

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 5 October 2021, at Ashington Hirst Welfare, Alexandra Road

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Caroline Ball, Michelle Brannigan, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Avril Chisholm, Jim Lang, Mark Purvis, Pauline Thompson, Bob Walkinshaw

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer, Stephen Humphrey- Assets & Facilities Manager, Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer (minutes), Members of the Public - 4

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Clerk explained to the public how the meeting would proceed and why some councillors had to leave the meeting.

Several residents had attended the meeting to voice their concerns regarding the proposed planning application 21/03780/CCD, item number 8 on the agenda.

The Clerk explained that Cllr. Ball was able to remain for the meeting with regards to objections and comments relating to the planning application, however, regarding any actual planning matters Cllr Ball would need to declare an interest.

The Clerk informed the residents that they had the full support of Ashington Town Council and that their views and comments would be taken into consideration when the town council responded to the planning application. Subsequently the town council had already submitted objections to another planning application linked to the rail line development a few months earlier.

Resident comments / objections included

- Objection to any additional form of crossing as they felt the crossing on Green Lane at one end of the proposed site for an underpass and the crossing on Station Road at the other end of the proposed site were quite sufficient, approximately 500 to 600 yards between the two, indeed you can see both crossings from the current pathway over the rail lines.
- The potential for increased anti-social behaviour. There have been several fires started near the current crossing, as well as a congregating place for drug and alcohol users.
- The cost implications of building an underpass, these funds could be better used to improve the proposed station some 250 yards further up the line,
- Do not agree with the survey done on the current crossing and felt the numbers stated using the crossing were exaggerated.
- The current crossing is not accessible for all.
- Understand the history of the crossing being a right-of-way.
- Speaking on behalf of other residents, the couple residing at 1 Darnley Road (closest to the proposed underpass) requested a meeting with the town council to formulate a response to the planning department and hoped that combined a good case could be built against the planning application.
- First-hand experience of how bad the anti-social behaviour has been living so close to the pathway along and up to the crossing. The police have said they do not have the

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resources to monitor the area. If this is the case how will CCTV and lighting help to combat the issues. If anything, the proposed walls will make it even more appealing for anti-social behaviour, and block all line of sight for children using the underpass.

- Recent events at an underpass at Cramlington and Howden reinforce the reasons not to go ahead with the plans.
- Promises to be kept informed have not materialised.
- Frustrating that so far, the public's comments have not been considered (results of the survey).
- Work on the site to be carried out overnight.

Clerk's Response

- ATC received notification on 30 September 2021
- All comments will be properly logged and considered
- No amount of lighting could make it safe
- Do not assume the application will go through. Planning will not allow any building works to start until the planning application has gone through
- The more residents that log onto planning portal and comment, will flag up as an issue,
- Will suggest a special meeting to formulate response to the planning,
- Consultation process will be questioned
- Planning process started just last week
- Concerned to note that public protection has no comments
- Police not responded yet

FGS 21/100 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Eleanor Armstrong, Victor Bridges, Matthew Cuthbert, Lawrence Henderson, Liam Lavery, Sophie Robinson and John Tully.

FGS 21/101 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

Cllr. Lynne Grimshaw and Cllr Mark Purvis declared an interest in item number 8 on the agenda, PLANNING APPLICATION 21/03780/CCD.

FGS 21/102 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27 July 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGS 21/103 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

FGS 21/104 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.***Ashington Hirst Running Club.***

Ashington Hirst Running Club requested the amount of £750 to support the purchase of running t-shirts for participants in the Fell'em Doon Festive 5K run. The run will take place in Ashington Community Woodland in December 2021.

The Ashington Hirst Running Club organise two public running events, each year, in Ashington; a 10K run in the summer and a 5K event in December.

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The events aim to encourage people to take up running, whatever their ability and the Club envisage that 350 runners will take part in this event. The events are building in popularity and participants will be limited to this number.

Funding would support the purchasing t-shirts for the participants. It is envisaged that the majority of runners will be from Ashington but the event also brings people into the town.

The Club are also active in raising funds for local good causes including Real Deal Plus.

Parkhead & Wansbeck Powersports

Parkhead & Wansbeck Powersports requested the sum of £500 to support the funding of the British Junior Powerlifting Championships in October.

The group have been chosen to organise and host the event this year at the Hirst Welfare Centre.

The activities the group provide support a range of people, including a significant number of disabled people. The activities help build confidence and self-esteem for its members.

Since the Covid-19 restrictions came into place, it is only now that limited activities are beginning to take place within the Hirst Welfare Centre. The group hope to encourage football to the Centre through the activities they are involved in.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. The Ashington Hirst Running Club receive the sum of £750 as sponsorship from Ashington Town Council for the Fell'em Doon Festive 5K Run.**
- ii. The Parkhead & Wansbeck Powersports receive the sum of £500 to support the British Junior Powerlifting Championships in October.**

FGS 21/105 6. WOODHORN MUSEUM ACCESSIBLE PLAY AREA.

