

AGENDA 5, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE – 14TH JULY 2026

Allotments

Woodhorn

- Weed killing on roadways ongoing – still more to do. Enquiries made regarding PA2 qualification for weed spraying.
- Weed-sprayed vacant plot has now been occupied.
- Road works carried out.
- Invoices issued, with payments already received.
- Keys allocated to new plot holders, giving extra time after main gates are locked.
- Enquiries conducted regarding people on site.

Seaton Hirst

- Fly-tipped fridge cleared by NCC.
- NCC pest control attended – last visit regarding rats.

Nursery Park

- Tap repaired.
- Vacant plot strimmed back and re-allocated.

North Seaton

- Fly-tipped bricks have now been cleared.
- Quarterly meter readings taken for Wansbeck Road, Highmarket, and Highmarket Small Holdings. One meter needed to be dug out.

Hirst East End

- Meeting held with plot holder regarding ongoing issues.
- *Highmarket / Wansbeck Road*
- NCC contacted regarding a branch within the Holy Sepulchre Church, which has now been made safe.

General

Pre-planned work has now been postponed, as the larger van used by Neighbourhood Services was taken for MOT on 1st July, which is usually one week out of use. This wasn't scheduled in but efforts will be made next year to ensure that is the case.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The Annual Return has been published on the Council's website and submitted to the external auditor. This year the Council's submission formed part of the new AGAR digital trial, in which we are participating. Based on previous years, the external audit report is expected to be returned in time for the September meeting.

Power in Place Conference

Alongside a period of leave, the Executive Officer attended the Power in Place Conference for larger town and parish councils, held in Harrogate. The conference focused on councils leading strategically in their place, the changing political landscape of devolution, and how town councils can position themselves as the principal player in their town by innovating and recognising what they are able to deliver and achieve. It was a very worthwhile event, attended by many much larger councils — Ashington likely was among the smallest in attendance — and

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included some newly created councils (Harrogate and Taunton) and many currently going through [local government reorganisation \(LRG\)](#).

An example of what the programme included:

Adult to Adult Conversation With Unitary Authorities — Robin Tuddenham, Solace President and Chief Executive of Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council, on the pressures facing principal councils and how strategic partnerships between the tiers can be built on an equal footing.

The Grand Local Government Reset: From Administration to Innovation — Professor Rachel Granger, De Montfort University, on the challenges facing local government, drawing lessons from Denmark's 2007 municipal reforms.

Power in Place: The Strategic Role of Larger Town Councils in England's Changing Governance Landscape — Mel Stevens, Chief Executive, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).

Taking the Long View: Possibility, Practice & Place — Eve Roodhouse, Director of Strategy and Policy, Local Government Association.

A recurring theme was the nature of the conversation between town and parish councils and their unitary authorities. Much of this was of most immediate value to councils currently going through LGR, but it remains highly relevant to Ashington: although reorganisation in Northumberland took place many years ago, the devolution agenda is very much live for this Council. Unitary authorities face sustained and rising demand in adult social care and services for looked after children, which will continue to absorb an ever greater share of their budgets. The question posed to the sector was to what extent town and parish councils are willing and able to lead on the changes this creates in their places — a question directly relevant to the strategic priorities work coming before this Council.

Neighbourhood Services

Following the seasonal recruitment, the routine set out in the Workforce Planning Report has been running for 4 weeks and is working out well. Ryan and Matthew put significant effort into bringing Station Road, Memorial Garden, the planters, and the other planted features up to a good standard, and the routine is doing as intended to maintain that standard rather than chase a backlog.

While the schedule is working well, it has not yet been tested against genuinely extreme weather, or against either operative being unavailable through leave or sickness, or across a full winter. The Executive Officer is confident in the design but is not yet able to say it has been tested under all realistic conditions and will report back if the pattern needs to flex in response. It was flexed to cope with the ASB at People's Park.

The Executive Officer is working with ward councillors on a number of smaller projects to be delivered through their ward enhancement funding.

Members may note the tilted flag pole. The contractors who carried out the works last year have returned once already to tighten the bolts, they have been contacted to request a site visit to establish if this is going to be a recurring issue.

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Play Areas

Consultation has begun on the Paddock Wood play area at North Seaton, procurement will be brought to the September FGS Committee. The formal opening of North Seaton Colliery play area has now been arranged for 17th July, from 3:30pm, all Cllrs have been invited.



