape Family Support be notified that Ashington Town Council are currently reviewing the Grant Aid policy and how small grants and larger scale funding is decided.

This work is expected be completed towards the end of March/beginning of April, where upon they will be contacted with further details.

The Town Council agreed an overall budget of £58,500 and is keen to ensure this funding is allocated in the next financial year.

FGS 21/142 ALEXANDRA ROAD PLAY AREA.

a) Summary of Discussion

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the report from the working group meeting held on Monday 31st January 2022.

b) Preferred Supplier/Consultation

It was **AGREED to DELEGATE** that the Assets and Facilities Manager, in consultation with Ward Councillors, award a preferred supplier to design an accessible junior play area to the budget of £45,000.

c) Final Design

It was **AGREED to DELEGATE** that the Assets and Facilities Manager, in consultation with Ward Cllrs, approves the final design for Alexandra Road play Area, and places the order.

It was discussed that in addition the £45,000 budget for the play area, that £5,000 was set aside for CCTV provision, and any extra supplementary work.

It was **AGREED** to contact County Cllr Ken Parry to request a contribution from his capital small schemes funding, as well as NCC 106 Play Provision Funding, and the Ashington Leisure Partnership. It was discussed that any funding received would off-set the Town Council's contribution and would fund other play areas in the town.

FGS 21/143 ENVIRONMENTAL PROPOSAL.

It was **AGREED** to receive the environmental proposal sent out in advance of the meeting. It was further **AGREED** to commission locally based, landscape designer Mr Sean Murray of Garden Narratives to design schemes and maintenance schedules for the floral displays listed:

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- Eighteen floral beds on Station Road (one way section – Grand Corner Wansbeck Square)
- Four entrance features (on the B1334 and A197)
- Thirty-two Towers and Planters

It was discussed that the delivery of the schemes would be agreed separately following a tender process.

FGS 21/144 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL – ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.

It was AGREED to receive the updated 2022/23 Service Level Agreement and annual costs £21,617.86 to fund 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Environmental Enforcement Officer for Ashington.

In response to a question from Cllr Michelle Brannigan, the Clerk advised that the agreement was expected to be reworded to make clear that should labour not be provided the invoice to Ashington Town Council would be adjusted accordingly.

“If The Service as set out in this SLA cannot be delivered by the best endeavours of NCC, invoices for payment will be adjusted accordingly.”

It was AGREED to authorise that the Clerk sign up to funding an Environmental Enforcement Officer (0.5 FTE) for a further year, on behalf of the Council.

After further discussions in relation to ongoing issues with fly-tipping and household accumulations, it was agreed to add proposals to the next Full Council meeting to contact Northumberland County Council in regards empty properties, selective landlord licensing and a multi-agency approach to tackle anti-social behaviour and public protection in particular wards of the town.

FGS 21/145 JACK CHARLTON STATUE.

It was AGREED to receive an update report in regards funding and work carried out on the Jack Charlton Statue project. **It was AGREED** to delegate to the Clerk and Officers, in consultation with the working group, the development of an action plan for the next stages of the statue project.

It was discussed that the statue unveiling could coincide with the anniversary of the 1966 World Cup win in July, and that a football tournament could be included in the event.

FGS 21/146 CAPITAL WORKS BEING CONSIDERED IN CLOSED SESSION.

It was AGREED to move £50,000 from the 2022/23 Earmarked Reserves allocation to Allotments, to fund capital works relating to replacement water systems and perimeter fencing.

FGS 21/147 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next Finance and General Services Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 15th March 2022 at 6:00pm, at North Seaton Community Centre, Manley View.

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FGS 21/148 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Town Council **AGREED** to pass the following resolution:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, permitted under Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Exempt Information) (England) Order 2006) Act; as the matter is confidential, for reason of 'terms of tenders, and proposals and counter proposals in negotiations for contracts'

FGS 21/149 NURSERY PARK ALLOTMENT SITE.

Members received tenders for boundary fencing and the clearance of plot 13, as follows:

Contractor 1 - £4,860

Contractor 2 - £7,540

It was **AGREED** to proceed with contractor 1, JSH Joinery, £4,860, for boundary fencing and plot clearance at Nursery Park Allotment Site.

FGS 21/150 HIGH MARKET ALLOTMENT SITE.

Members received tenders for road repairs on High Market Allotment Site, as follows:

Contractor 1 - £5,610

Contractor 2 - £1,400

It was **AGREED** to proceed with contractor 2, HFF, £1,400, for road repairs to High Market Allotment Site,

FGS 21/151 NORTH SEATON COLLIERY ALLOTMENT SITE.

Members received tenders for the following works on North Seaton Colliery Allotment Site, as follows:

a) Water System

The following quotes were received for a replacement water system at North Seaton Colliery:

Contractor 1 - £14,660

Contractor 2 - £17,600

It was **AGREED** to proceed with the scheme, and that Contractor 1, WL Straughan Ltd be awarded the contract.

b) External Fencing

The following quotes were received for a metal palisade perimeter fence at North Seaton Colliery Allotment Site:

Contractor 1 - £33,620

Contractor 2 - £27,950

It was **AGREED** to proceed with the scheme, and that Contractor 2, HFF be awarded the contract.

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FGS 21/152 WOODHORN ALLOTMENT SITE CLEARANCE.

The following quotes were received to clear the site fly-tipping at Woodhorn Road Allotments:

Contractor 1 - £3,360

Contractor 2 - £1,800

It was AGREED to proceed with the removal of fly-tipping at Woodhorn Road Allotment Site, and that Contractor 2, HFF be awarded the contract.

Environmental Enforcement are involved with the fly-tipping incident and will endeavour to reclaim the costs, once the case has been heard in court.

The meeting ended at 8:05pm.

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