

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Tuesday 16 November 2021 at Hirst Welfare Centre.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Marjorie Chambers (Vice Chair)	
Eleanor Armstrong	Caroline Ball
Michelle Brannigan	Louis Brown
Vicky Brown	Avril Chisholm
Matthew Cuthbert	Lynne Grimshaw
Lawrence Henderson	Jim Lang
Liam Lavery	Sophie Robinson
Pauline Thompson	John Tully
Bob Walkinshaw	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Assets and Facilities Manager
Sharon Parmley – Senior Admin Officer/PA (minute taking)
Members of the Public – 1

C21/968 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mark Purvis and Victor Bridges.

C21/969 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

Disclosures of interest were received from,

Cllr. Caroline Ball regarding item 7. Application For Funding Support, Full Circle Food Project.

Cllr. Lynne Grimshaw regarding item 8. Planning Application 21/03780/CCD.

Cllr. Jim Lang regarding item 8. Planning Application 21/03780/CCD.

C21/970 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the Tuesday 21 September 2021, were agreed and signed as a true record.

C21/971 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

C21/962 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.

The Special Projects Officer reported that the Remembrance Day Service had been well attended and thanked the Assets and Facilities Manager, Neighbourhood Services Officer and the WI for their work in the garden in preparation for the day.

Ashington Sea Cadets and Marine Cadets, SSAFA and several members of the public and Council members thanked Ashington Town Council for a moving and well organised service.

C21/966 APPOINTMENT OF A NEW TOWN CLERK/RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER.

The Special Projects Officer informed members that the new Clerk, Sarah Eden would be starting on Monday 6 December. Sarah is looking forward to joining the town council.

C21/972 5. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.

The Leader Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert provided the following update report;

- **Play Areas – CCTV** - Town Council funded CCTV has been in place since the beginning of October, at Paddock Wood and Peoples Park Play Areas. After a couple of incidents, which were addressed by Assetwatch, it appears that the CCTV has had the desired effect and there has been no significant vandalism or anti-social behaviour over the past few weeks.
- **Floral Planting** - The floral towers and troughs around the town had recently been planted with winter bedding plants, as well a tidy up of the flower beds on Station Road.
- **Litter Bins & Bus Shelters** - As part of the on-going programme a number of new litterbins have been installed around the town. As stated at the last meeting there is a focus on removing smaller, older column mounted bins and replacing them with larger capacity ground mounted bins.

The recently appointed Neighbourhood Services Officer is also working on the towns bus shelters for deep cleans and repainting where necessary.

- **Neighbourhood Services Partnership**

The next Neighbourhood Partnership Board meeting will take place on the 30 November. Any members wishing to report issues in their ward or request items added to the Winter Works programme, please contact a member of the board before the meeting.

The Leader informed Councillors that he had received several updates from the Neighbourhood Services Team and would be distributing all of the information within the next few days.

Members discussed the need to be able to measure the performance of the Neighbourhood Services Team as well as ensuring the town receives value for money.

- **Ashington Christmas Tree & Lights** - Ashington's Christmas Tree is due to be installed by Elveden early on Wednesday morning, 17 November. The town's Christmas lights, and Christmas tree lights will be completed week commencing Monday 22 November.

For clarification there will be no switch-on event this year due to continuing concerns with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, as in previous years new Christmas lighting features, designed by Ashington school children, will be part of the display. This year will see five new features placed close to the town's Christmas tree on Station Road.

The designs are from an annual competition, organised by the Town Council, with schools in the town. Ashington children have designed new lighting features for the past eleven years and this year saw seven school's entering the competition with five winning designs developed into new lighting features. Over 700 entries were received by the Town Council and the Leader thanked all the schools who took part particularly at this very challenging time.

C21/973 6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2020/21.

The Special Projects Officer presented the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 and motion to the Council.

Resolved:

That further to the completion of the external audit review by PKF Littlejohn LLP of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for Ashington Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2021,

- (i) Full Council resolve that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year 2020/21, including the External Auditor report and certificate, be approved and accepted,
- (ii) Full Council formally note that, except for the matter reported below, in the view of the external auditor, the information in Section 1 and 2 of the AGAR was in accordance with Proper Practices and that no other matters had come to attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements had not been met:

“The smaller authority has disclosed that it made proper provision during the year 2020/21 for the exercise of public rights, by answering “Yes” to Section 1, Assertion 4. However, as was reported last year, we are aware that it failed to do this and should have answered “No” to this assertion. It has also that it took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from external and internal audit, by answering “Yes” to Section 1, Assertion 7, which, on the basis of above, is not correct.”

Cllr. Lynne Grimshaw
Chair – Finance & General Services Committee
10 November 2021

C21/974

7. APPLICATION FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.

The Full Circle Food Project requested the sum of £650 to support the costs of the organisations Christmas programme for Ashington residents including activities for children. Activities to include Santa’s Grotto, eco crafts and a Christmas party for up to 40 children.

The Full Circle Food Project has been active since 2014 and is now based in the Hirst Park Growing Zone, providing healthy eating activities for the Ashington Community.

Many of the Full Circle Food Project beneficiaries come from the deprived Hirst Ward and activities are improving the life skills of attendees as well as their health and well-being. Currently over one hundred residents are benefitting from weekly activities. It is envisaged that up to eighty will benefit from the Christmas activities including 40 children and young people.

Resolved:

That; the Full Circle Food Project be awarded the sum of £650 to support costs of the organisations Christmas programme.

C21/975

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.

Cllr. Ball notified members that the planning application for the underpass at Darnley Road was now on hold.

Northumberland County Council have put the application on hold in order to explore and consider alternative options to the underpass. Residents had also responded with objections in numbers which dictated NCC look more closely at the planning application. NCC have recognised how organised and passionate the public response was.

ATC welcomed the decision to look at alternatives and will formally respond to the planning application.

C21/976

9. PARISH PRECEPTS AND COUNCIL TAX 2022/23.

The Special Projects Officer notified members that the indicative 2022/23 tax base was to be £7,713.69, an increase of 251.03 Band D properties, totalling a core budget revenue of £26,845, without any increase in charge for 2022/23.

The Leader invited members to form a budget working group, which will meet in December to discuss the budget for 2022/23. Any members wishing to attend the budget working group to contact the Leader via email.

Resolved:

That, Members establish a Precept Working group to determine the Precept (Council Tax) for 2022/23.

C21/977

10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Full Council was agreed for Tuesday 25 January at 7.00pm. (venue to be agreed).

C21/978

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC.

The Town Council agreed:

- (a) That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the agenda as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in 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; and
- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweigh the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons: - Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A as amended (1, 2 and 4)
 - Information relating to any individual,
 - information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and
 - information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection

AGENDA 6, Enc i)

with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the Authority. AND:

- (c) that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure would adversely affect the Authority's ability to conduct its affairs.

C21/979 12. EMPLOYMENT MATTER

A verbal report was received from the Special Projects Officer regarding an employment matter.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the report and to take the actions recommended in line with Terms and Conditions of Employment and the Council's policies.

The meeting ended at 9:00pm