AGENDA 6, Enc i) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, DRAFT Minutes of the Finance and General Services Committee held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 10th February 2026, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

CLLRS PRESENT:
Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Karl Green, Kerry Davison, David Coyle, Marjorie Chambers, Louis Brown, Glyn Davies, Scott Amery, Bob Walkinshaw, Caroline Ball, Jessica Appleby, Melanie Fox, Mark Purvis, Sonia Simm, Steven Roberts, Paul Wright.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE
Sarah Eden – Executive Officer, Alan Bunker – Allotments Officer, and Gary Holmes – Administration and Communications Officer

FGS2526/121 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR
Welcome by Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

FGS2526/122 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jim Lang.

FGS2526/123 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS
Cllr Fox disclosed an interest in the discussion of small grants as having a not for profit Community Interest Company (CIC) in Ashington.

Cllr Brown disclosed an interest in any discussion of allotments, as an allotment holder.

FGS2526/124 DISPENSATIONS
Cllrs Fox and Brown requested a dispensation to stay in the meeting and speak on items if necessary.

FGS2526/125 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
There we no members of the public.

FGS2526/126 DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
The minutes of the previous Finance and General Services Meeting held on Tuesday 13th January were **RECEIVED** and **AGREED**.

FGS2526/127 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES

Neighbourhood Services

Play Areas
Repairs and maintenance continue across all play areas following each site having a RoSPA Play Safety inspection. We await part for some and better weather for repainting and surfacing works.

North Seaton Colliery Play Area is complete apart from the basketball net, and some internal verge works. Once the weather improves we will arrange an opening event.

Bus Shelters
We are still waiting for funding information back in regards bus shelters. The funding is expected from NCC via NECA, however I cannot order shelters until I have confirmation. Once this is confirmed we will be able to order those identified as requiring replacement. This includes replacement of the ageing existing bus shelters at The Northern, with a new transparent shelter

with additional accessible seating. Improved entry and egress for bus users. More light with upper poly panels so users can see when bus is coming. Also, Briardene, as noted and also with improved egress onto pavement which is currently lacking. Finally funding towards accessible seating made locally for all shelters without.

Town Seats

We expect those seats that have been ordered for Haydon ward (5) to arrive this week.

Horticulture

It is a terrible time of year for gardening, but all areas will be visited again in February for a clean-up. Our priority is the Memorial Garden in readiness for some new planting on the west border, but it is too early at the moment.

The wall surrounding the Woodhorn Gateway was hit by a car in the New Year. A local contractor is carrying out the repair in the next couple of weeks.

Allotments

The following report provides an update on maintenance activities, site improvements, and ongoing issues across all allotment sites under management. Key accomplishments include completion of rent collections, resolution of fly-tipping incidents, winter tap repairs, and clearance of overgrown plots.

NORTH SEATON COLLIERY

Rent Collections

Rent collections are complete.

Fly-Tipping Resolution

Assistance was secured from Northumberland County Council (NCC) regarding fly-tipping incidents.

Materials removed included:

- Multiple hedges and branches
- One bandit machine located in the hedge row.
- Plot holders successfully recycled chippings.

Hedge and Tree Maintenance

Work has been completed on hedge and tree cuttings on both sides of the North Seaton Colliery site.

SEATON HIRST

Tree Management

Bernicia Housing has completed cutting of an overhanging tree from a neighbouring property that borders the allotment site. Liaison with Bernicia regarding this issue has been ongoing since summer.

Safety Concerns

Three gas canisters were safely removed from the site. Thanks are extended to Northeast Caravans for their assistance with this matter.

HIGHMARKET

Scheduled Maintenance

NCC is scheduled to cut back the hedge line within the churchyard which currently overhangs into the roadway.

WOODHORN ROAD

PLOT CLEARANCE PROGRAMME

Significant progress has been made with the clearance programme initiated in summer with assistance from the Woodhorn Team. Overgrown gardens have been cleared and are now being rented out, providing excellent opportunities for plot holders heading into spring.
This achievement would not have been possible without the dedicated help from a group of plot holders.

NCC assistance for clearance work where fly tipping has occurred.

Current Status: Three abandoned plots began clearance work last week.

HIRST EAST END

Asbestos Clearance

Two asbestos clearances have been completed. Plot holders were made aware of the latest clearance through new signage on the noticeboard.

