

Updated Town Hall Closure

Damp proofing works at Ashington Town Hall:

Strip out – 6th and 7th February, Damp works – 8th – 17th February, Services, decoration, and reinstatement 20th February – 3rd March.

Meetings

Hirst Welfare has been booked for the following meetings:

FGS - Tuesday 14th February, 6:00pm

Climate Change & Environment Committee - Tuesday 21st February, 6:00pm

We also have an Extraordinary Full Council meeting at Bothal School on Tuesday 7th February, commencing at 6:00pm.

Contact with Officers

Officers, not including NSO's, will be working at home during the works, with limited access where we must print things off for meetings. The systems in place fully support working from home, with all files available via a shared dropbox, so there is no interruption to work. If members wish to meet officers in person, there are several venues in the town where this can be arranged.

Telephone System

At the time of writing the landline is not working. Sharon has been researching alternative systems that will better meet our needs and a proposal will be brought to the March meeting. Having our own provider, rather than via NCC is more expensive but we can manage the service directly. The main needs of the system, that are not available presently are:

- ✓ One direct number to ATC, that can be picked up by all officers.
- ✓ Different answerphone messages, depending on out of office, holiday, on the other line.
- ✓ Callers able to select to external line (Northumberland County Council)

Neighbourhood Services Officers

The Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers, Mark and Ryan have been busy repairing litter bins and planters, ensuring they are in tip top condition. We will shortly be sharing some positive messaging about this. Bus shelters have also been cleansed, as happens periodically, another example of looking after our assets that we will be sharing across our media.

Officers have installed three new public seats as agreed in September; two on B1334 path/cycleway, and one in People's Park. We are planning a press release about Town Council seating when the weather improves which will focus on our ethos of maintaining not replacing, and also equipping seats with armrest to support those with accessibility needs.

Neighbourhood Services Officers will be working closely with NCC to improve the environs of the bus shelters recently installed on Alexandra Road, near Berry Moor and Windy Gyle.

Northumberland County Council Consultation – Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) For The Control Of Dogs, Antisocial Behaviour, Crime And Policing Act 201, Part 4

Ashington Town Council agreed a response to the consultation at Full Council in November. We asked that Sports Fields be included in a ban on dogs, with specific reference to Hirst Park.

Recently, Durham County Council started a consultation to update their PSPO which ends in May 2023, and they are seeking to include 'dogs on leads' for designated sports fields, not a full ban, but an attempt to reduce the issue of dog fouling ahead of sports being played.

This week, NCC Senior Animal Welfare and Environmental Enforcement Officer answered to the Council's consultation response:

"Thank you for your response to the dog control consultation. Here is an update:

Generally, the proposal to extend the current was well supported so the orders will continue for another 3 years. As for the suggestion to ban dogs from all sports fields in Northumberland, this is something that has been discussed a number of times over the years. One of the main problems is that many of the sports areas do not have a clear boundary, like a fence.

Under the current legislation it is an offence to take a dog into a fenced off children's play area (with swings and slides etc) but areas that have play equipment and are not fenced off are not covered.

You are probably aware that our department is currently carrying out monitoring of the Hirst football pitch to determine if there is a problem with dog fouling in this area. Officers will be visiting the area at different times of the day to witness how many dog owners are using the fenced off area to exercise their dogs. We will also look for any dog fouling inside the fenced area and of course if we witness anyone not cleaning up after their dog a fixed penalty notice will be issued. We will continue the monitoring until April/May then our findings will be discussed at a higher level to decide if any changes need to be made.

I would imagine that if it was decided that the Hirst field could be added to the current no dog zones then other sports areas could then be looked at going forward."

Hirst Masterplan

Members have been invited to a Teams online meeting on Thursday 16th February to discuss the work carried out on the development of a masterplan for the Hirst. NCC's Neil Quinn and the commissioned architects are seeking feedback from Cllrs.

West Sleekburn Recycling Plant Visit

Following an invite to attend a tour, five spaces have been given to visit on Thursday 23rd March at 2pm. Along with the Clerk, Cllrs Brannigan, Thompson, Chambers and Ball promptly confirmed they wished to take part. Unfortunately, they cannot add numbers to this visit, as there are waiting lists, but if anyone cannot attend, following confirmation of the date/time, another could go in their place.

Lynemouth Windfarm 106 Funding

Funds provided by Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) are linked to Lynemouth Windfarm and under the agreement with SPR must be used for the purposes of Regeneration and Enterprise. The funds are available to Ashington and Newbiggin by the Sea Town Councils.

We have recently reclaimed funding for the installation of bus shelters (x3 Shelters for Woodhorn Rd, Alexandra Rd and A197) at £21,665.75. There is £4,563 remaining that is expected to part-fund a further shelter.

Between £14,000 and £16,000 will be available in the next financial year, again for Enterprise and Regeneration. The Town Council can accumulate funding, but we need to keep officers updated of any plans in the pipeline. Members are encouraged to think how funding could be put to best use.

Tree Planting Schemes

As agreed at the Climate Change Committee in October, Brambledown has planted 73 semi mature trees at 5 locations: Woodhorn roundabout, A196 Wansbeck Riverside, Alexandra Road, Paddock Wood area and South Side in North Seaton. 12-month watering and maintenance will be carried out by Brambledown.

A further 13 semi mature trees are due to be planted by local contractor GS Wright Tree Surgeons at Woodhorn Villas and A197 Pegswood; watering and maintenance will be carried out by our own Neighbourhood Services Officers.

Allotment Works

All taps that that have recently been installed on allotment sites across the town have passed Northumbria Water inspections, carried out on behalf of DEFRA.

Significant perimeter fencing and associated improvement works have been completed at North Seaton Colliery Allotment Site by HFF, as agreed by Council in February 2022.