

**Ashington Town Council**

**DRAFT Meeting of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022, in The Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Michelle Brannigan, Victor Bridges, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davies, Mark Purvis, Sophie Robinson, John Tully and Bob Walkinshaw. Cllr Caroline Ball arrived later as shown in minutes (6:22pm), Cllr Pauline Thompson arrived later as shown in the minutes (6:45pm).

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

**FGS 22/296 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Eleanor Armstrong, Lawrence Henderson, Jim Lang, Liam Lavery

**FGS 22/297 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Louis Brown and Cllr Victor Bridges declared an interest in agenda item, FGS 22/306 REMOVAL OF DAMAGED SHEDS AT HIRST EAST END ALLOTMENTS.

**FGS 22/298 DISPENSATIONS.**

Cllr Louis Brown requested dispensation to allow him to stay in the meeting and to comment on agenda item FGS 22/306 REMOVAL OF DAMAGED SHEDS AT HIRST EAST END ALLOTMENTS, as he had information relating to the item . **This was AGREED.**

**FGS 22/299 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public.

**FGS 22/300 MINUTES OF FGS MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 as a true record.

Cllr Tully referred members to page 5 of the previous minutes, item FGS 22/287 REPORT OF THE ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022.

Cllr Tully proposed a working group be set up to look at enhanced services moving forward, as the current Partnership Agreement with NCC ends in 2024. **It was AGREED** that once terms of reference were clear that the proposal would be brought to a future meeting, at the earliest possibility, to be formally agreed.

**FGS 22/301 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** a verbal and tabled update on items actioned since the previous meeting.

***EV Van***

The vehicle has been operational since Monday 21st November and to date is working well. The vehicle can travel up to 130 miles between charges, which is via an electrical point installed at the unit prior to purchase. We will keep an eye on the financial impact of energy costs.

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**Bus Shelters**

Following confirmation that £26,229 s106 Windfarm funding is available to be spent in Ashington, preferably in the current financial year, we are awaiting confirmation that this can be used to fund the proposed x3 bus shelters that the Council agreed at the last meeting, as the quotes have been sought but the work not ordered, this is expected to be straight-forward.

The funding available is for capital projects that benefit the community and in view that previous funding has been used towards play areas, it is suggested that an alternative capital project could be preferred. There is expected a further £14k in 2023/24 that the Council can access, therefore it would be good to think about this sooner rather than later.

A deep clean of the town's bus shelters will take place in the run up to Christmas.

**Christmas Lights Switch-On Event**

The Christmas Lights switch-on event that was scheduled for Thursday 24th November (from 3:30pm) was cancelled at 3:00pm in view that gazebos were moving with the wind and had to be taken down quite quickly. This meant the stall holders who were part of the event, had to pack up. Planning for the event engaged over 30 businesses and community groups, all of whom were disappointed but understanding.

Ashington Girlguiding Division, planned to make Christmas tealight lanterns with decorated jam jars. They are now going to offer the activity to the Girl guides as part of their Christmas activities.

Ashington Veterans and Elders Institute, guess the price of the hamper game was given away to a lucky winner at their coffee morning on Saturday 3rd December, and the 80 Christmas trees decorations were given to a school and 20 to the local beavers and cubs.

Cambois Rowing Club have extended their row to the North Pole Challenge until February 2023.

Koast Radio have welcomed the opportunity to work with Ashington Town Council more closely through the event.

Ashington Hirst Running Club stayed a while and got a few new members for the running

The Sewing Machine Guy will be offering their activity of fairy and fairy house making free of charge in the shop.

Cooplands donated the biscuit raffle prize to the ATC staff and commented that the lights were fantastic this year.

Asda were only there a short time but commented that it was lovely to catch up with community groups they work with, as well as meeting news one, and giving out some activity booklets. Asda hope to be included in any future events.

Real Deal Plus commented that the event would have been amazing, but that safety must come first especially with so many children about.

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Friends of Ashington Community Woods echoed this but were pleased to have been part of planning and future events.

Ashington Hirst Running Club enjoyed staying around and made the most of the exposure. With new members signed up.

Morpeth Lions stayed for as long as people wanted to see Santa and were very grateful to be involved.

Girl Guides passed on thanks to those who tried to get the event up and running in the conditions, and for the organising.

Cambois Rowing Club echoed these comments and especially praised Ryan 'described as a star', for his help with the rowing machines.

### **Selection Boxes and Christmas Trail**

The Christmas Trail has proved popular not only for children, but businesses were delighted to be involved in the Christmas activity. We gave out 30 selection boxes on the night to children who had taken part in the Christmas Trail.

Mark and Ryan delivered a supply of selection boxes to the businesses taking part in the Christmas Trail on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November. A post was put out on the ATC Facebook page that the Trail date had been extended to Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December and completed sticker cards could be handed in for their prize at any of the participating stores.

