

## **AGENDA 5, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026**

### ***Neighbourhood Services***

We have welcomed Matthew to the team and he is working with Ryan on horticulture and assets.

The Executive Officer has created a schedule for our assets and horticulture than defines the jobs expected to be carried out across the week, depending on high or low season. This is scheduled work and there is some time available for reactionary work. This coincides with the introduction of the new asset platform CiviCLY that all staff have been introduced to and which is working well and will make managing our assets much more efficient.

Prior to horticultural assets being worked through on the weekly high-season visit more substantial work has been carried out on each. This includes the Memorial Garden, Doves Corner, St. John's Workers Memorial, the Mining Wheel, Jack Charlton Statue, and the four Gateways. Station Road beds are underway as we speak. It is expected that by w/c 15<sup>th</sup> June we will move to the routine schedule.

We have suffered vandalism at both Alexandra Road Play Area and People's Park Play area recently. People's Park is a concern and damage is currently being assessed, as well as the CCTV footage available to try and ascertain who is responsible.

The projections for the world cup are on so we hope the will pick up some positive comments as England proceeds through the competition.

### ***Town Twinning***

The delegation of all twin towns and cities is being held in Remscheid in April 2027, planned for 8-10<sup>th</sup> April. Along with Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council, Ashington Town Council is cordially invited and the Executive Officer had an informal online meeting with Sven Wolf, Lord Mayor Remscheid prior to the Annual Meeting. Remscheid is celebrating 20 years of their Youth Council which we hope will be a feature of the trip. They are keen to look into Parkrun following this suggestion. Anyone Cllr wishing to join the trip would be very welcome. The Council will be formally represented as usual by the Civic Head.

### ***Public Toilets***

Following the Council's formally agreed interest in December to seek information the public toilets on Station Road there has been no further information from NCC. The EO has sought a conversation, following up in January and again in April. This was followed up again in May after the announcement of capital expenditure on public toilets being planned in Northumberland (copied below).

### ***Public Toilets Investment Programme***

*The Council has agreed an additional £1.56m capital funding in its Medium Term Financial Plan over the next 3 years to enable the completion of its Public Toilets Improvement Programme. The additional funding will mean that all 54 public toilets in the County will benefit from improvements, with the remaining 26 public toilets being improved over the next 3 years. Details of the timing of refurbishment activity and scope of works needed at each facility are currently being developed. Issues with repeated blockages at Alnmouth public toilets have not been fully resolved following changes made to cisterns, so some further works to improve the flow/falls within the drainage pipework serving the site are due to start in June. Access to toilets will be maintained during the works.*

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### ***Council Owned Depot – Community Asset Transfer***

The full application was submitted at the end of February. After a follow-up email by the Executive Officer, further documents were requested and subsequent to some back and forth the full application was signed off as received on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. This is now at Stage 2 for assessment by the Strategic Property Asset Management Group (SPAMG). There are no published timescales for a response; an update has been requested.

[Read the Full Community Asset Transfer Process](#)

### ***Allotment Sites – Management Report***

#### ***Hirst East End (Council Managed)***

- News plot holder taken on, with recently new plot holders making good progress
- Strimming of vacant garden carried out, this has now been split and occupied
- Pest control arranged in response to rat activity
- Scrap removed from site
- Further plot split completed, reducing the waiting list and adjusting area for one existing plot holder
- Roads weed sprayed
- Inspections scheduled for w/c 15/06

#### ***Nursery Park (Council Managed)***

- Arrangements made with local tree surgeon to chip fly-tipped hedging material on site
- Roads weed sprayed
- Inspections scheduled for w/c 15/06

#### ***Woodhorn Road (Council Managed)***

- Site management visit carried out; plots requiring immediate attention identified
- Roadway works planned for week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> June
- Weed spraying carried out

#### ***North Seaton Colliery (Council Managed)***

- Weed spraying carried out
- Inspections to be carried out next week
- Fly-tipping issues, reminders about locking gates issued

#### ***Seaton Hirst (Committee Managed)***

- Meeting held with Secretary regarding rat issue raised by local residents; pest control requested and committee to clear the affected plot
- Asbestos collection carried out, with further collections to follow

#### ***Wansbeck Road (Committee Managed)***

- Scrap collection at the site organised and completed
- Nearby residents surveyed about fence works requested by committee as part of capital work

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### *General*

Meeting held with NCC Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer regarding the increase in fly-tipping across allotment sites with a view to standardising response, evidence collecting and potential to prosecute. Exploring fly-tipping CCTV options.

Capital works scoring has been carried out with a view to prioritising the capital works to be booked in the current financial year.

### ***Website and Social Media PR***

#### *Website*

Ashington Town Council has completed a major overhaul of its website, delivering significant improvements to accessibility, navigation and functionality. The project has involved extensive redevelopment across the website's key sections, with work on smaller areas still ongoing.

