# COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllr Caroline Ball (Chair), Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Vicky Brown, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr John Tully, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Sophie Robinson, and Cllr Matthew Cuthbert

# ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO, Sharon Parmley – Communication and Engagement Officer, Stephen Humphrey - Assets and Facilities Officer, and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant.

One member of the public in attendance.

**In the absence of the Chair, and Vice Chair, It was AGREED** that Cllr Caroline Ball would Chair the meeting.

# FC23/046 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by Cllr Caroline Ball.

# FC23/047 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bob Walkinshaw, Marjorie Chambers, Lawrence Henderson, Jim Lang and Mark Purvis.

# FC23/048 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Louis Brown disclosed interest in **FC 23/060 MANAGEMENT OF ASHINGTON ALLOTMENTS.**

# FC23/049 DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations.

# FC23/050 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One member of the public present but no questions being asked.

# FC23/051 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

**It was AGREED to AMEND** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18th July 2023 as Cllr Pauline Thompson’s name appeared twice. It was then **AGREED to SIGN** the minutes as a true record.

*Cllr Sophie Robinson arrived at 18:03.*

# FC23/052 REPORT FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the following report from Sergeant Paul Davis.

In the last 8 weeks in Ashington the overall crime rate is slightly above compared to 2022. However, there has been a spike in shoplifting and there was a total of 121 in the last 8 week across Ashington. Burglary has been confirmed to be down compared to previous years across Ashington.

All the following nominals have been given custodial sentence for shoplifting which have been investigated by the Ashington NPT.  The following names are in the public domain.

Brody Small, Adam Watson, Jamie Brown, Samantha Oliver, Gemma Leeds, Connor Parker, Keinan Snowden.

ASB over the last 8 weeks is comparable to previous years with 213 reports in the last 8 weeks. Motorcycle discord accounts for approximately half of these cases. We have completed a garage watch scheme and S59 warning signs should be in place shortly. CCTV has also been used successfully and two people have been arrested through good investigative work by identifying clothing and bikes via CCTV, body worn video and social media.

Success over the summer investigations burglaries committed by an Ashington resident and another person caused a spike in burglary reports.

Members welcomed the news that police office numbers would be increased in the coming months, and thanked officers for their continued work and for keeping the Council updated on issues.

It was highlighted that reports need to be made using 101, or 999 if an emergency, and a crime is in process. Call waiting times are much lower than they have been in the past.

# FC23/053 NORTH EAST IMMEDIATE CARE

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** information about the work of North East Immediate Care (NEIC), presented by Steven Miles (Paramedic, Trustee, and volunteer), Professor Michael Norton (Deputy Medical Director at North East Ambulance Service, Trustee and volunteer).

North East Immediate Care (NEIC) is a new charity set up in late 2020 by healthcare professionals to provide voluntary advanced emergency care in the North East of England. It was established to support the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, which covers an area of around 3230 square miles from Teeside to the Scotland border, with a population of over 2.7 million.

The charity was founded by trustees who are accredited by BASICS (British Association for Immediate Care). After an initial trial period, the charity applied for official status but was delayed by a pandemic backlog. Charity status was finally granted in October 2022, allowing the charity to establish itself and provide voluntary emergency care across the now properly North East Ambulance Service area.

*Sharon Parmley left the meeting.*

# FC23/054 REPORT FROM THE CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON (CLLR VICTOR BRIDGES)

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** a verbal report from the Civic Head of Ashington on engagements since the last meeting, to include a verbal report from Deputy Civic Head, Cllr Vicky Brown on the Town Twinning visit to Remscheid.

Civic Head Cllr Victor Bridges gave a verbal report on the following:

* Attended the Family Fun Day event.
* Attended the Morpeth Mayor Charity Fundraising Meal.
* Attended the opening of the Aintree and Epson play park opening.
* Attended the Bigger Picture Screening Event by Mortal Fools.
* Attended the Pride Picnic event.
* Attended the Hirst Anniversary Cup Bowls competition.

Cllr Vicky Brown gave the following verbal report on the trip to Remscheid.