Occupancy: New plot holders are now on the site.

NURSERY PARK

Water Management

A meeting has taken place with the local garage regarding rainwater potentially running into gardens. Further meetings will be held if required.

Water Usage

We have identified an error in water costs dating back to February 2017. Payments of £2,502.33 will be repaid.

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

Bird Box Installation

Bird boxes are to be placed across all sites. Woodhorn Road has started the rollout of this initiative.

TAP REPAIRS - ALL SITES

Multiple tap repairs have been carried out across most sites, with more to follow. Poor weather conditions at the start of the year, with temperatures reaching -5°C, resulted in several taps bursting.

Remedial Action: Tap week was implemented in mid-January, during which extra insulation was added to tap boxes to prevent future incidents.

CONTINUING ACTIONS

Continue monitoring tap infrastructure across all sites, particularly during cold weather periods.
Continue plot clearance programme to maximize site utilisation.

Monitor water drainage situation at Nursery Park and schedule follow-up meeting if issues persist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to:
Northumberland County Council for fly-tipping assistance
Bernicia Housing for tree maintenance
Northeast Caravans for gas canister removal support
Woodhorn Team for plot clearance assistance

Events and Engagement

Community Film

Annual grant filming is almost complete. Cllrs have been sent sneak previews by email. We are really looking forward to the finished film by LukLuk Productions and groups will also be able to use promotional videos.

Grant Funding

The final round of small grant funding is open for invitations, with a closing date of 18th February and officer decisions by 25th February.

Annual Grant funding was launched and agreed late, therefore interim evaluation reports were not requested until January. We have received what was requested and will assess format and expectations with the Grant Funding group as part of the review. Most 2nd payments have been made, with three groups that were funded for projects awaiting completion.

Youth Engagement

We participated in a community roadshow at Dukes Academy on 28th January 2026, organised by Northumberland County Council's Locality Team and the school. Sharon engaged directly with students to promote the Council's online survey for young people, using a prize tombola (including Amazon vouchers, power banks, and other items) to encourage participation. The event brought together multiple local organisations providing services and opportunities for young people. These roadshows occur several times annually at Dukes Academy and Northumberland College, helping students access information about local support and activities, with the next event scheduled at Northumberland College on 12th February 2026. We have received an invitation from Dukes Primary School to attend their World of Work Day on Tuesday 3rd March, we attended last year which proved to be a really good event highlighting what type of work ATC do.

Keep Britian Tidy - Spring Clean

We have planned to facilitate KBT Spring Clean inspired stalls at the Ashington Market on Tuesday 17th March. This will include relevant partners including NCC Recycling & Waste Management, Green Dog Walkers, Ashington Community Litter Pickers, and Northumbrian Water.

We will also be offering up litter picking equipment to anyone who wants to take part in litter picks around the town – litter pickers, gloves, bin bags, and we will liaise with NCC for their removal.

Free Swims

Free swims continue in both half-term and easter holidays, on Wednesdays and Saturdays 1-2pm at Ashington Leisure Centre.

Northumberland Miners Picnic

We have met with Woodhorn Museum staff who continue to support the Memorial Service which opens the Northumberland Miner's Picnic event on 13th June 2026.

Ashington Saturday Market

Brite-side Events was expected to commence the Saturday Market in February, however there are a couple of outstanding matters between the organiser and NCC in respect of logistics with set-up and take-down and how this will be managed – with or without a road closure.

Christmas Lights

In view that the projections which were part of the Christmas Lights display did not work as expected, we negotiated a discount. As a result, we longer have the expected overspend (£1,160) which was for the replacement motifs on columns due to kids motifs failing.
We will be looking at alternative Christmas trees at the earliest opportunity.

NCC Highways – Gullies

Background

For new Members, following a proposal brought to Council for proactive measures on gulley clearing, we were pleased to receive news of a dedicated 22-week programme operating in Ashington. This systematic plan sees the gulley sucker operating Monday to Thursday in Ashington, with Fridays reserved for emergencies.
As we are now halfway through the programme, I sought an update from the NCC Area Manager.