The Wards section now features a faster, more accessible interactive map, allowing residents to view ward information, identify their local councillors and use a postcode search to locate their ward quickly. The Policies section has been completely redesigned, enabling users to search for specific policies, sort documents more effectively and see clearly when policies were last adopted and updated. The Councillors page has been enhanced with new search and sorting functions, making it easier for residents to find and access information about their elected members.

The Structure and Committees section has been transformed from a lengthy text-based page into a clearer, easier-to-navigate format. The Allotments section now offers integrated directions for both Android and iPhone users and incorporates the same interactive mapping system used in the Wards section. Several information pages, including the War Memorial and About Ashington Town Council sections, have been redesigned to improve readability, replacing large blocks of text with a more engaging layout.

The mobile version of the website has received substantial improvements, with a dedicated navigation system making browsing significantly easier on smartphones and tablets. Smaller standalone pages covering items such as seats, bins and bus shelters have been brought together under a new Street Scene section, creating a more logical structure for residents. The Community Guidance and Defibrillator sections have also been upgraded, with the latter now featuring an interactive search tool allowing users to locate the nearest publicly accessible defibrillator by current location or chosen address.

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
<a href="#">Have your say on the future of Northumberland — consultation open now</a>	2nd June 2026
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council Small Grant Fund: Three Local Groups Awarded Over £1,000</a>	1st June 2026
<a href="#">ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL APPOINTS CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND CIVIC HEAD FOR THE YEAR AHEAD</a>	27th May 2026
<a href="#">Miners' Memorial Service to Honour Northumberland's Mining Heritage at Annual Picnic</a>	26th May 2026

### Facebook

The Council's Facebook page has seen exceptional growth over the period 8 May to 4 June 2026, with significant increases recorded across all key metrics compared to the previous reporting period.

Views reached 184,300, an increase of 207.2%, with 70% of views coming from non-followers, up 50%, demonstrating that content continues to reach well beyond the existing audience. Unique viewers totalled 38,476, up 174.6%. Content interactions reached 1,500, up 101.8%, with interactions from non-followers rising by 189.1% to 740, narrowly exceeding the 749 interactions recorded from followers. Facebook visits totalled 2,500, an increase of 97.5%.

The page recorded 61 new follows, up 79.4%, against 26 unfollows, delivering a net gain of 35 followers, representing a 75% increase on the prior period.

Overall, this reporting period represents a strong performance across all areas, with particularly notable growth in reach beyond the existing follower base, suggesting that content is resonating with a broader audience across the town and beyond.

Post	Reacts	Comments	Share	Date
<a href="#">🚫 Illegal e-bike, e-scooter and motorcycle riders causing misery across Ashington and surrounding a...</a>	94	37	39	21st May 2026
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council has confirmed a number of key appointments for the forthcoming year following...</a>	85	6	12	27th May 2026
<a href="#">🔨🕊️ The annual Northumberland Miners' Picnic will begin with a special Miners' Memorial Service on...</a>	21	0	28	26th May 2026
<a href="#">🎪 A fresh new chapter is coming to Ashington this summer... and it's being led by young people 🧑🏫 Ashi...</a>	41	10	13	15th May 2026

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<a href="#"> Ashington Town Council is planting its colours firmly to the mast this summer with a bold red an...</a>	92	4	5	18th May 2026
<a href="#"> New seating has been installed along Newbiggin Road and Black Close Bank as part of a local impro...</a>	76	12	3	15th May 2026
<a href="#"> Big news for Ashington and communities across Northumberland!  Grassroots projects tackling clim...</a>	66	6	3	15th May 2026
<a href="#"> Ashington Town Council is hiring a Seasonal Neighbourhood Services Operative for Summer 2026  Lo...</a>	11	7	13	13th May 2026
<a href="#">  The annual Northumberland Miners' Picnic will begin with a special Miners' Memorial Service on...</a>	10	1	11	2nd June 2026
<a href="#"><u>Ashington marked International Workers' Memorial Day on Saturday 2nd May, bringing the community to...</u></a>	49	2	1	6th May 2026

### Upcoming Meetings

- Armed Services Day – 27<sup>th</sup> June, 10am
- Finance and General Services Committee – 14<sup>th</sup> July, 6pm

### Events and Engagement

#### 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.

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

Two free swim sessions were scheduled during the May Half Term holiday period:

Each session offered up to 80 slots on a first-come, first-served basis with no advance booking required.

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The Free Swim programme continues to make a positive impact in the Ashington community. Attendance during the May holiday sessions was strong, demonstrating clear local demand for accessible leisure provision.

A further 12 sessions are planned for the summer holidays. The initiative remains on track to provide accessible, free leisure opportunities to a growing number of families throughout the year.

The initiative supports the following strategic goals:

- Promote active and healthy lifestyles across the community
- Increase access to leisure facilities for residents of all ages and abilities
- Inspire the next generation of swimmers — from learning to swim to taking skills to the next level
- Support health and wellbeing across the community through low-barrier leisure provision

Ashington Town Council has confirmed its continued funding and commitment to the Free Swim initiative for 2026. This ongoing support reflects the Council's dedication to health, wellbeing, and equitable access to leisure facilities for all residents.

