AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE – 11th November 2025

Neighbourhood Services

Doves Corner

Ward Cllrs have indicated that their preference is that ATC maintain this space in respect of sustainable planting; this will be brought to a future meeting to agree formally. Subject to approval this will be added to NSO work schedules.

Town Council Assets

Bus Shelters and Town Seats remain a priority. Information has been requested from NCC and providers on user numbers. We await information on a funding application for shelters and locally fabricated seats for shelters without them.

Those town seats for update are on the agenda following a response from Haydon Ward Cllrs and funding support from the County Cllr. A further reminder that ward Cllrs can get in touch if there are seats in there ward they would like to see updated with the new style seating which is made with recycled materials and no maintenance, as well as being more accessible with arm rests. Thoughts being that if seats are identified for replacement rather than refurbishment we could seek funding via MLIS or Windfarm. **A reminder to Ward Cllrs to get in touch.**

Horticulture

Work is complete on the Woodhorn Road/Woodhorn Villas entrance feature which has always been more difficult to maintain. Mark and Ryan have built up the border in brickwork to match the gateway structure, the bed has been reduced and will be further planted in spring. We will look at mirroring this scheme at the Bothal entrance feature which is similarly sprawling and could do with a physical border.

Allotments

Site Inspections

- Routine inspections have continued across all managed allotment sites.
- Follow-up inspections from early to mid-September have been completed.

Allotment Liaison Group

An Allotment Liaison meeting was held on Thursday 23rd October with the opportunity for site representatives to bring forward capital projects across all allotment sites. The main emphasis for capital spending is roadways which Alan has started seeking costs for. Additionally fencing at Wansbeck Road Allotment site, and suggestions for community spaces at other sites. The workmanship on taps was raised. Discussions included the potential to switch off water supplies ahead of any cold snaps to prevent damage.

The assessment framework provides a transparent, fair way to evaluate capital work's needs, although the difficulty will be where sites have the same request – roadways. Information on the assessment framework was previously provided but if anyone has questions, they are welcome to contact Sarah or Alan.

Maintenance & Repairs

- **Roadways:** Initial meeting held with a contractor; awaiting quotes.
- **Fencing:** Meeting scheduled later this week with a fencing contractor.
- **Taps:** Additional repairs completed; lagging options to be explored before temperatures drop.

- **Locks:** Urgent repairs underway at the Woodhorn site; ongoing servicing will be required.

Plot Management

Several gardens have been re-let across various sites. Invoices for North Seaton Colliery will be issued next month, with rent due on 1st January.

Boundary Improvements

NCC has assisted with overgrown boundary clearance at:

- Seaton Hirst
- Hirst East End

Nursery Park has also been identified for future work. These efforts have improved site exteriors and may help deter littering.

Future Works

Ongoing discussions with NCC regarding boundary improvements between Highmarket and Wansbeck Road sites and adjacent church grounds. Work is expected to commence late November or early December.

Safety & Waste Disposal

The Town Council has partnered with a local company to safely dispose of gas canisters found on sites.

Play Areas

ROPSA inspections were postponed to 18th November to inspect all our play areas. This annual inspection is a legal requirement.

North Seaton Colliery Play Area

An order for the newly developed play area has been placed, this item is on the agenda.

Bywell Road Play Area

Following previous update about this NCC owned and maintained play area, the survey designed by us and sent out by NCC has had a good response so far. The findings have been shared with ward Cllrs and NCC.

Paddock Wood Play Area

Sarah has identified some areas for potential improvement at Paddock Wood Play Area and has arranged a site meeting with ward Cllrs. Areas identified are outside of the Town Council's remit but with funding could be actioned by a suitable contractor, i.e. youth shelter repainting, seat refurbishment or replacement. The play area itself has equipment that is no longer in use and bark continues to be an issue.

Events and Engagement

Youth Advisory Committee Collaboration Meeting Summary
Monday, 20th October 2025, Hirst Welfare Centre, Alexandra Road

The Youth Advisory Committee met with Youth Service Providers to review current youth services and partnership activities across Ashington. The meeting brought together representatives from Ashington

Town Council, police, youth organisations, education providers, and community safety teams. A full report will be brought to the December FGS meeting.

Key Updates

Positive News: Youth-related antisocial behaviour is at an all-time low, with only fireworks-related incidents remaining a concern. The Playzone sessions have been highly successful, and Ashington Town FC has won funding to deliver additional activities there.

New Initiatives: Beyond Youth will open the pavilion over winter months from November. A Street Games project bid has been submitted to engage 14+ young people in project development skills. A darts programme combining numeracy learning will launch with world number 6 Chris Dobey attending the opening event.