Current Position

Overall, the programme is going well. However, the recent spell of poor weather has impacted progress, with NCC estimating they are approximately 2-3 weeks behind the original schedule. At present there are:
• Approximately 90 missed gullies (majority due to access issues such as parked vehicles)
• Around 50 gullies requiring further action beyond routine cleaning

Recovery Plan

To address this and get back on track, NCC are arranging for an additional tanker to operate in Ashington for approximately 3-4 weeks. This means two tankers will be operating in the town during this period, allowing them to:
• Revisit missed locations
• Deal with gullies requiring further attention
• Recover lost time

After this period, work will revert to one tanker to complete the programme.
The plan is to review with NCC at the end of the programme and maintain the proposal of how we work with them to keep on track.

Public Spaces Protection Order – PSPO

Following the Council's agreement to respond to the consultation with hopes of a future survey on 'dogs on sports fields', we received the following positive response…
Thanks for your email. I spoke with my manager in relation to this and we thought the email you sent detailed it perfectly. We are going to do some evidence gathering going forward and the PSPO's are looked at every 3 years. This will then hopefully give us intel as to what this could look like going forward.

I have your contact details so may be in touch to organise a meeting when we look at this.

Website and Social Media PR

Website

Widescope was contacted to add an extra slot to meetings to upload scanned copies of the signed agreed minutes of each meeting.

The Town Councillor page (Ashington Town Council - Town Councillors) has also been redesigned for better readability and easier reference of which Councillor is part of which committee.

The following items appeared on our website news page since the previous officer's report. Members are reminded that we maintain active Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages to promote Council activities and engage with our community. You can read them in full by visiting the website.

https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/

Article Title	Date
Ashington Town Council Connects with Young People at Dukes Academy Roadshow	5th February 2026
Finance & General Services Committee Meeting on 10/02/26	3rd February 2026
ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SETS AMBITIOUS BUDGET FOR 2026/27	29th January 2026
Free Swimming Sessions Return for February Half Term - Extended to Run Throughout 2026!	20th January 2026
Full Council Meeting on 27/01/2026	20th January 2026

Article Title	Date
Exciting New Play Area Coming to North Seaton Colliery, Ashington	13th January 2026
Ashington Town Council Opens Final Round of Small Grant Fund for 2025-26	12th January 2026
Finance & General Services Committee Meeting on 13/01/2026	6th January 2026
Hirst Ward By-Election Result, 18th December 2025	19th December 2025
Christmas and New Year Message from the Chair of Ashington Town Council, Councillor Mark Purvis	18th December 2025
Christmas Window Competition Winners Announced	18th December 2025
A Very Merry Christmas from Ashington Town Council - Holiday Office Times	18th December 2025
Ashington Christmas Market 2025: A Festive Success Despite the Weather	16th December 2025
NOTICE OF POLL: HIRST WARD BY-ELECTION	11th December 2025
Ashington Town Council Offers Free Swimming Sessions	8th December 2025
Highways Gully Maintenance Programme Begins in Ashington	5th December 2025
Finance & General Services Committee Meeting on 09/12/2025	1st December 2025
Relive the Magic: Official Video of Ashington Christmas Light Switch-On Now Available	1st December 2025
Ashington Town Council and Northumberland County Council Kerb Appeal Trial	28th November 2025
Ashington Town Council and Northumberland County Council Launch Kerb Appeal Trial	27th November 2025
Ashington Town Council Adopts Civility & Respect Pledge and Commits to Enhanced Standards in Public Life	26th November 2025
Ashington Town Council to Distribute Reindeer Food at Tuesday Market Event	25th November 2025
Ashington Christmas Market Moves to Hirst Park in Partnership with Heart of the Hirst Christmas Fair	24th November 2025

DRAFT

Article Title	Date
Ashington (Hirst Ward) Town Council Election - Notice of Nominations	22nd November 2025
Transformed Doves Corner Sets New Direction for Sustainability in Ashington	20th November 2025
Ashington Town Council Applauds Success of Project Shield in Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour	20th November 2025
Full Council Meeting on 25/11/2025	17th November 2025
Ashington's Christmas Light Switch-On Draws Over 1,000 Residents Despite Challenging Weather	14th November 2025
Notice of Election - Hirst Ward	12th November 2025
Ashington's New Christmas Tree – Give it a chance to shine!	12th November 2025

Facebook

Our Facebook page has demonstrated positive performance since the last Communications Officer's report back on the 11th November 2025. The reporting period (11th November - 6th February 2026) shows growth across key metrics including views, reach, and engagement, with particularly strong performance in link clicks and new followers.

Since the last meeting we had 3,400 followers and this has increased yet again by 400 reaching 3,800 followers.

