

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Full Council, and**  
**Finance & General Services Committee,**  
**held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023**  
**at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllrs. Mark Purvis (Chair), Caroline Ball, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davies, Lynne Grimshaw, Jim Lang, Sophie Robinson, Pauline Thompson and John Tully.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

Sarah Eden – Town Clerk & RFO, Stephen Humphrey, Assets and Facilities Manager, Sharon Parmley – Administration (minute taking).

**FC23/1102 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Welcome by the Chair Cllr Mark Purvis.

**FC23/1103 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Michelle Brannigan, Victor Bridges, Lawrence Henderson, Liam Lavery and Bob Walkinshaw.

**FC23/1104 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Louis Brown declared an interest in item FGS23/346 PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO ALLOTMENT WATER SYSTEMS – 2023/24 on the Finance & General Services agenda, as a member of the North Seaton Colliery Allotment Association.

Cllr Pauline Thompson, Marjorie Chambers, and Sophie Robinson declared an interest in item FGS23/346 PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO ALLOTMENT WATER SYSTEMS – 2023/24, as representatives on the newly formed Allotment Liaison Group.

**FC23/1105 DISPENSATIONS**

Cllrs. Marjorie Chambers and Sophie Robinson requested dispensation to ask/answer any questions that may arise in relation to the Allotment Liaison Group.

**FC23/1106 RESIGNATION OF LEADER**

**It was AGREED** to formally **RECEIVE** the resignation of former Leader, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert.

**It was FURTHER AGREED** to formally acknowledge the new Leader appointed by the Labour Group, Cllr John Tully.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw thanked Cllr Cuthbert on behalf of all the Councillors for a good job done whilst in the role and wished him all the best for the future.

The Chair formally welcomed Cllr John Tully as Leader.

**FC23/1107 WAIVER OF CLLR SIX-MONTH ATTENDANCE RULE**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** a leave of absence request from Cllr Liam Lavery.

**It was FURTHER AGREED** that in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Cllr Liam Lavery's non-attendance at meetings of the Council be approved for a period of 6-months on grounds of ill health and recovery.

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**FC23/1108 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was one member of the public in attendance, whom had no questions for the Council.

**FC23/1109 REPORT FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a tabled report from Inspector Wayne Daniels, who could not attend the meeting.

***Overall data from the start of the year***

There have been 1,589 incidents reported during this period. As a result, there have been 569 crimes, 151 in relation to transport (traffic collisions), 128 in relation to anti-social behaviour and the majority is in relation to public safety which covers a wide variety of incidents which don't fall into the other categories but there is nothing of concern in relation to this.

***Update regarding crimes:***

The highest number of crimes are in relation to violence against the person (non-injury) which also includes threats of violence. Theft related offences is our next highest with a large part linked to shoplifting. The teams have had some great results over the last few weeks arresting several of our sector targets which have resulted in custodial sentences. The Coop seem to have the highest reports (obviously there are a few in the area) but we have been working with them and are still trying to arrange a meeting with the area manager.

***Other updates***

In our response to community intelligence, we executed 2 warrants recently and were successful in relation to one of them.

We have also used our Closure Order powers to get full closures on 2 addresses in Ashington linked to anti-social behaviour and drug misuse.

It is getting to the time of year when we generally start to see an increase in anti-social behaviour, work is already ongoing with our partners to discuss our plans and have a more coordinated approach to tackle some of these issues, taking into account some of the issues we saw last year with the fires in the community woods for example. I will be able to give more of an update on this during our next meeting.

I have been working on a project with the NCC Communities Together Team to create a coordinator role who will work in the Hirst area, and I'm pleased to say that between the NCC Communities Together Team and the Violence Reduction Unit, they have been able to match fund this role and the person will be in place soon. In brief, together we have identified key priorities for the area which include; Crime and ASB, health issues (including mental health, drugs and alcohol misuse), housing and environment, education and employment and the community. Although they will work from the Hirst area, this will obviously have a wider impact on Ashington as a whole because it will bring key partners and stakeholders together for a more coordinated approach which I feel has been missing. Again, I will give more information about this next time.

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A survey will soon be sent out on our Northumbria Connect System to the residents of Ashington which ask how people feel living in the area (which includes how safe they feel), what they feel are the main issues/priorities/concerns, etc. Once I have the data from the results of this survey, I will be able to share some of our findings with you.

Finally, you may have heard rumours about a reduction in our PCSO numbers within the force or seen updates from the PCC regarding investment into Neighbourhood Teams. We have recently undergone a review of our Neighbourhood Policing Model which will be refocussing our priorities to:

- Reduce neighbourhood crime and Antisocial Behaviour (ASB).
- Proactively target and disrupt offenders.
- Identify and protect vulnerable victims.

As a result of our change in focus and increased emphasis on proactivity and offender management, we have needed to consider our skillset required to deliver this model. In order to achieve this, the force is investing 134 police officers into Neighbourhood Teams. This means there will be a reduction in PCSO's across the force, but the teams will also see more police officers put into the Neighbourhood Teams. Obviously, this will be a sensitive matter internally for us, but this will increase our proactive capabilities to deal with our priorities.

