

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 8th July 2025

Finance and General Services Committee July 2025

This report provides an update on key activities and developments since the last Finance and General Services meeting held in June 2025.

Neighbourhood Services

Station Road

Station Road maintenance was deliberately delayed to ensure flower beds were weed-free for the Animating Ashington Event on Saturday 5th July. This timing was prioritised given the anticipated high attendance, consistent with previous successful community events. Routine maintenance has now been completed following the event

Gateways

Gateway maintenance has been completed, including work on the Mining Wheel and Jack Charlton Statue areas. However, the gateway bed at the entrance to the Northern Relief Road (Woodhorn Roundabout) requires priority attention due to ongoing soil quality issues. Mark and Ryan have developed improvement plans for this gateway, which is currently the only one not meeting our standards.

The remaining gateways present well as entrance points to the town, with the sustainable planting schemes and additional hard landscaping elements implemented by Ryan proving effective.

Green Lane Industrial Unit

Cllrs and Officers met with a representative from Green Ash Estates regarding the industrial unit. The estate agents have confirmed they are willing to negotiate both a new lease agreement and rental terms. A detailed report with further information and recommendations will be presented to Council at the proposed meeting on 9th September 2025.

Events and Engagement

Northumberland Miners Picnic Memorial Service

The Northumberland Miners' Picnic on Saturday 14th June began with a moving Memorial Service at Woodhorn Museum, bringing together distinguished guests and community members to honour those who worked and died in the Northumberland Coalfields.

The service was conducted at 10:30am by Ministers from Ashington Churches Together, the service welcomed notable attendees including:

- Councillor Pauline Thompson, Civic Head of Ashington
- High Sheriff Mr George Farr
- Deputy Lord Lieutenant Mr Keith Green
- Ian Lavery MP for Blyth and Ashington
- Members of the local community

The service featured poignant musical performances from, Ashington Colliery Band (Brass Marras) and Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

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The choirs performed "Requiem" and the deeply moving "Gresford" - a song written by Durham miner Robert Saint to commemorate the 266 men who lost their lives in the 1934 Gresford Colliery explosion in North Wales.

A wreath-laying ceremony was conducted by Ashington Town Council in memory of those who worked in the Northumberland Coalfield, followed by a respectful two-minute silence observed by all attendees.

The service concluded with a powerful address from Ian Lavery MP, who spoke passionately about the enduring legacy of mining communities. He emphasised that the miners didn't just extract coal but "forged communities, created solidarity, and left us with values that remain as precious as any mineral: courage, dignity, and an unbreakable bond between neighbours."

The Memorial Service marked the beginning of a full day of celebration, featuring brass band performances, art activities inspired by the Pitmen Painters, community parades, and diverse entertainment that continued the spirit of remembrance and celebration throughout the day.

The Northumberland Miners' Picnic is organised by Woodhorn Museum, with the Memorial Service organised by Ashington Town Council. In recognition of the event's importance to the community, Ashington Town Council has made a generous donation of £5,000 this year towards the cost of the event, which was agreed earlier in the year.

Sarah has requested an evaluation of the event from North East museums, including income and expenditure, ahead of our contribution. Sharon received the following feedback directly to the Council. A meeting will be arranged with Jo and Liz from North East Museums to discuss next year's event and feedback on this year.

"Thank you, Sharon, it was my pleasure. Fantastic event and thoroughly enjoyed by all". Scott Dickinson

"Thank you for your email. I'm proud to have taken part in such a wonderful event. I truly appreciate the opportunity" Kylie Parker Hirst Miners Welfare

"Once again, many thanks to everyone for their efforts in continuing to make this event a success. Please pass on our thanks to Sarah and all the councillors for their support it is greatly appreciated. Personally, I still prefer individuals being called out to lay a wreath I think that might be the first time we have done this differently, just something for discussion". John Dunn

Thank you for your letter. Actually, it is I who should be thanking you for what was a reflective memorial service with a beautiful musical accompaniment and a really fun day with wonderful entertainment. Thank you very much for asking me. High Sherriff of Northumberland.

