

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, DRAFT Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 25th March 2025, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

CLLRS PRESENT:

Cllr Mark Purvis (Chair), Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Cllr Graeme Wright, Cllr Paul Wright, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Glynn Davies

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer, Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant

FC24/105 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by Cllr Mark Purvis.

FC24/106 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr John Tully, Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Louis Brown and Cllr Bob Walkinshaw.

FC24/107 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

FC24/108 DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were requested.

FC24/109 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one member of the public present. The Chair read out the questions sent in advance of the meeting, and offered the answers noted in bold.

Question for Ashington Town Council Meeting 25 Mar 2025.

In the written reply to my question about the involvement of ATC in the planning process the following statement was made:

“As a Town Council, we are committed to being an active voice in planning matters affecting Ashington. While we are a consultee like other bodies, we do try to ensure community views are heard and considered in the planning process, as evidenced with the planning application for land off Wansbeck Road – 22/04216/OUT”

Please can the council explain how the lack of any formal responses to two major planning applications, namely the re-development of Wansbeck Square, and the proposed cinema is in accordance with “being an active voice in planning”?

The Council, while not submitting formal written responses to the Wansbeck Square redevelopment and cinema planning applications, was actively engaged through numerous meetings and presentations regarding both developments. This engagement represents an active voice in the regeneration process, though in a different form than formal written submissions.

The Council's participation in these meetings allowed for direct dialogue with developers and NCC Regeneration, providing input and representing community interests throughout the development process. This approach, while different from formal written responses, still constitutes active involvement in planning matters.

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Cllr Marjorie Chambers noted that the resident, who has been part of the regeneration meetings, is aware that Ashington Town Council has been actively participating in discussions regarding the main street, the cinema, and other related developments. She questioned the purpose of the inquiry, given their existing knowledge of the Council's involvement and input.

The resident was permitted to respond and acknowledged that this was how the Council was able to engage and respond, however public perception via the Planning Portal showed no comment from the Council.

FC24/110 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 28th January 2025.

FC24/111 PRESENTATION FROM COMMUNITY SAFETY TEAM – PROJECT SHIELD

Northumberland County Council's Community Safety Team in attendance to update on recent work and data. Inspector Wayne Daniels, Neil Pacey, Grant Urquhart, and Julie Leddy were present for the presentation.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw commended the community safety team for their excellent work.

Grant reported on the "Back on Track" program targeting 9-10 year olds in schools to educate them about electric scooter and bike usage, which has seen an increase during the Christmas period. The program, delivered in partnership with fire and ambulance services, aims to educate on proper usage while creating a positive image of the Police.

Following success in Cramlington, plans are underway to expand to Central Primary in Ashington and Blyth. Grant emphasized that only licensed orange scooters in Newcastle are legal for road use, with all other electric scooters and bikes restricted to private land.

The winter period saw a slight rise in anti-social behaviour around Asda, McDonald's, and the leisure centre. Concerns regarding the train station were addressed, with police and council coordinating with British Transport Police to ensure safety. Neil reported that between 1st September 2024 and 28th February 2025, 334 ASB incidents were recorded on foot beats, representing a 24% decrease from the previous year. Shop keepers at Manor Walks have also reported a decrease in anti-social behaviour.

In response to Cllr Graeme Wright's inquiry about comparisons with other projects, Neil indicated that data could be obtained, with current comparisons focused on the West End of Newcastle. Cllr Glyn Davies expressed concerns about public perception regarding police report effectiveness, with Wayne acknowledging the frustration while emphasizing that data can only reflect actual reports. Cllr Caroline Ball requested ASB breakdown information, which Neil confirmed could be categorised, with Julie noting that more detailed breakdowns are available in their regular meetings.

Neil explained that police have authority to seize and destroy illegal electric scooters and bikes, including tactical intervention capabilities. Wayne highlighted the challenges of addressing the vast number of these vehicles, emphasizing education over confrontation, particularly since many offenders are children. Many housing associations prohibit these vehicles due to fire

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hazards. Following Cllr Caroline Ball's suggestion for a Christmas campaign to educate parents, Grant revealed their first Snapchat campaign aimed at early intervention.

Project Shield conducted 28 patrols in February, resulting in 253 man hours, 740 engagements, and 22 home visits. Julie mentioned that the fire service would be conducting a significant push due to safety concerns surrounding the batteries and associated fire hazards.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw inquired about educational resources for schools, with Neil confirming numerous resources are available. She suggested inviting parents of caught offenders to demonstrations about the dangers, which Neil agreed to discuss with the fire service.

Wayne acknowledged the challenges of identification due to masks but confirmed they maintain a database for intelligence sharing.

FC24/112 REPORT FROM THE CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON (CLLR CAROLINE BALL)

Civic Head Cllr, Caroline Ball provided the following updates:

- **Small Grant Presentations:** Councillor Ball expressed gratitude for the positive impact of the small grants awarded, noting that recipients have conveyed their appreciation for the support.
- **International Women's Day Event:** She attended the International Women's Day event organized by Full Circle at Hirst Park, highlighting the importance of such community gatherings.
- **Pride Event Participation:** Over the past weekend, Cllr Ball participated in the Pride event at Hirst Park, carrying the torch alongside Walk the Plank, emphasizing the significance of inclusivity and community spirit.
- **National Funding in Ashington:** She expressed satisfaction in seeing national funding being allocated to Ashington, enabling the hosting of significant events in the town.
- **Appreciation for Civic Head Role:** Cllr Ball thanked the Council for appointing her as Civic Head for the year, expressing her gratitude for the opportunity to engage with various community groups and organizations.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw thanked Caroline on behalf of Ashington Town Council for her hard work and dedication as Civic Head of Ashington Town Council.

FC24/113 RESIGNATION OF CLLR GEMMA HEMLSEY (College Ward)

The resignation of Cllr Gemma Hemsley was formally **RECEIVED**.

Cllr Caroline Ball wanted it noted that the Council thanks Gemma for her work during her tenure at the Council and the efforts she put forward as a Councillor.

FC24/114 DRAFT POLICY COUNCILLOR-OFFICER PROTOCOL

The model policy 'Councillor-Officer Protocol' endorsed by NALC and SLCC as part of the Civility and Respect Campaign was **RECEIVED and AGREED** .

FC24/115 NALC COUNTY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 25th January 2025 were **RECEIVED**.

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FC24/116 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members **AGREED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items, permitted under Section 1 (2) LGA 1960, due to the confidential nature of the business being transacted.

FC24/117 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – LEGAL MATTER

The Council reviewed the Executive Officer's report on a legal matter involving Ashington Town Council. Following advice and information gathering, **it was AGREED** to proceed as recommended. The Executive Officer will communicate the decision and notify the Council's insurers.

FC24/118 STAFFING MATTERS

It was AGREED to approve spending of up to £1,700 for professional advisory services recommended by the Personnel Committee, following consultation with North East Regional Employers Office (NEREO). The Personnel Committee was authorised to proceed with engaging the recommended external services provider, following their recommendation.

FC24/119 DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 20th May 2025, 6:00pm at the Town Hall