

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT Minutes of the ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP BOARD held at**  
**11:30am on Thursday 22 September 2022 Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Ray Wealleans – NCC Neighbourhood Services Area Manager, Peter Bowman – NCC Neighbourhood Services Team Leader, John Robertson – NCC Principle Environmental Enforcement Officer

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE.**

Sarah Eden – ATC Clerk/RFO  
 Sharon Parmley – ATC Administration

**1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Apologies were received from the Chair, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert.

As existing Vice-Chair, Cllr Marjorie Chambers took the first item, to appoint a Vice-Chair, which had not been actioned at the first meeting following the Annual Meeting of the Council.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

Members discussed the pros and cons of positions being shared among members, and the appropriateness of County Cllrs taking on executive roles.

Following discussion, the Clerk advised that the meeting was properly convened and, in a position, to elect a Vice-Chair, and that there were no governing documents to suggest who should or not be appointed.

Cllr Caroline Ball was proposed by Cllr Louis Brown and seconded by Cllr Marjorie Chambers.

**It was AGREED** to elect Cllr. Caroline Ball as Vice Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Cllrs. Vicky Brown, Matthew Cuthbert, Lynne Grimshaw, Pauline Thompson and NCC Stephen Wardle.

Ray Wealleans took the opportunity to thank the Council for the Partnership Breakfast for team members earlier than morning, which was much appreciated by the team.

**4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest on items for agenda discussion.

**5. DISPENSATIONS**

There were no dispensations received or to consider.

**6. PREVIOUS MEETING**

**a) It was AGREED** that the report of the last meeting, held on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022, was a true record.

**b) It was AGREED** to receive the follow-up actions not covered on the agenda from the last meeting.

**i) Update on legal arrangements for Play areas**

The Clerk updated that following discussion with NCC Strategic Estates, Mike Robbins, it was clear that a legal agreement did not exist for the management and maintenance of the Play Areas, once the responsibility of NCC. A draft agreement was shared with the Clerk, who then shared with the

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Council's insurers. The Clerk responded in August with a suggested change to incorporate that although ATC is responsible for repairs, NCC is responsible for inspections. This level of shared responsibility would only ever be really tested if there was a claim. To date this remains with Strategic Estates. A draft agreement will be brought to the FGS Committee once a response is received.

Following a request by the Clerk, Ray Wealleans confirmed that copies of annual inspections of the play areas would be shared.

**ii) Update on reporting system issues**

All issues with the reporting system have been addressed.

**7. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET**

**a) 2021/22 Underspend**

**It was AGREED** to defer the discussion of priorities to be addressed with the available underspend to the next meeting. **It was also AGREED** that NCC Officers would prepare any priorities to put forward to the board.

**b) 2022/23 Budget Update**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated budget report sent out in advance of the meeting.

In response to a question from Cllr Caroline Bal on fuel costs, Ray Wealleans confirmed that NCC had fixed costs previously which reduced the impact.

**8. ENHANCED SERVICES PERFORMANCE**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the Clerk's summary of Enhanced Services delivered under the Partnership Agreement. **It was also AGREED to RECEIVE** the Clerk's Summary of Data collected from the Enhanced Monitoring Tool, both sent out in advance of the meeting.

**a) WEED CONTROL**

**I. Weed Control Update (Die-back removed under Enhanced Services)**

Peter Bowman updated that NCC will undertake two weed spraying applications of obstacles on soft landscape areas the first in March/April the second in July/August. NCC shall also undertake two selective weed spraying applications on footpaths, kerb edges and other hardstanding areas in April/May and August/September.

**II. Operational Improvements**

Enhanced Service results in dieback being removed more effectively. In response to questions, Peter Bowman advised that die-back was removed mechanically, and by hand.

Peter Bowman further reported that recently, the quad driver has been absent, so this has reduced the coverage of weed spraying as it is far quicker with the quad bike. However, three further staff have been trained and the battery strimmer is now used on the cleansing route.

Cllrs received updates on specific areas questioned.

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Cllr Caroline Ball updated on the experiment in her own back hard where weeds were strimmed prior to the weed spray being applied, and that this has been more effective than where they were left to die-back.

Officers updated that the type of weed spray used depends on the situation and that that used commercially differs from the weed spray people can use in their own gardens.

## **b) STREET CLEANSING**

### ***I. Cleansing Schedules***

Peter Bowman recited the terms that NCC shall use our best endeavours to keep all areas predominantly free of litter. The Cores Service delivers weekly litter bin emptying. The Enhanced Service delivers an increase from a 4-weekly cleanse to a weekly cleanse in residential areas.

Peter Bowman reported only a slight disruption to schedules due to bank holidays

### ***ii. Operational Improvements***

The Core Service delivers a daily cleanse and litter bin emptying in high footfall areas such as shopping precinct. The Enhanced Services delivers a dedicated presence on Station Road and the immediate area around it, throughout the day that results in much more frequent cleansing and litter bin emptying seven days a week.