More cards and sticker were requested, and we should have numbers of participants by the end of this week.

### **Christmas Lights**

Feedback for the Christmas Lights has been positive with a post on Facebook gaining 125 likes and 25 positive comments.

"the lights are fantastic this year"

"best ever Christmas Lights"

"better than ????" (another town)

"the Christmas tree is beautiful this year, love the baubles"

### **Schools Involvement**

The following schools have all taken part in recording carols and Christmas songs, some have also sent in photos and videos. These will all be added to the video that is being produced by LukLuk Films.

- Ashington Academy
- Bothal Primary
- Central Primary
- James Knott Primary
- Bishops Primary
- Dukes Primary
- William Leach Primary

There are also recordings from Ashington Music Society.

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Ten businesses took part in the competition and the winner is The Salvation Army Shop, with their lovely festive fireside scene. They will receive a poster that can be displayed and will be presented with a hamper that can be shared or kept for the staff room.

**Wansbeck Road Planning Application - 22/04216/OUT**

The planning application will likely come to the NCC Strategic Planning Committee on 7th March 2023. The Planning Officer aims to have reports completed one-month in advance, therefore Tuesday 7th February is the last date that Ashington Town Council can schedule a meeting to agree their response and comments.

With the agreement of the Chair, an Extraordinary Full Council meeting will be scheduled for Tuesday 7th February at a venue large enough to fit those members of the public wishing to attend.

**Allotments****Tap Works**

We have 111 taps on our 8 allotment sites. In August, the Council agreed to replace x50 tap units as per the regulations enforced by NWL. There was a request for an additional 5 taps from Allotment Associations but only 3 taps were installed, paid for by the Associations (Woodhorn and Green Lane). Hirst East End decided against the additional taps (2).

7 sites have been visited by Northumbrian Water and conform to water regulation standard. The final inspection of Woodhorn Road is on 13th December.

**Advice from Northern Counties Allotments Association (NCAA) – Tenancy Agreements and Rules & Regulations**

To develop common tenancy agreements, rules and regulations across the allotment sites in the town, advice is being sought via Mr David Banks, Advisor at NCCA. Mr Banks has met with each allotment association in the town and drafts will be developed for discussion and hopefully agreement in coming weeks.

Advice is also being sought on management agreements between the associations and the Town Council, via Mr Banks, but priority is being given to Tenancy Agreements and Rules & Regulations.

**Play Areas**

Following the recent completion of the Alexandra Road Play Area, work will commence with Haydon Ward Councillors in identifying improvements to Aintree Close and Epsom Drive Play Area. These two play areas are recognised as priorities requiring improvements.

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The Clerk verbally updated members that a further large-scale planning application had been received for the Potland Burn Estate, the application can be viewed at;

<http://publicaccess.northumberland.gov.uk/online-applications>

An extension to the deadline for response has been requested, which it is expected will be permitted, and the application will be brought to the January Full Council meeting.

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Cllr Brannigan stressed that we need to start protecting green field sites and will be bringing the issue to a future agenda.

**Cllr Caroline Ball arrived at 6:21pm.**

Cllr Louis Brown requested a full report on the Christmas Lights Swich-On be brought forward, stating the event had never been cancelled before.

Cllr Ball expressed concerns regarding the gazebos for the light switch-on and stated that she was disappointed with NCC's response.

Cllr Ball also proposed an events committee be established to support ATC staff.

Cllr Tully and Cllr Brannigan stated that the lights are tremendous and congratulated and thanked the staff.

Cllr Grimshaw added that it was disappointing that the gazebos had to be taken down because of the high winds but wanted to thank the officers for doing a good job in involving so many businesses, community groups and organisations.

It was discussed that following budget setting, the Council should consider setting-up an Events Working Group. **It was AGREED** the proposal would be brought to a future meeting, at the earliest possibility, to be formally agreed.

**FGS 22/302 WANSBECK VALLEY FOODBANK**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** an update on work this year to date.

**It was FURTHER AGREED** to release the 3rd instalment of annual funding.

The Clerk informed members that there were selection boxes left over from the Christmas Trail and asked if members endorsed that these be donated to Wansbeck Valley Foodbank. Cllrs agreed they would be a welcome donation for the Christmas period.

**FGS 22/303 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2022/23**

**a) Updated Budget Report**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated budget report sent out in advance of the meeting.

**a) Accounts Paid**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid since the November FGS Meeting and to endorse those accounts paid according to the Council's Financial Regulations.

**b) Spending Committed to the year end**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** note of all known spending committed to the year end, and to consider any additional spending not included.