Positive posts and posts concerning Ashington in general are still showing very strong community engagement, rather than shares that we post on behalf of other organisations, with a continued effort to share posts where applicable and possible.

Efforts are still ongoing on how to optimise Facebook to ensure the biggest reach and engagement possible while we still discuss the use of advertising to boost posts, if needed.

Upcoming Meetings

Youth Collaboration Meeting – 16th February, 2:00pm
CCTV Meeting – 25th February, 2:00pm
Partnership Meeting – 25th March, 2:00pm
Full Council Meeting – 31st March, 6:00pm

NCC Town & Parish Council Conference – 5th March, from 4:00pm (held at NCC County Hall)
Ashington Town Forum – 1st April, 3:00pm (held at Bernicia Headquarters)
Gary has a meetings list and has also created a scannable QR code that will put meeting dates into your calendar, please ask for this.

Title	Date published	Reach	Likes and reactions	Shares
It's great to see opportunities like this bein... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	12 Nov 2025	31,244	34	47
https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	19 Dec 2025	23,630	49	10
Tell us what you think, Ashington! ... Boost ··· Multi media • Ashington Town Council	9 Dec 2025	18,246	49	3
Community Spirit Shines Through as Festiv... Boost ··· Multi media • Ashington Town Council	14 Nov 2025	12,000	98	14
12 Days of Christmas Market Postponed D... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	13 Nov 2025	10,942	18	37
(Click on the link to read in full) https://ww... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	13 January 16:00	10,596	22	13
CHRISTMAS WINDOW COMPETITI... Boost ··· Multi media • Ashington Town Council	18 Dec 2025	9,878	85	7
NEW: Ashington Kerb Appeal Trial Laun... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	27 Nov 2025	8,902	30	6
TEMPORARY PARTIAL CLOSURE Station ... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	9 Dec 2025	8,552	6	6
https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk... Boost ··· Photo • Ashington Town Council	11 Dec 2025	6,162	12	6

Project Shield Update – 18th February, 5:00pm at County Hall, and online. The Executive Officer provided an update on Project SHIELD. The Council is currently awaiting an update for the current year. It was noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner role no longer impacts funding, and as a result, funding for four employed officers is unavailable. The Executive Officer met with the relevant contact on Friday and reported that representatives are attending several Town Councils. An information session has been arranged for the 18th February at County Hall, or online at 5:00pm, to update all Councils. The purpose of the session is to enable Councils to agree on how their funding is to be allocated. Visits to other councils are also being undertaken to explore further funding opportunities.

Cllr Purvis raised the matter of water at Nursery Park. The Allotments Officer advised that a significant volume of surface rainwater is entering the site. One of the gardens is also

experiencing considerable waterlogging, which is causing water to disperse onto the adjacent path.

Cllr Davis referenced the email circulated regarding asbestos discovered on the allotment site and requested an update. The Allotments Officer confirmed that the first instance involves small fragments, which may be attributable to the recent heavy rainfall and ground disturbance caused by vehicle movement. A further avenue on the site has also been found to contain asbestos; the Allotments Officer indicated this may have been fly-tipped, though this could not be confirmed at this stage.

Cllr Brown noted that asbestos is a recurring issue in the allotment area and highlighted that buildings along North Seaton contain asbestos, raising concern that this material could ultimately contaminate the allotments.

FGS2526/128 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2025/26

a) Updated Budget Report

The updated budget and expenditure report was **RECEIVED** and there were **NO** questions to the RFO.

b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid

The schedule of accounts paid was **RECEIVED** and those accounts paid since the last meeting was **ENDORSED** and there were **NO** questions received.

c) Bank Reconciliation

The bank reconciliation dated 31st January 2026 was **RECEIVED**

FGS2526/129 UK TOWN CULTURE 2028 – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (placed on the agenda by Cllr Caroline Ball)

Cllr Ball described that Ashington has a strong cultural foundation, citing the Pitman Painters as a notable example. She expressed that even without a successful outcome, pursuing this opportunity would provide the town with hope and raise its profile. She highlighted that Ashington already has a wealth of culture and existing projects to build upon, and referenced Animating Ashington as evidence that bringing opera to the streets of the town drew a genuine audience.