Funding Opportunities: Ashington and Blyth have been designated as Project Shield Areas, unlocking Home Office funding. Other available funds include Community Chest funding (contact: Rita Patel-Miller - ritapatel.miller@qtsdatacenters.com)
Bernica Fund (up to £200) and Eat Sleep Play Fund for travel costs.

Training: NUF Next Team course for 16+ starts 5th January 2026.

Challenges

- Fireworks incidents at Hirst Park remain problematic. Young people involved have been referred to fire services, and partners are working to identify supply sources.
- Need to increase engagement with older teenagers across multiple services.
- County lines awareness required - partners urged to report concerns to police due to limited intelligence in the area.

Actions

- All partners to send upcoming event information to Sharon
- Identify training needs
- FIBS (Fire Incident Behaviour System) form to be circulated for reporting fireworks incidents
- NUF course and Community Chest funding details to be shared with all partners

Small Grant Fund Summary - October 2025

The October 2025 Small Grant Fund round closed on 22nd October and received 9 applications in total.

6 organisations were successful, receiving a combined total of **£2,440** in funding for community initiatives including:

- A Christmas event for elderly clients and families
- Youth development equipment and activities
- Heritage preservation projects
- Community sports championships
- Radio station equipment upgrades

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3 applications were unsuccessful as they did not meet the small grant criteria. These applicants included youth clubs and sports organisations seeking funding for volunteer expenses, uniforms, and equipment. All unsuccessful applicants have been signposted to alternative funding sources.

The successful grants will support diverse community activities ranging from heritage preservation and youth engagement to entertainment for elderly residents and local sports events.

The small grant funding report will be emailed out for information.

Celebratory Funding Film

An email invitation has gone out for a planning meeting taking place on Wednesday 17th November at 2pm here at the town hall.

All successful annual grant applicants have been invited to the meeting to arrange filming slots with Jimmy France from Luk Luk Production for three short videos.

The videos will feature Sport, Youth, and Community and Climate Action. These videos will provide you groups and the Council with the opportunity to promote their organisation, showcase the wonderful work being done, and share stories with the wider community.

Remembrance Sunday Service & Parade 2025

9th November 2025, Ashington Memorial Garden

Ashington's annual Remembrance Sunday service and parade attracted hundreds of residents in a well-attended and moving tribute to the fallen and those who have served in our armed forces. The parade was led by Parade Marshall John Langan, with strong youth representation from Reiverdale Scouts, Ashington Girlguiding Division, Ashington Sea Cadets, and Dukes Combined Forces Cadets

The service was conducted by Ashington Churches Together (Rev. Sam Lockhead and Fr. Vincent Waiga). The memorial garden welcomed:

- Four-person Honour Guard from Zulu Company 5 Fusiliers
- Music by Ashington Colliery Band
- Singing supported by Ashington Community Singers and Ashington & District Male Voice Choir
- Traditional two-minute silence, Last Post, Reveille, and Lament observed
- Wreath laying by armed forces representatives and local community groups (announced by Frazer Nicholson, Vice Chair of Ashington Royal British Legion)

Julie Cordon, Deputy Lord Lieutenant attended and Mr A Vaziri, Royal British Legion Branch President delivered the Exhortation and Kohima Epitaph.

There will be a de-brief arranged with Ashington Branch of RBL and others involved in the New Year.

Upcoming Events

Christmas Light Switch On & Lantern Parade, this Thursday 13th November on Station Road and at the Masonic Hall. Ashington Town Council Meetings List

Christmas Craft Market, this Friday 14th November on Station Road. Ashington Town Council Meetings List

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Website and Social Media PR

Website

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/

Hundreds Gather for Ashington's Remembrance Sunday Service	*10 November 2025*
Ashington's Magical Christmas Lights Switch-On Returns with Fairies, Elves, and Festive Fun	*07 November 2025*
Ashington Town Council Welcomes Community Engagement Events on Town Centre Regeneration	*05 November 2025*
Ashington Memorial Garden Enhanced as Part of Town's Regeneration Ahead of Remembrance Sunday	*05 November 2025*
Finance & General Services Committee Meeting on 11/11/2025	*04 November 2025*
Ashington to Debut Spectacular Light Projections Across Town Centre This November through December	*31 October 2025*
A Warmer Welcome to Ashington	*28 October 2025*
Ashington to be Represented at North East Field of Remembrance	*27 October 2025*
Spooktacular series of events to launch new Animating Ashington Autumn Winter Festival	*24 October 2025*
Allotment Liaison Committee Meeting on Thursday 23rd October	*17 October 2025*

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Casual Vacancy - Hirst Ward	*16 October 2025*
Ashington Christmas Craft Market with Festive Magic and Free Family Fun	*14 October 2025*
Ashington Christmas Craft Market with Festive Magic and Free Family Fun	*13 October 2025*
Ashington Town Council Launches Second Round of Small Grant Fund	13 October 2025
Finance & General Services Committee Meeting on 14/10/25.	08 October 2025

Facebook

The Town Council's Facebook page has shown positive performance during the period 14th October to 8th November 2024.