**Cllr Ball declared an interest in the next agenda item, with regards to Crossroads Café, and left the room.**

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**FGS 22/304 WARM HUB FUNDING**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** applications for warm spaces funding, from the pot of £4,720 agreed at the October meeting, and to agree any funding awards.

The Clerk advised members that as agreed by the Council at the October meeting, the Council had linked up with Northumberland Communities Together prior to launching the funding. As members were aware there were no application received at first asking, and the NCC Locality Coordinator working closely with community groups had sent a further circular.

The Clerk commented that the Council may have expected to receive more applications, however some warm hubs were NCC buildings and open anyway. Other warm hubs received annual funding from Ashington Town Council, so may not wish to apply for further grants. Finally, often it is not money that is in short supply to provide services, but people, and without the volunteers, it would be difficult. At least one organisation had fed back that they had considered a warm hub but could not provide the personnel to deliver it.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Tully, and **SECONDED** by Cllr Vicki Brown, that each organisation receive initial funding of £500.

Cllr Tully suggested that should groups require more funding they should be permitted to come back and ask for more. The Clerk asked for clarification as the groups had already asked for more than £500 in their applications. In addition, the need was now and the next meeting available to agree any further funding would be the February FGS, due to the Christmas break.

Cllr Tully responded that if funding was spent, they could come back and seek more and that this could be delegated to officers, in consultation with the Chair.

**Cllr Thompson entered the meeting at 6:45pm**

Cllr Brannigan **PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT** that the funding should be increased to £1,000, this was **SECONDED** by Cllr Marjorie Chamber.

Members proceeded to vote on the proposals, Cllr Brannigan requested a named vote.

**As per the rules of debate, the amendment for funding of £1,000 to be awarded to each group who had applied was taken.**

Those in favour: Cllr Brannigan, Cllr Chambers, Cllr Bridges, Cllr Walkinshaw (4)

Those against: Cllr Tully, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Vicky Brown, Cllr Davies, Cllr Purvis, Cllr Cuthbert, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Thompson, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw (9)

**The Amendment was not carried.**

**The original proposal was APPROVED**, to make an initial contribution of £500 to all applicants, and that should this fund be exhausted in the delivery of the warm space, that the organisation be invited to come back to the Council.



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**It was FURTHER AGREED** to delegate to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, any further contributions up to £2,000, as permitted by Financial Regulations.

Those organisations to receive funding are:

- Word of Life WRU Church
- Holy Sepulchre Church Hall Warm Hub
- Crossroads Café
- Northumberland Pride

**FGS 22/305 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**It was 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 (1) Information relating to an individual.

**FGS 22/306 REMOVAL OF DAMAGED SHEDS AT HIRST EAST END ALLOTMENTS**

**a) Damage at Hirst East End Allotments**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the report of incidents at Hirst East End Allotments and resulting damage to sheds sent out in advance of the meeting.

**Cllr Bridges left the meeting 7:05pm**

**b) Quotations for Removal/Associated Works**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** quotations for the take down and removal of burnt-out sheds, and associated works at Hirst East End Allotments sent out in advance of the meeting.

*To remove three damaged sheds and associated damage to an adjoining greenhouse, and to replace 7m of plot boundary fencing and gate to plot no. 8.*

Contractor A - £1,950

Contractor B - £4,665

**It was AGREED** to proceed with the works and to place the order with Contractor A, Northumbria Recycling at a cost of £1,950.

**FGS 22/307 URGENT ITEM – ASBESTOS REMOVAL**

**The Chair sought the Council's agreement to receive an urgent item.**

**It was AGREED** to suspend the following standing order:

*“9b - No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least seven clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice, or the day of the meeting.”*

**It was also AGREED to suspend standing order 11e) to allow the consideration of a single quotation, in view of the urgent nature of the work.**

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*“11e) Where it is intended to enter a contract less than £25,000 in value for the supply of work, goods or services the Clerk/RFO shall obtain three quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply).”*

**It was AGREED** to agree to engage Savana Environmental to remove asbestos from allotment sites as set out below, at a cost of £5,963:

**Scope of Works**

<b>Item 1:</b>	
Provision of asbestos removal operatives, materials, plant, equipment and waste disposal to undertake the following works:	£5,963.00
Attend site at the following allotment locations, wrap and remove for disposal at licensed transfer station stockpiled asbestos cement waste.	
High Market Allotment Site (3 piles)	
Wansbeck Road Allotment Site (2 piles) (Additional waste)	
Woodhorn Road Allotment Site (1 pile) (+ 2 piles size of 1 <sup>st</sup> estimated)	
Hirst East End Allotment Site (various as viewed)	
<b>Total Quotation Value (Excluding VAT)</b>	<b>£5,963.00</b>

**FGS 22/308 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

**Meeting ends 7:20pm**