Cllr Amery raised concern regarding the timeline, noting that the submission must be made by 31st March, leaving only six or seven weeks, and expressed concern about the impact this would place on officers. Cllr Ball confirmed she is willing to lead and carry out the work herself, as she feels strongly about the opportunity. She advised that she has already contacted several organisations who have expressed willingness to be involved.

Cllr Wright expressed his full support for the motion, noting that Billy Connelly once performed at Bubbles Bar, and that for a town of its size, Ashington has made a notable mark on history. He acknowledged that Ashington has at times suffered reputationally, even amongst its own residents, and suggested that this initiative would help address that by celebrating the very best the town has to offer.

Cllr Davis also expressed support for the motion, referencing the town's strong sporting culture and its association with the Charlton brothers as a further example of Ashington's heritage. Cllr Fox stated that she sees no reason not to proceed and that the Council can only try. She noted that if local organisations came together, the initiative would also benefit their own publicity and bring attention to organisations that residents of Ashington may not even be aware of.

Cllr Green advised that he had received a briefing from a director at the County Council, who had informed him of other towns also submitting bids. He noted that Ashington would be classified as a medium-sized town and that, on that basis, the town has a strong chance of a successful outcome.

Cllr Fox, Cllr Green, Cllr Simm, Cllr Wright, and Cllr Davison all put themselves forward to assist Cllr Ball with this project.

FGS2526/130 PARTNERSHIP BOARD UPDATE REPORT

Cllr Grimshaw described the report as excellent and praised the work undertaken as outstanding.

Cllr Brown welcomed the contributions made by officers and fellow councillors but noted that the Council appears to be demonstrating to the County Council the direction of travel and cautioned that this should not be forgotten as a core service responsibility. He questioned how much the County Council is contributing, given that Ashington Town Council is committing £237,000, and suggested that residents of Ashington may effectively be paying twice for this service, with the funds potentially better deployed elsewhere. The Executive Officer confirmed that Cllr Brown requested this information at the most recent Partnership Meeting and it had not yet been provided.

Cllr Chambers drew a comparison with the cleansing service, noting that it too was a core service that had been enhanced, as is the case with the current arrangement. She expressed the view that the Council has consistently paid for enhanced services and queried the basis of Cllr Brown's objection.

Cllr Coyle sought the permission of the Chair to address Cllr Brown directly, asking whether, as a member of the partnership, he wished for Ashington Town Council to continue with it, and if not, how he would propose the funding be spent instead. He also asked Cllr Brown to consider what impact the removal of five operatives would have on the town.

Cllr Brown responded that, under the right circumstances, he would support continuing the Partnership. He noted that when the arrangement was first established, the overall pot was close to £900,000, whereas the County Council's contribution has since reduced considerably. In response to the funding question, he suggested the money equates to approximately £40,000 per ward, which could be used for ward enhancements. He acknowledged that the Council should have a say in the deployment of operatives but maintained that the current arrangement amounts to paying for core service provision rather than a genuine enhancement. He added that the County Council is aware that, should the situation not improve over the coming years, the Council may consider withdrawing from the partnership.

Cllr Ball raised a point of order that the meeting be engaged and not a back and forth between two Cllrs. The Chair intervened to halt the discussion, stating that the same concerns are raised repeatedly, and emphasised that there is no intention to remove officers who perform excellent work and collaborate effectively. The Chair noted that this ongoing uncertainty is detrimental to the officers whose employment may feel at risk.

Cllr Ball spoke to the matter of value for money, observing that £40,000 per ward is a modest sum relative to what the Council seeks to achieve. She highlighted that without the operatives, the condition of Ashington would be significantly worse, and praised the dedication and effort of the workforce. She expressed a wish that the operatives do not feel disheartened by the recurring debate.

Cllr Coyle acknowledged that Cllr Brown contributes positively to the committee and has put forward good ideas but expressed frustration that discussions in full Council meetings appear to regress rather than progress. He noted that the Council benefits from a 15% discount from the County Council because of having five operatives in place, when compared to what employment costs would be otherwise.

Cllr Simm expressed her appreciation for the impact of the Partnership, citing initiatives such as Kerb Appeal as particularly impressive. She noted that residents have also observed improvements, including grass edging and gully clearance, and highlighted the visible effort of officers including personally assisting with litter picking.