PLAYGROUND CONSULTATION
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS...

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL IS HOSTING TWO IN-PERSON DROP-IN SESSIONS AND WOULD LIKE LOCAL PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR IDEAS ABOUT NEW FEATURES THEY'D LIKE TO SEE IN A PARK!

FRIDAY 26TH OF JUNE
26.06.26

FRIDAY 10TH OF JULY
10.07.26
15:30 - 17:00

TUCK SHOP WILL BE OPEN!
POP IN IF YOU'RE FREE!

NORTH SEATON COMMUNITY CENTRE, MANLEY VIEW, NORTH SEATON



Opening Event
NORTH SEATON COLLIERY

will be having a ribbon cutting for its newest play area - and YOU'RE INVITED!!

there will be:

- Ice Cream
- Seed Bombing
- Face painting

The event will take place at **North Seaton Colliery, Links View** and will run from 15:30-17:00 on Friday the 17th of July

Drop in anytime, we hope to see you there!

and plenty refreshments courtesy of North Seaton Colliery Community Centre

Website and Social Media PR

Website

A press release is currently being prepared to inform the public of the recent website changes. Work is also underway on a new "Things to Do Around Ashington" page, which will showcase local attractions such as parks, the woods and the museum, using the same interactive search and mapping system featured elsewhere on the website.

Councillors, residents, community groups and visitors are encouraged to explore the updated website and share their feedback. Anyone who spots an issue or has suggestions for further improvements is welcome to contact the Council directly.

The following items appeared on our website news page since the previous officer's 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.

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

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Article Title	Date
Ashington Town Council Launches Next Round of Small Grants Fund — Award Cap Doubled to £1,000	1st July 2026
Ashington Town Council Champions Community Spirit with £71,547 Investment in Local Groups	29th June 2026
Ashington Marks Armed Forces Day with Thanksgiving Service	27th June 2026
Ashington Town Council Publishes Unaudited Annual Accounts for 2025/26 — Residents Invited to Exercise Their Right to Inspect	24th June 2026

Facebook

The Council's Facebook page has continued to perform strongly over the period 8 June to 5 July 2026, with growth recorded across almost all key metrics compared to the previous reporting period.

Views reached 233,400, an increase of 23.4%, with 78.2% of views coming from non-followers, reinforcing that content is continuing to reach well beyond the existing audience. Unique viewers totalled 59,387, up 52.4% on the previous period. Content interactions reached 1,200, up 21.8%, with interactions from non-followers again exceeding those from followers, 640 compared to 529, though the margin narrowed slightly this period. Facebook visits totalled 3,600, an increase of 41%.

The page recorded 121 new follows, up 92.1% on the previous period, against just 9 unfollows, delivering a net gain of 112 followers, an increase of 187.2%. This strong follower growth also saw the page pass the **4,000 followers** milestone during the period.

Overall, this has been another period of strong performance, with continued growth in reach, engagement and visits, and the added milestone of surpassing 4,000 followers reflecting the page's growing presence across the town and beyond.

Date	Post	Reactions	Comments	Shares
01/07/2026	🔒 Update from Northumbria Police regarding Hirst Park incident 🔒 Northumbria Police have issued a s...	114	45	51
09/06/2026	⚠️ People's Park Play Area Closed Until Further Notice ⚠️ Ashington Town Council regrets to inform ...	103	29	38
22/06/2026	Update: Anti-Social Behaviour at People's Park Following our earlier post asking residents to repor...	112	28	10

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10/06/2026	People's Park Play Area – Now Reopened Ashington Town Council is pleased to confirm that the People...	62	7	14
16/06/2026	❤️ Community Comes Together in Tribute at the Northumberland Miners' Picnic Memorial Service ❤️ Hundr...	39	2	10
01/07/2026	💙 Ashington Town Council is pleased to announce that the next round of the Small Grant Fund will op...	5	0	12
27/06/2026	Ashington Town Council's Civic Head, Cllr Caroline Ball, joined civic and military dignitaries this...	40	3	3
12/06/2026	🏠 Pothole or play park – who do you call? 😊 With both Ashington Town Council and Northumberland Co...	8	0	7
23/06/2026	. Playground Consultation Share Your Ideas! 💬 Ashington Town Council is inviting local residents ...	3	0	7
09/06/2026	🔧🐦 The annual Northumberland Miners' Picnic will begin with a special Miners' Memorial Service on...	6	1	4