Cllr. Mark Purvis brought to the attention of the Town Council that Woodhorn Museum in Ashington has launched a public fundraising campaign to support the creation of a new accessible play area at the museum site.

The scheme is a planned extension of the existing play area to include more accessible and inclusive play equipment to enable all to benefit from visiting the museum.

Woodhorn Museum has already secured over £50,000 in external funding from SUEZ Communities Trust and The Ridley Family Charity to help deliver the project. Members of the public have also significantly contributed via (via Go Fund Me) to help try raise the final amount needed to turn the planned accessible playground into a reality.

The proposed scheme will extend the existing play area at Woodhorn with new accessible play equipment that will help children interact and learn through sound, vision, memory and sensory experiences. A dedicated "rotating disk" play piece will also provide a calming experience for children with autism. The play extension will also include an accessible path to the playground and new seating.

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Subject to securing full funding the scheme is planned to be developed over the Winter in readiness for spring 2022. The confirmed scheme cost is £70K and with public donations the current funding total stands at £52.5k a shortfall of £17.5K. An application for £10k is pending with the "Movement for Goods" fund, the outcome of which is expected in the next few weeks. If successful, then the likely funding shortfall would be £7.5K.

In addition to the funding for the play area members also agreed to raise the contribution to £10,000 to incorporate funds for Christmas activities delivered to children with additional needs.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. **Ashington Town Council make a funding contribution of £10,000 to the Woodhorn Museum Accessible Play Area Scheme, and supporting costs for Christmas activities, and that**
- ii. **The contribution be funded by virement from the agreed 2021/22 budget provision of £10,000 originally agreed for the Northumberland Miners' Picnic event in 2021.**

FGS 21/106 7. BUDGET REPORT.

The Clerk presented a detailed budget report to the council for the period 1 April – 30 September 2021.

The Clerk highlighted the following items;

- Savings at Hirst Park
- Refund from Neighbourhood Services Partnership
- Climate Change enhancements
- Funding received from outside organisations
- Need to start and think about precept for 2022/23
- If identified schemes are not completed the funds get rolled forward
- Payment for Electric Bikes?
- Mentioned that Northumbria Police have had a substantial amount of funding in recent year

It was RESOLVED to RECEIVE and APPROVE the report.

FGS 21/107 8.PLANNING APPLICATION

21/03780/CCD – Construction of a New Covered Pedestrian Underpass to Replace Existing Level Crossing, Including Works to Public Rights of Way. Construction of Soft and Hard Landscaping, Surface and Subsurface Drainage, Utilities and Other Services, Boundary Treatment and Other Associated Works.

It was RESOLVED to DEFER this item until such time as a special meeting can be arranged for residents to meet with members of the town council.

FGS 21/108 8.CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WORKING GROUP.

Cllr. Lang informed members that the first meeting of the Climate Change & Environmental

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Issues Working Group took place on the 5 August 2021. The working group were reminded of the Climate Change Policy Statement adopted by Ashington Town Council in 2019. At the meeting it was agreed to consider and discuss a practical programme of achievable work, including physical projects, raising awareness and improving knowledge.

The second meeting of the Working Group took place on the 9 September 2021. The meeting built on discussions from the first meeting and Cllr. Lang reported that Town Council staff were currently developing a Climate Change page on the Council's new website which will contain all relevant climate change information and associated links to other organisations. The page will become live in coming weeks.

Tree planting schemes on the two main routes through the town (A197 and A196 / B1334 corridors) to tackle carbon emissions are also being developed and will be brought to the Council for full consideration in due course and will likely include bulb and wildflower planting as part of the proposals.

Cllr. Lang reported that the Town Council had organised a litter pick in and around Hirst Park on the 25 September to raise awareness of the Big Green Week initiative (18-26 September). The aim of the initiative was to raise awareness and develop plans for our climate and nature in the run up to November when the United Kingdom will host the United Nations Climate Summit (known as COP26). A total of 15 bags of rubbish were collected.

Cllr. Lang proposed a motion to oppose balloon and sky lantern releases. The first of many climate change motions the working group are hoping to be adopted in the coming months.

Cllr. Lang informed members that the release of sky lanterns and balloons had the potential to have an adverse impact on the environment, as well as a danger to wildlife, livestock and marine life. Sky lanterns in particular pose a significant fire hazard and both contribute to litter and waste on land.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. Ashington Town Council supports Northumberland County Council's stance on balloon and sky lantern releases and formally adopts a policy that opposes the release of balloons and sky lanterns in Ashington,**
- ii. A statement to be released on the Town Council managed Website and social media platforms that publicises the Council's adopted position and sets out the negative environmental consequences of balloon and sky lantern releases; and that**
- iii. An alternative list of suitable, ethical and eco-friendly environmental alternatives be published alongside the statement.**

FGS 21/109 8.DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next Finance and General Services Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 26 October 2021 at 6:00pm, venue to be agreed. **The meeting ended at 7:30pm.**