Cllr Amery acknowledged that he has not always been the strongest advocate for the partnership but stated that over recent months there has been a meaningful shift in the Council's ability to influence the deployment of operatives. He encouraged the partnership to continue evolving, commended the committee for their efforts, and stressed the importance of maintaining the current momentum.

Cllr Davies clarified that he has never advocated for abolishing the partnership but questioned whether it is appropriate for the Council to pay £250,000 to the County Council for what he considers to be a core service. He drew a comparison with other towns and parishes that do not have a similar enhancement agreement, such as Seahouses, and noted that the two principal councils with such agreements are Blyth and Ashington. He called for a review of the agreement and a comparison with other areas, to establish whether the Council is receiving fair value. He reiterated that he is not seeking to cause division, and acknowledged that the current delivery is excellent, but expressed a desire for proper scrutiny. He also recalled that when the original agreement was made, certain commitments were given that were never fulfilled.

Cllr Purvis noted that he has been a member of the Council since its establishment and that this issue has been raised every year without anyone ever approaching him or the Council with a viable alternative. He stated that the current level and quality of service cannot be replicated for £237,000 through any other means and expressed concern that the debate continues to go around in circles.

Cllr Grimshaw closed by thanking the operatives, officers, and members of the board for their exceptional work. She encouraged anyone with ideas for further enhancement to bring them to the attention of the Executive Officer. Cllr Grimshaw also suggested that those Cllrs who feel

they have alternative ideas to the current arrangement get their heads together and bring something to be considered.

FGS2526/131 ASHINGTON COMMUNITY WOODS

An update on the project was received with a report of the last meeting held. The report outlined progress on the proposed improvements to the site entrance and Miners' Memorial. The project, developed in partnership with Groundwork and the Friends Group, has included community consultation, initial design options, and preparation for a future funding application.

The report summarised feedback from 48 consultation responses, highlighting that the woods are well-used by local residents, primarily for dog walking and exercise. Key issues raised included fires and camps, drainage and parking concerns, dog fouling, and overgrown paths. While most respondents felt the entrance was welcoming, suggestions included improved drainage, better signage and waymarking, and a heritage-themed feature if artwork were to be introduced. There was limited support for additional seating or shelters due to concerns about vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The Steering Group also noted practical considerations including drainage works, access for horses and people with disabilities, wider parking issues, and the potential to use digital interpretation (such as QR codes) to enhance visitor engagement. The report and initial design concepts were noted.

The report and update was received. Cllr Amery expressed his appreciation for the woods, describing it as a brilliant asset for Ashington, and suggested that it would benefit from some Council funding, such as the provision of additional seating.

Cllr Fox agreed that the woods is a fantastic asset and that she makes great use of it herself, however she disagreed with the proposal for additional seating, expressing concern that during the summer months this could attract anti-social behaviour from young people and result in damage to the asset. She suggested that the condition of the grounds should be addressed before consideration is given to further additions such as seating or statues.

Cllr Ball noted that she had attended the recent meeting and was struck by the genuine care shown by those present for the asset. She highlighted that when the community woods were established, there was an understanding that without continued funding, the paths and wider infrastructure would fall into disrepair. She confirmed that she would be happy to direct ward funds towards the asset and to explore additional funding sources if required.

The Executive Officer confirmed that the money set aside by the Council will fund the initial project scope and completion of grant funding applications for larger pots of money.

FGS2526/132 SMALL AND ANNUAL GRANTS 2026/27

It was **AGREED** that the working group would be reconvened.

Cllr Brown advised that Cllr Tully had expressed an interest in joining the committee, as had Cllr Brown himself.

Cllr Fox drew attention to an issue she had observed with the small grants process, noting that smaller organisations such as Community Interest Companies can often struggle to access

funding and may disengage from the process entirely due to the requirement for 12 months accounts. She suggested that consideration be given to establishing a separate funding pot specifically for smaller and newer organisations to apply to.

Cllr Green expressed his support for Cllr Fox's suggestion.

Cllr Brown took the opportunity to thank all those involved in the North Seaton Colliery Community Centre, confirming that the solar panels are now fully installed and operational and that the central heating installation is complete. He also extended thanks to Kompan for their contribution to the play park.

It was AGREED that those members of the Grant's Group continue; Cllrs Grimshaw, Chambers, Green, Ball, and Davison with the addition of Cllrs Brown and Tully.

FGS2526/134 DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING
Tuesday 10th March 2026, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

The meeting ended at 19:02

DRAFT