### ***Great Big Green Week Event Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026***

Ashington Town Council's Great Big Green Week event was held on Tuesday 9th June 2026 at Ashington Market, Station Road, as part of the national Great Big Green Week campaign. The free community event ran from 10am to 2pm and brought together five local partner organisations to share sustainability advice, showcase green projects, and inspire residents to take action on climate change. Over 100 members of the public visited the stalls throughout the day, making it a resounding success.

The event attracted strong footfall, with over 100 members of the public visiting the stalls across the four-hour period. While the event primarily drew Ashington residents, visitors also travelled from Bedlington, Morpeth, Blyth, and Newbiggin to attend. Every stall saw excellent levels of engagement throughout the day, with many visitors commenting that they had genuinely benefited from the wealth of information and advice on offer.

Five organisations participated in the event, each offering tailored advice and engagement:

**Citizens Advice Energy Team** — provided energy advice and information to help residents reduce their bills and carbon footprint.

**Climate Action Wansbeck** — ran a popular 'swap pledges for plants' activity, encouraging residents to make green commitments.

**Groundwork NE & Cumbria** — showcased green projects, volunteering opportunities, and recycling advice.

**NCC Climate Change & Warmer Homes Team** — offered advice and information on home energy efficiency improvements.

**Full Circle Food Project** — held a plant sale and shared information about the project's work in the local community.

**Ashington Town Council** — provided information on climate change projects in the town and hosted the free raffle.

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The popular free raffle for energy-saving appliances proved a highlight of the day. Two lucky winners were drawn: Audrey from Ashington won the air fryer (ticket Green 246–250), and Yvonne from Ashington won the slow cooker (ticket Pink 256–260). Both winners were delighted with their prizes.

A community Questionnaire invited residents to submit ideas for small green projects that could benefit Ashington. The response was outstanding, with suggestions including:

- Community allotments and growing areas
- Communal composting schemes
- Greater support and infrastructure for recycling
- A demonstration allotment to inspire and educate the community
- An Eco Hub for Ashington
- A Repair Café to reduce waste and extend the life of everyday items

All suggestions will be considered by Ashington Town Council's Climate Change Committee as the Council continues to develop its green agenda for the town.

### ***Northumberland Environment and Climate Fund (NECF) Celebration Event County Hall Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2026***

Alan Bunker and Sharon Parmley attended the NECF Celebration Event at County Hall, where 9 of the 14 projects from last year were represented. It was great to see the breadth of work taking place across the county to tackle climate change, including river and nature projects, heating system upgrades to reduce carbon footprints in buildings, and recycling initiatives.

Sharon delivered a short presentation on the Eco Fair, which was held in April 2026, accompanied by a 5-minute highlight reel edited by Gary Holmes from the full 20-minute video.

A video message from Glen Sanderson was shared, congratulating all groups on the success of their projects. The Chair of Northumberland County Council also attended, thanking everyone for their efforts and providing an update on the Council's own work to address climate change. This included the installation of solar panels with EV charging in the car park, the provision of NECF funding, collaboration with a range of organisations on wider projects, and the ongoing delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan 2024–2026.

Looking ahead, plans are progressing to develop an environmentally accessible allotment plot, supported by a £5,000 award from this year's NECF fund.

### ***Northumberland Miners' Picnic Memorial Service Woodhorn Museum, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026***

The Northumberland Miners' Picnic Memorial Service took place on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at Woodhorn Museum, commencing at 10:30am. Over 200 people attended the service, which is believed to be the most well-attended in the event's long history. Despite a brisk and windy morning, the sunshine held throughout. Following the service, the Northumberland Miners' Picnic continued for the rest of the day, with approximately 2,000 people attending the wider activities and entertainment.

The service was led by Ministers of Ashington & Newbiggin Churches Together and opened with a welcome and a performance from Brass Marras, who played "When the Stars Begin to Fall."

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The congregation then joined in the hymn "Abide with Me," followed by a Bible reading and sermon. Prayers were offered before the Ashington & District Male Voice Choir performed two pieces — "Woodhorn Disaster," which names all 13 miners who lost their lives in the 1916 Woodhorn Colliery disaster, and "Requiem." Their performance was described as deeply moving by many in attendance.

Wreaths were laid by a wide range of dignitaries, elected representatives, trade union officials and community organisations, reflecting strong cross-community support for preserving Northumberland's mining heritage.

A blessing was given before the closing address which was delivered by Mr Ian Lavery MP for Blyth & Ashington.

Following the service, the Miners' Picnic continued throughout the day with a full programme of live entertainment and a wide range of family activities, including crafts for children. Approximately 2,000 people attended across the day, reflecting the continued importance of the event as one of the most valued and cherished occasions in Northumberland's community calendar.

Ashington Town Council extended thanks to Woodhorn Museum for providing the setting; Ashington & Newbiggin Churches Together for leading the service; the Ashington & District Male Voice Choir and Brass Marras for their musical contributions; all dignitaries and union representatives; and every volunteer, organiser and member of the public who attended and supported the day.