

## **AGENDA 10, Enc iv) PUBLIC STATEMENT ON RECENT EVENTS IN ASHINGTON**

*(placed on the agenda by Cllr Louis Brown and John Tully)*

To consider endorsing and issuing a public statement addressing recent events in Ashington, including unauthorised flag displays on public assets, vandalism, and protests, following community feedback. To agree that the Council:

- Endorses the attached draft statement "Standing Together: Ashington's Response to Recent Division"
  - Authorises the Clerk to issue the statement on behalf of Ashington Town Council
  - Agrees to coordinate release with participating community groups and organisations
  - Delegates authority to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to make minor amendments following any final community group feedback
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**Proposed by: Cllr John Tully, Seconded by: Cllr Louis Brown**

**Purpose:** To consider endorsing and issuing a public statement addressing recent events in Ashington, including unauthorised flag displays on public assets, vandalism, and protests.

**Background:** The Council has received representations from residents and community groups requesting local leaders take a clear stand on recent divisive activities. A draft statement for further comment and support from community organisations is included.

**Recommendation:** That the Council:

1. Endorses the attached draft statement "Standing Together: Ashington's Response to Recent Division"
2. Authorises the Town Clerk to issue the statement on behalf of Ashington Town Council
3. Agrees to coordinate release with participating community groups and organisations
4. Delegates authority to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to make minor amendments following any final community group feedback

### **Public Statement**

Ashington Town Council is taking a clear stand on recent events in our town. We hope that community leaders, local groups, and residents will stand with us in sending this message.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed flags being illegally attached to public assets, divisive protest marches with inflammatory chanting, vandalism of street signs and road markings, and everyday conversations poisoned by hostility. This behaviour does not represent Ashington. We do not support these actions.

These actions are being driven by a small group, not by the town as a whole. These actions spread hatred and unrest. They divide rather than unite. They damage the reputation we have all worked to build.

Everyone has the right to peaceful protest—but what we are seeing goes far beyond legitimate expression. These protests achieve nothing positive for Ashington's image or future. The colourful union flags being erected today will become tattered and torn eyesores tomorrow, and it will fall to overstretched public resources to remove them. That is money and staff time

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that should be invested in improving our community, not repairing damage caused by a destructive few.

We want to be absolutely certain there is no misunderstanding: we are not challenging anyone's right to display flags with pride on their own property. The current displays create an atmosphere of exclusion and unease.

We have heard from residents and community groups asking local leaders to take a stand. This is us taking that stand.

Misinformation is being deliberately spread to fuel fear and division. We urge anyone with genuine questions or concerns to use proper channels—contact your councillors, attend meetings, speak to community leaders, engage with community groups. Real answers are available through honest, direct conversation, not through inflammatory speech or social media speculation.

Above all, we want to remind everyone what Ashington truly represents: a welcoming town with a proud history of people from all backgrounds settling here, working hard, and contributing to our schools, shops, businesses, and community life. We ask every resident to pause and consider: how must our neighbours—whether newly arrived or established for generations—feel when they see these divisive displays and experience the atmosphere of unease and unwelcome being deliberately created on their way to work, school, or the shops?

Ashington is stronger because of its diversity. Respect, fairness, and inclusion are the values that have always bound us together. We will not allow a small minority to undermine these principles.

We are asking every resident to play their part: reject actions and speech that harm our community, treat all neighbours with respect, and help ensure Ashington remains a town we can all be proud to call home.

The majority of Ashington's residents believe in decency, community, and mutual respect. It is time we made our voices heard more loudly than those who seek to divide us.