The page gained 158 new followers during this period, reflecting a 24% increase. This brings the total follower count from 3,400 (reported at the previous Finance & General Services Committee meeting) to 3,600.

Engagement Metrics:

- **Reach:** 70,000 (up 7.3%)
- **Views:** 320,000 (up 0.4%)
- **Content Interactions:** 3,800 (down 10.6%)
- **Link Clicks:** 558 (down 3.8%)
- **Page Visits:** 5,700 (down 30.4%)

Notable peaks in engagement occurred around 19th October and 3rd November, correlating with specific content releases.

Posts focusing on positive community news and Ashington-specific content continue to generate stronger engagement compared to shared content from partner organisations. This trend reinforces the value of locally focused original content.

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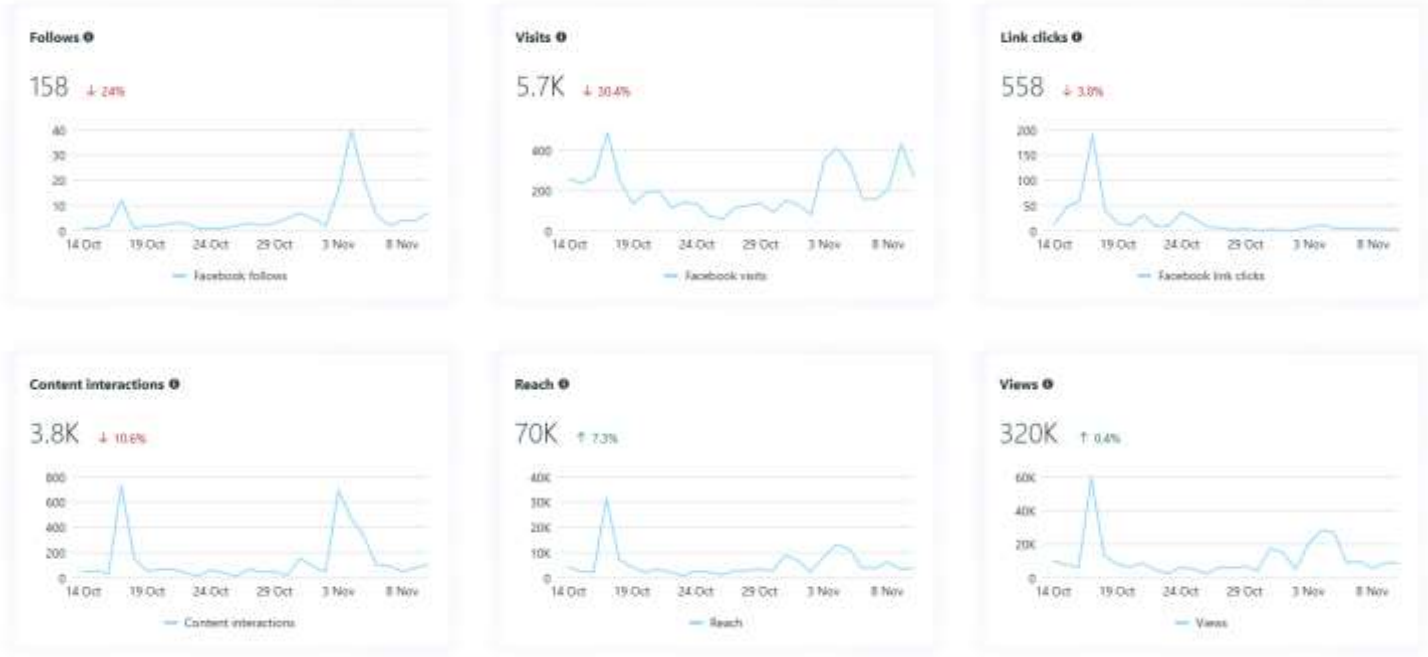
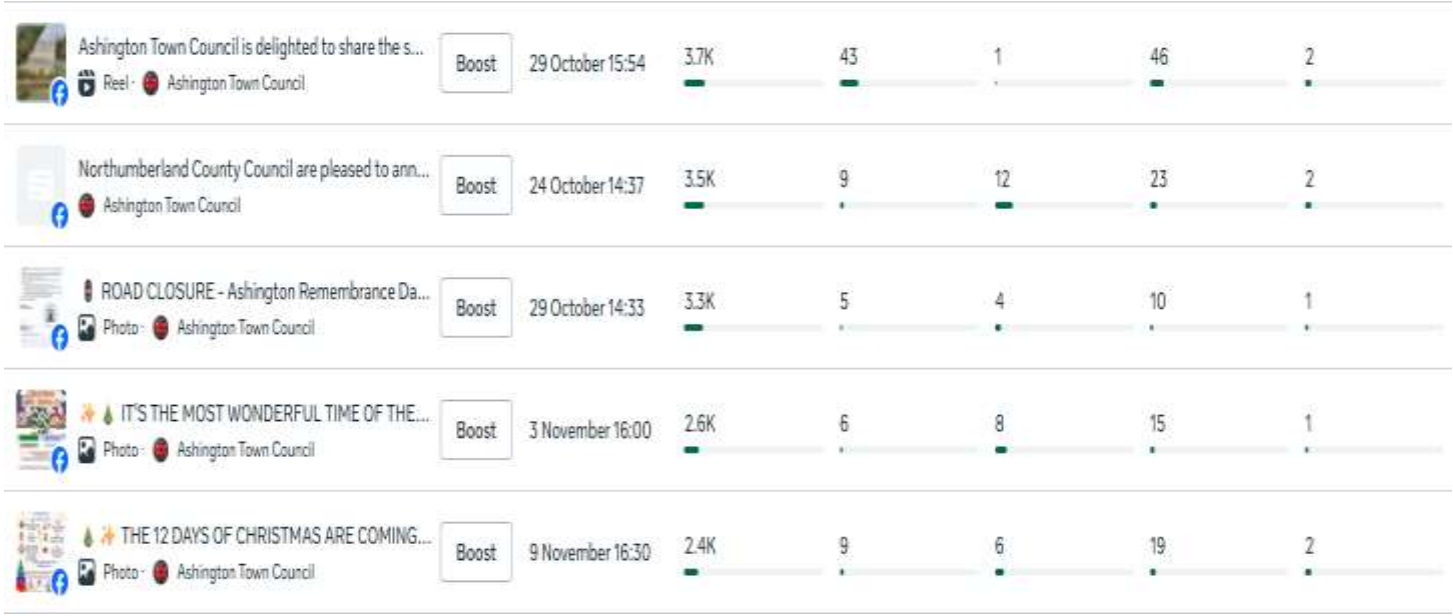