We arrived on September 1st to Remscheid; it was raining upon arrival. The evening brightened up with a meal and greeting by everyone at the MK Hotel. On the Saturday we went for a walk under the Muengstener Bridge to the Burg Castle where we had afternoon tea.

On the evening everyone attended a tour of the File Factory where we also had a meal along with drinks with old friends and good company.

Sunday was the day of the associations where scores of stalls were on Remscheid Main Street where an exceptional time was had with old friends.

Speeches and exchange of gifts took place in the Ratskeuer as the day concluded with another meal with old friends.

The Chair thanked the Civic Head and Deputy Civic Head for their reports.

# FC23/055 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (CLLR JOHN TULLY)

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** a verbal report from the Leader of the Town Council.

Cllr John Tully reported than he attended a NALC meeting two weeks ago, adding that one thing that came out of it was the recent changes to planning. Cllr Tully stated that as a town council, we need to put forward the public’s views when it comes to planning.

Cllr Tully confirmed that an invite has been given to neighbouring councils to exchange ideas and views and help one another which should take place next month, with the possibility of meeting more regularly.

# **FC23/056 FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated document and to note changes to risks identified.

The Executive Officer commented further on the high-risk rating for ‘taking on assets without due diligence’, and whilst mitigating factors were now in place and the risk rating would effectively be lower, until the historic issues with play areas was concluded it would not be appropriate to lower the rating. Likewise, in relation to the management of allotments this was ongoing, and it is hoped the risk rating will lower when changes are bedded in.

Members thanked the Executive Officer for a fulsome report.

# FC23/057 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR), YEAR ENDING MARCH 2023

## a) External Auditor Report/Certificate

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the External Auditor Report/Certificate.

## b) Notice of Conclusion of Audit

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** and endorse the publication of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit (with dates for inspection), on the Town Council’s website, alongside Annual Governance and Accountability Return, year ending March 2023, noting that there were no matters requiring attention.

Members thanked Officers for ensuring the governance and accounting requirements of the Council were carried out to such a high standard.

# FC 23/058 RESPONSE TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** and endorse the written response to public questions received at the Full Council meeting on 18th July 2023, sent by email on 19th July 2023.

**FC 23/059 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

*Cllr Louis Brown left the meeting at 19:12 with a declarable interest.*

**FC 23/060 MANAGEMENT OF ASHINGTON ALLOTMENTS**

**It was AGREED to** **RECEIVE** a report of recommendations in respect of the management of Ashington Allotments. The Council **AGREED** all matters in the report, including Management Agreements, Tenancy Agreements, and Conditions and Rules on sites.

**It was AGREED** to new management arrangements for several allotment sites in Ashington.

Sites will either be leased to and managed by allotment associations (self-managed) or directly managed by the Council.

**It was AGREED** that Hirst East End, North Seaton Colliery, and Woodhorn Road would transition to direct Council management starting Oct 2023 and Jan 2024.

**It was AGREED** that for self-managed sites, High Market, Green Lane, Wansbeck Road, and Seaton Hirst Council the lease charged by the Council will be increased from £7.50/plot each year, to £10/plot per year. For Council-managed sites, the rent will be £31 per plot per year. This is an increase for some sites.

**It was AGREED** to new standard lease agreements for self-managed sites, with the Assets and Facilities Manager supporting Allotment Associations to be properly constituted to sign a legal lease.

**It was AGREED** to new tenancy agreements and conditions for Council-managed sites.

It was noted that Nursery Park is already being directly managed by the Council.

The meeting was reminded that an Allotment Officer role is proposed to be recruited to support the transition and ongoing management.

The Executive Officer commented that whilst financial impact is expected to reduce the deficit for allotments, rents have been historically low, due to custom and practice, that allotments are seen as a service and a tradition, and to raise them too much could result in the risk of plot abandonment, and other issues.

In summary, the Council agreed to a greater oversight of allotments, with new rental and management arrangements to improve operations and finances.

# FC23/061 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 28th November 2023, 6pm, Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

**The meeting ended at 19:25pm**