Cllr Grimshaw stated that she was disappointed that we would be losing PCSO's, they have done a fantastic job working in the community.

Cllr Ball suggested writing to the Crime Commissioner regarding the PCSO's, and request reassurance on the future of community policing. Appropriate questions would be actioned by the Clerk.

**FC23/110 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**a) Full Council 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** and sign as a true record the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

**b) Extraordinary Full Council 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** and sign as a true record the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

Cllr Grimshaw thanked ATC Officers on behalf of the Bothal Ward Councillors for a well run meeting, which residents were delighted to be able to engage with ATC regarding the planning matter. Cllr Grimshaw updated that she had not heard when it was going to the Strategic Planning Committee.

The member of public in attendance sought the Chair's approval to speak on the matter, and reiterated what a positive meeting it had been, with a good turn out, adding that it was good to capture resident's enthusiasm for a very sensitive matter.

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**FC23/1111 REPORT FROM THE CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON**

The Civic Head sent his apologies for the meeting, so the item was deferred.

**FC23/1112 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a verbal report from the new Leader of the Council, Cllr John Tully.

Cllr Tully shared the good news of £16 million funding for regeneration in Ashington Town Centre.

Cllr Tully also expressed the need to develop a strategic plan for the council, setting out priorities such as clean streets, Climate Change and Community Engagement.

He agreed the Council had made a good start in the community and reiterated that the Council would continue to do the best for the Community.

**FC23/1113 FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT, MARCH 2023**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234), the updated document presented by the Clerk/RFO.

It was **FURTHER AGREED to APPROVE** the Financial and Management Risk Assessment, March 2023.

The Clerk highlighted training for Councillors which is to come forward, as well as a new purchase order system and invoicing system.

The Clerk invited members to read the document and come back with any questions they may have.

**FC23/1114 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

It was **AGREED** the Annual Meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

**FC23/1115 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **AGREE 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 employee(s).

The member of the public present left the meeting.

The Assets and Facilities Manager and Communication & Engagement Officer stepped out of the meeting 6:15pm.

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**FC23/1116 PERSONNEL****a) Recruitment**

**It was AGREED** to proceed with the recruitment of an Administration Assistant and to advertise the vacancy via Indeed and Jobs North East, as well as the Council's own media.

**b) NJC Pay Scales 2023/24**

It was **AGREED** to allocate a further estimated £7,812 to employee costs for 2023/24 based on current negotiations (flat increase £1,925 as last year) which exceed the budgeted 4%. It was noted that any further increase on this would need to be taken from contingency.

**c) Reward and Recognition**

**It was AGREED** to set aside £100 to pay to employees who successfully complete the Town & Parish sector specific training – Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA), and role specific training as agreed.

**FC23/1117 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Annual Meeting of the Council Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023, 6pm, Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

**FGS23/338 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR FINANCE AND GENERAL SERVICES**

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw takes the Chair from Cllr Purvis for the Finance & General Services Meeting.

**FGS23/339 MINUTES OF FGS MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023 as a true record.

**FGS23/340 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES**

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

**Neighbourhood Services Officers**

The Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers, Mark and Ryan have addressed several issues of vandalism to bus shelters, litterbins and floral planting. A number of flower troughs have been damaged and removed from Station Bridge and will be repaired ready for new summer. Three labour intensive floral planters not suited to more sustainable planting have been removed on the A197.

We supported NCC Neighbourhood Services to remove the dilapidated fencing and to tidy the area adjacent to the bus shelter the Council installed on Alexandra Road.

NSO's are operating a programme of removing column mounted and unstable litter bins and replacing bins on concrete pads, as opposed flagstones. There is now only one column mounted litter bin in the town. Once this programme is complete, we will order the 2023/24 quota of litter bins (24) to replace those that are past their best.

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Work has been on-going in cleaning and maintenance of the town's bus shelters and play areas during winter months.

In the coming weeks Mark will be supporting the installation of defibrillators, and Ryan will be supporting the Great British Spring Clean. Additionally, all things spring will continue with maintenance of flowers beds in the town centre and gateways, as well as refurbishment on public seating. Several bus shelters have also been identified as requiring paint work. The electric van continues to work well and meets officer requirements.

### **Engagement**

Sharon is attending Wansbeck Community Engagement Day at Hirst Welfare Centre on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March which is an ideal networking opportunity. The Great British Spring Clean has been the main focus over the last couple of weeks, as well as sharing the endeavours of the Ashington Litter Picking Project. We are working with Neighbourhood Services to seek a better way of reporting and to remove the double handling of community litter picks, which will improve response times and reduce our workload in this regard.

The events calendar, and forthcoming events, which have also been at the centre of recent work is on the agenda.

### **Hirst Masterplan**

Several Members attended a Teams online meeting on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the work carried out on the development of a masterplan for the Hirst. NCC's Neil Quinn has set up a mop-up sessions on 27<sup>th</sup> March from 5pm-6pm for those who were unable to attend.