Wansbeck and Central Development Group Meeting Summary the meeting held on 14th May 2025

Northumberland Recovery College Update

Current Provision Status

- 201 new student enrolments since last meeting
- 35-40 sessions running weekly across the region
- Several programs fully booked with waiting lists (Happiness and Mediation Club, Jigsaw of Me, All About: ADHD, Autism Peer Support Groups)
- Café Connect Ashington experiencing low attendance and requires marketing support
- New online program "She Shares Online" launching 11th June

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NRC is exploring restructuring to address waiting lists and student dependency issues through:

- Core continuous sessions for viable student numbers
- Time-limited block sessions with defined start/end dates
- Tiered sessions matching different skill levels
- Enhanced peer support groups for program graduates

Ashington Town Council Events Update given

- *Big Green Week*: 10th June, 10:00am-2:00pm at Ashington Market (featuring raffles for air fryers and slow cookers)
- *Community Fair*: 6th July, 1:00-4:00pm at People Park
- *Free children's swim lessons* took place during May half term, with two/week planned for summer

Partner Organisation Activities Update given

- *Thriving Together*: Bi-monthly newsletter, networking event 15th July in Stocksfield (previous event attracted 90 attendees), Solid Foundations project refunded, new Volunteer Passport programme launched
- *Repurposeful*: Community activity pack creation project for schools, care homes, and community organisations supporting people with disabilities, autism, and dementia
- *Northumberland County of Sanctuary*: Supporting asylum seekers with significant mental health challenges including PTSD

Key Issues and Actions from the 14th May meeting

Student Feedback Concerns

- **Promotion accessibility**: Online-focused promotion excludes non-digital users; need for local newspaper, magazine, and council newsletter promotion
- **Session naming clarity**: Some gender-specific groups not clearly identified in titles, causing confusion

Action Items

- NRC to review promotional materials and expand offline promotion methods
- NRC to contact Repurposeful about Café Connect involvement in activity pack creation
- Clearer demographic specifications needed on session information

The group prefers face-to-face quarterly meetings and wants increased student participation in future development discussions. Current meeting location at The Bothy is suitable but may need larger venue if attendance grows.

Next Meeting: Wednesday 13th August 2025, 2:00-4:00pm at The Bothy, Ashington

Ashington Community Fair Sunday 6th July 2025

Ashington Community Fair was a fantastic success, drawing excellent attendance from across the community. Despite a brief rain shower during the day, spirits remained high, and the event continued in full swing.

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The fair featured an exciting programme of live performances and youth services offering engaging activities while helping to promote Ashington Town Council's important youth survey.

These youth engagement initiatives are being funded through the Youth Advisory Committee Budget as part of the Council's commitment to improving engagement with young people throughout the town.

The event showcased a vibrant mix of market stalls featuring both local traders and community groups, alongside the ever-popular Richardson's amusements, creating something for everyone to enjoy. A full report on the day's activities will follow, accompanied by professional video coverage from LukLuk Productions and comprehensive photographic documentation captured by Ashington Camera Club.

We are looking closely at this event for next year, hoping to seek more involvement from the Youth Advisory Committee and feedback from those involved over the last few years.

Thank you to Sharon for her amazing work pulling the fair together, and co-ordinating the Miners Memorial Service, it's a lot all at the same time. Sharon has also co-ordinated the Riverside Open Day that all Cllrs have been invited to, so we hope so can go along and see our superb Riverside groups in action.

Allotments

Recycling initiatives continue to expand across allotment sites. Glass recycling is now operational at NS Colliery, with a similar facility planned for Seaton Hirst Allotment site. Window and door frame recycling is planned for Seaton Hirst, with Woodhorn Road anticipated to follow.

Cllr Kerry Davison, as a member of the Allotment Liaison Committee, is conducting proactive site visits in liaison with Alan to support her understanding.

Site representatives and volunteers from Woodhorn Road allotment site have worked collaboratively with Alan to bring vacant plots back into productive use. We are very grateful for their hard work on Monday and Tuesday, as well as their good humour. This remains a priority area, and the team's ongoing efforts are really appreciated.

All Woodhorn Road invoices (248 in total) were issued on Monday 30th June. Due to the scale of this administrative task, other enquiries were deferred on that day to ensure completion. Plot holders are encouraged to make payments directly via bank transfer where possible to reduce administrative processing time, but we appreciate many will be coming to the office to pay by cash or card.

Alan has access to the works van over the next two weeks during Ryan's and Mark's annual leave periods, and has scheduled clearance and weed spraying works during this time.

Website and Social Media PR

Website

The following items appeared on our website news page since the previous officers report. Members are reminded that we maintain active Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages to promote Council activities and engage with our community. You can read them in full by visiting the website.