Events and Engagement

Sound Futures Festival

Planning for this year's Sound Futures Festival is now well underway, led by YMCA Northumberland with partners across the Youth Collaboration Partnership. The festival is a reimagining of Ashington Fair Day and, as Council previously resolved, responsibility for its delivery has passed to YMCA Northumberland and partners, marking a fresh new chapter for the event. The vision is a vibrant, youth-led festival in the heart of Ashington, celebrating young people, creativity, music, community and the range of opportunities available locally for young people and families.

The event is happening on Saturday 22nd August 2026, running from 11am to 6pm. The day will offer family-friendly entertainment, live music, activities, fairground rides and opportunities for the community to come together, with something for all ages — celebrating local talent, community pride, and Ashington's heritage as well as its future.

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The centrepiece will be a main stage showcasing young musicians and bands from across the area, supported by an acoustic and open mic stage to keep the atmosphere flowing during changeovers and give more young performers the opportunity to take part. The confirmed line-up so far includes Bear Park, Cardboard Church, Ben Harwood, State Label, Funky Biscuit, Y-Music, Keiran Simpson, Tanzeela Ruby, Alfie and Nissi, with further acts to be announced.

Around the site, themed zones are planned covering activities, sport, a market, food, and information and guidance, where organisations can showcase their services and opportunities for local young people. The overall aim is a relaxed village festival feel, with the stage as the focal point and all stalls and gazebos forming one shared festival environment.

The overall budget is modest at around £13,000, a significant proportion of which is required for essential infrastructure such as staging, PA, toilets, power and tents. Partners have been contributing activities, stalls, performers and volunteers, with a formal volunteer induction process to be introduced closer to the day. Further announcements will follow as plans develop, with updates shared through YMCA Northumberland's social media channels, and our own and momentum around the event continues to build.



Summer food provision — Full Circle Food Project

Following the Council's agreed financial support, and working through the Youth Advisory Committee, the Council is supporting a free packed lunch offer during the summer holidays with Full Circle Food Project, based at Hirst Park. Rather than limiting numbers, the opportunity will be open to all and demand-led, running one day each week across the holidays.



It had originally been expected that the Council would be match-funding, with Northumberland County Council (NCC), a larger-scale summer food offer. The provision that has come forward is scaled down from this with NCC looking at this in the future, taking a deliberate test-and-learn approach for its first year, which has the advantage of presenting fewer barriers to families using it — there is no registration or eligibility requirement, simply a free, nutritious packed lunch for those who want one. Because of the Council's close working relationship with Full Circle Food Project, the funding arrangement reflects this: rather than a fixed grant, funding is open to reclaim based on actual demand, up

to the value of the delegated funds of £2,000, ensuring the Council pays only for what is delivered while allowing the offer to grow if take-up is stronger. Promotion is underway, with the Council acknowledged as sponsor.

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Free Swim Sessions

The Free Swim programme is a community initiative funded by Ashington Town Council, delivered in partnership with Ashington Leisure Centre (Places Leisure). The programme provides free, open-access swimming sessions during school holiday periods, welcoming residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy the pool at no cost.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Slots Available</i>
27th May 2026	Wednesday	1pm – 2pm	23
30th May 2026	Saturday	2:30pm – 3:30pm	21
Total May Half Term Attendance			44

The availability of free swims continue throughout the summer holidays.

ASHINGTON LEISURE CENTRE

FREE SWIM

Places Leisure
Part of Places for People

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

SUMMER HOLIDAYS
FROM WED 22ND JULY TO SAT 29TH AUG

EVERY WEDNESDAY 1PM TO 2PM
EVERY SATURDAY 2.30PM TO 3.30PM

**JUST TURN UP TO GET YOUR FREE SWIM.
80 SLOTS AVAILABLE.
FIRST COME FIRST SERVED!**

**BECOME THE NEXT GENERATION OF OLYMPIAN
LEARN TO SWIM OR TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL**

Continuing our **FREE** swim initiative funded by
Ashington Town Council.

Ashington Leisure Centre, Lintonville Terrace, Ashington,
NE63 9JY