Top Ten Posts:

Title		Date published ↑↓	Reach ↓	Likes and reactions ↑↓	Shares ↑↓	Interactions ↑↓	Comments ↑↓
Ashington is set to illuminate the festive season in ... Multi media · Ashington Town Council	Boost	31 October 16:25	25.7K	325	94	469	45
🎄✨ THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS ARE COMING... Photo · Ashington Town Council	Boost	3 November 16:30	11.4K	33	40	90	13
Ashington Town Council is delighted to formally sh... Photo · Ashington Town Council	Boost	5 November 09:57	9.6K	147	11	172	13
https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/n... Photo · Ashington Town Council	Boost	14 October 14:05	5.3K	11	6	39	21
A Building Named with Hope 💙 Northumberland ... Multi media · Ashington Town Council	Boost	21 October 15:17	3.8K	45	1	48	2



Ashington Town Council is delighted to share the s... Reel · Ashington Town Council	Boost	29 October 15:54	3.7K	43	1	46	2
Northumberland County Council are pleased to ann... Ashington Town Council	Boost	24 October 14:37	3.5K	9	12	23	2
ROAD CLOSURE - Ashington Remembrance Da... Photo · Ashington Town Council	Boost	29 October 14:33	3.3K	5	4	10	1
IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE... Photo · Ashington Town Council	Boost	3 November 16:00	2.6K	6	8	15	1
THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS ARE COMING... Photo · Ashington Town Council	Boost	9 November 16:30	2.4K	9	6	19	2

Halloween Trail

The Halloween Trail achieved significant success this year, with 26 businesses from Ashington High Street participating, including both new and returning traders.

Families collected stamp cards and visited each participating shop to receive treats and stamps. The event attracted over 100 families and young people, representing a 100% increase in participation compared to the previous year.

Feedback from participating businesses was positive regarding the operational change from stickers to stamps. Shops reported that stamping cards was more efficient than the previous sticker-based system, whilst children responded enthusiastically to the Halloween-themed stamps.

IT and Computer Systems

Work has commenced on developing a comprehensive asset register database using Microsoft Access. The database is designed to maintain a complete record of all Town Council assets throughout Ashington.

The system will include the following features:

- Photographic records of each asset
- What3Words location data for precise geographical referencing
- Inspection schedules and records
- Notes and maintenance history
- Asset condition monitoring

This database will provide a centralised system for managing and maintaining up-to-date information on all Council assets across the town, improving operational efficiency and asset management capabilities.