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<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/>

Civic Head Visits Northumberland CVA to View County of Sanctuary Art Exhibition	04 July 2025, 12:15
Riverside Open Day to Showcase Water Sports and Maritime Activities for Local Community	04 July 2025, 09:53
Ashington Community Woods Consultation Follow-Up	02 July 2025, 13:07
Northumberland Line Progress Update: New Stations Set to Open as Community Engagement Continues	02 July 2025, 12:53
Finance and General Services Committee Meeting - 08/07/2025	30 June 2025, 15:28
From Ashington to Antarctica: Dr Nina Purvis Makes History on "White Mars"	24 June 2025, 13:51
Community Consultation Begins for Ashington Community Woods Enhancement Project	24 June 2025, 13:23
Ashington Town Council Completes Play Area Legal Framework and Unveils New Signage	24 June 2025, 12:53
Local Councillors Discover Hidden Gem at Historic Ashington Veterans and Elders Centre	20 June 2025, 10:18
Climate Change and Environment Committee Meeting - 24/06/2025	18 June 2025, 15:26
Ashington Town Council Announces Spectacular Community Fair with Powering the Future Parade	18 June 2025, 13:32
Ashington Celebrates Community Unity During Refugee Week with Shared Meal Event	18 June 2025, 09:46

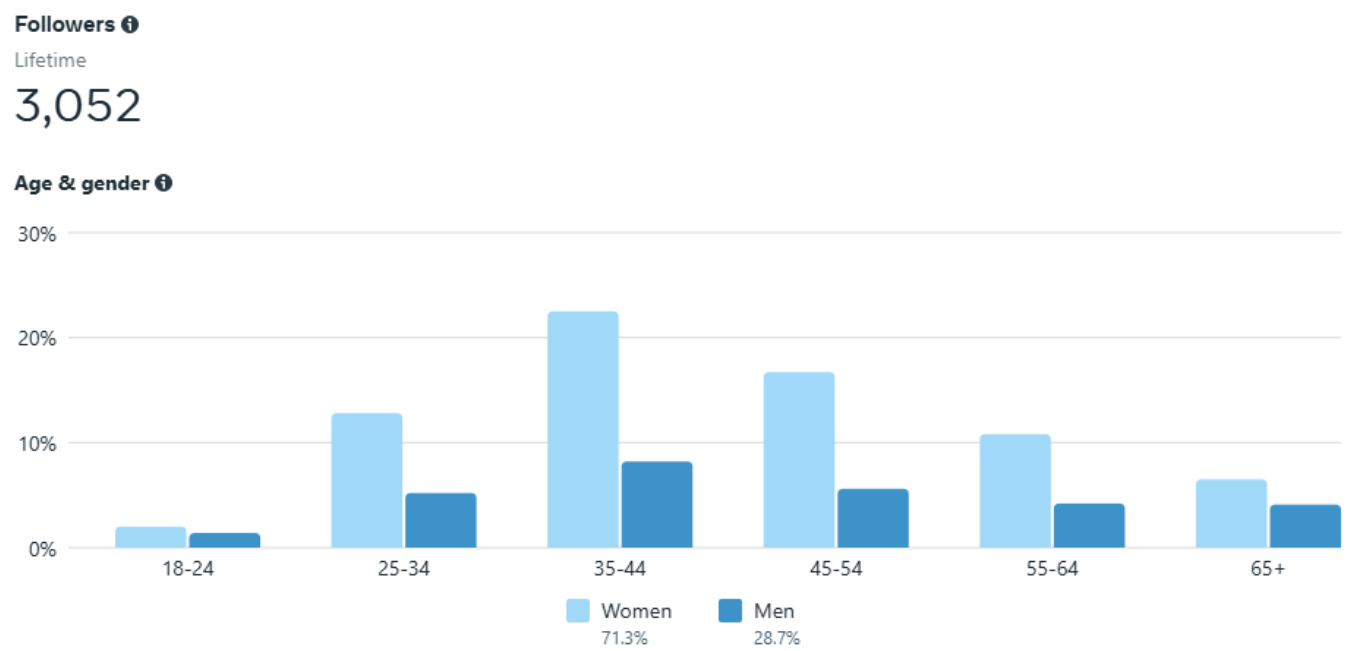
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Ashington's Community Climate Action Event Celebrates Huge Success During Great Big Green Week	17 June 2025, 10:49
Civic Head Attends Arts and Crafts Program with Blossoming Communities	16 June 2025, 09:09
Miners Memorial Service Honours Northumberland's Coal Mining Heritage at Annual Picnic	16 June 2025, 8:44
Finance Committee Leadership Confirmed as Council Agrees Grants Task Group and Allotment Rent Changes	11 June 2025, 09:06

Facebook

Love it or hate it, Facebook gets the message out quickly and we actively use it to share stories from the Council and others.

Our followers have increased by 30% in the last month, credit to Gary who has taken to mantle from Sharon on this.



Those stories on Facebook that resulted in the highest interaction, either via likes or reach are in bold above. Events, visits by the Civic Head, and the wonderful Dr Nina Purvis.