### **Meeting with Great Northumberland Forest, Kirsten Johnson**

Stephen met with Kirsten last Monday and talked through several potential sites for tree planting, some of which had previously been identified by Kirsten. In total, eleven sites have been identified for potential schemes including North Seaton roundabout, the Wansbeck estuary, Community Woods, and the Green Lane/Greencroft area.

### **Bus Shelters**

Those bus shelters being funded by Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw and Caroline Ball have been ordered, along with the shelter going in on Woodhorn Road. An additional four shelters will be ordered at the start of the next financial year, according to life span and as advised at the February FGS meeting.

### **Allotment Liaison Meeting**

The first meeting was held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March. The meeting was attended by allotment associations, Councillors and staff. At the meeting, the work to develop new agreements between the Town Council and individual allotment associations was agreed. This would then lead to new Tenancy Agreements and Rules & Regulations being developed for sites across the town. Mike Brannigan, of the National Allotment Society is supporting the Town Council with this element of the work.

### **Defibrillators**

The defibrillators are being installed next week at the twelve locations agreed by the Council, and with funding from all Ashington County Cllrs. Sarah is working directly with the named

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guardians to register each defibrillator on [The Circuit](#) which identifies them to North East Ambulance Service in the case of an emergency.

The initial registration is complete, and each site guardian will then log on and identify them as emergency ready once they are installed.

### **FGS23/341 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2022/23**

#### ***a) Updated Budget Report***

**It was AGREED** to note that a complete end of year budget report will be received at the next Finance and General Services meeting.

#### ***b) Accounts Paid***

**It was AGREED** to **RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid since the February Finance and General Services Meeting, and to endorse those accounts paid according to the Council's Financial Regulations.

### **FGS23/342 WANSBECK VALLEY FOODBANK**

**It was AGREED** to **RECEIVE** an update on work this year to date, sent out in advance of the meeting.

**It was FURTHER AGREED** to release the fourth and final instalment of annual funding of £3,250.

### **FGS23/343 WARM HUB FUNDING**

This item was deferred pending further information.

### **FGS23/344 EVENTS ADVISORY GROUP**

#### ***a) Terms of Reference***

**It was AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the draft terms of reference sent out in advance of the meeting for the Events Advisory Group.

**It was FURTHER AGREED** to adopt the agreed terms of reference for the Events Advisory Group.

#### ***b) Bunny Hop Easter Egg Hunt £500***

**It was AGREED** to host a Bunny Hop Easter Egg Hunt, in conjunction with traders on Station Road.

**It was FURTHER AGREED** to allocate a budget of £500 and delegate operational decisions and spending to the Communication and Engagement Officer.

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**c) Event Planner**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the Council's usual events in the calendar year.

It was **FURTHER AGREED** to allocate a budget for each event to allow essential planning by the Events Advisory Committee.

It was **AGREED** to allocate the following budget for each event.

| Date                                    | Event                     | Budget  |
|---|---------------------------|---------|
| Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2023      | The Great Big Green Week  | £3,000  |
| Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2023        | Ashington Fair Day        | £12,000 |
| Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 | Christmas Light Switch-On | £2,500  |

**FGS23/345 EXCLUSION OF 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 items, 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 (8) Expenditure proposed to be incurred for the supply of goods or services, and (9) terms proposed or to be proposed by the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the supply of services.

Cllr Louis Brown left the meeting 6:35pm.

**FGS23/346 PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO ALLOTMENT WATER SYSTEMS – 2023/24**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** a confidential report from the Assets and Facilities Manager sent out in advance of the meeting. The report detailed works required to the water systems at several allotment sites, for which two quotations had been received for each.

The Assets & Facilities Mgr recommended that works to Green Lane and Woodhorn Road be prioritised in the 2023/24 financial year, with Nursery Park and Seaton Hirst in 2024/25.

Quotes received:

Green Lane Allotments      Contractor A £14,648  
    Contractor B £18,746

Woodhorn Road Allotments      Contractor A £55,133  
    Contractor B £74,675

It was **AGREED** to delegate the Assets and Facilities Manager to place the order for the planned works at Green Lane with Contractor A – P2 Utilities Ltd, at a cost of £14,648, and upon satisfactory completion to proceed with the order for works at Woodhorn Road with the same contractor, at a cost of £55,133.

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It was **FURTHER AGREED** to move an additional £3,000 into the Allotment Capital budget, to allow for essential road repairs at Woodhorn Road, which can be carried out at the same time as the works on the water system.

Cllr Louis Brown returned to the meeting 7:05pm.

**FGS23/347 DETACHED YOUTH WORK 2023/24**

It was **AGREED** that £20,000 from the Council's Community Support budget to fund Detached Youth Provision be formally approved via the Memorandum of Understanding between Ashington Town Council and Ashington YMCA, and to delegate to the Clerk to progress.

**FGS23/348 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023, 6:00pm, Council Chamber, Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

**Meeting ends 7.10pm.**

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