Peter Bowman reported that annual leave and sickness is expected to improve in the coming weeks. Additionally, that the working week now included Friday afternoons, which were previously half day.

Cllr Louis Brown asked about problem hedges and overgrown gardens. John Robertson responded that NCC Legal do not get involved in these matters, but they can be passed to Planning Enforcement or Highways if it is a matter of access. Neither NCC or individuals not connected to the property can carry out works as this would be trespass, and/or criminal damage.

## **c) STREET SWEEPER**

### ***I. Street Sweeper Schedules***

The Core Services delivers a small compact mechanical sweep of residential streets every 13 weeks, this is increased to every 8 weeks under the Enhanced Service.

Peter Bowman updated that that there was a vacancy, but this would be filled soon. The routes as changed are working.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers mentioned that some areas of Haydon may not need to be visited as often as other wards and suggested that routes could be altered to ensure they attended where they were needed most.

Officers welcomed this suggestion and agreed that it would be helpful to be able to divert sweepers to more problem areas when needed. The suggestion that Core may be sufficient for some areas but enhanced was required in others. **It was AGREED** to discuss this further with ward Cllrs.

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**II. Operational Improvements**

The sweeping of kerbs is not covered under Enhanced Services. The Core Service delivers a mechanical sweep all kerb edges 4 times a year.

**d) RAPID RESPONSE**

**I. Rapid Response Reports**

To enable the scheduled, cyclical street cleansing activity to effectively operate two members of staff that can tackle litter and fly tipping hot spot areas on a planned and reactive basis will be deployed. This will provide more responsiveness to emergent issues enabling the team to tackle hotspots more regularly and to respond to ad hoc requests more quickly. This will also result in other teams being more productive as they will be taken off their regular work far less often enabling them to concentrate on doing a quality job in their patch.

Members and officers discussed the areas that caused problems and contributing factors.

**II. Positive Action to Reduce Fly-Tipping**

NCC shall remove more than 85% of fly tipping from public areas within 3 days of notification, though the enhanced team will allow us to significantly over perform against this standard.

It was AGREED the Partnership Board could look at a further Love Where You Live Campaign, an Amnesty Day in collaboration with the Police (who had previously suggested this), contact with Bernicia (although agreed that many properties are privately rented).

Cllr Marjorie Chambers asked about the black bags left beside waste bins for collection and whether these encouraged fly-tipping. It was acknowledged that this may look unsightly for a short period, but the Council would not want to deter litter pickers who are doing a fantastic job.

Cllr Louis Brown commented on accumulations at properties. John Robertson responded that there was a process to go through to encourage residents to deal with their own accumulations outside and within properties.

In response to a question about the size of household bins, it was confirmed that you can request a larger recycling bin, but only some are entitled to a larger general waste bin.

**9. ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT**

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the following report from John Robertson sent out in advance of the meeting.

**a) Enforcement Reports**

John Robertson gave the following report:

During June 2022 to August 2022, we have investigated 57 Fly-Tipping Offences in Ashington. All of which have been cleared by NEAT. A resident has been fined £300 via FPN for an offence in Sycamore Street and two residents have been fined £300 and £400 for offences in the Bothal area. Enquiries are ongoing to trace others responsible and interviews for some are planned.

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Two people are currently wanted on warrant for failing to appear at court for offences committed in 2021.

CPW (Community Protection Warning) and CPN (Community Protection Notice) continue to be used in the clearance of waste accumulations from private property. We investigated 42 accumulations during this time. Some properties are going through the stages of the procedure. Following investigations of the above reports and some from previous times we issued 10 CPW (Community Protection Warning) and 6 CPN (Community Protection Notice). The reports for 1 property in Dorset Close, 1 in Holmdale and 1 in Devon Close were referred to Bernicia and properties in Chestnut Avenue and Sycamore Street were referred to Advance.

Properties in Ariel Street, George Street, Woodhorn Road, Milburn Road and Beatrice Street were cleared of waste during the period.

1 property on inspection had no waste in the area.

One person appeared at Court for Breach of a CPN which took place in January 2022. They were fined £481.11 for an offence in Queen Street and ordered by the Court to clear the waste.

A couple appeared at Court for Breach of a CPN which took place in February 2022. They were fined £855.38 each a total off £1,710.76 for an offence in Hawthorn Road and ordered by the Court to clear the waste.

In the same period, we dealt with 14 reported Abandoned Vehicles most of which were traced to a local owner and were not abandoned, however 2 vehicles, a truck, and a caravan, have been uplifted and disposed of.

### **b) Operational Improvements**

John Robertson reported that officers continue to carry out patrols for both Litter and Dog Fouling Offences.

Additionally, a joint piece of work will be carried out with Bernicia and Environmental Enforcement in the coming weeks.

Officers highlighted issues with contaminated waste in household collections, with a significant percentage in Southeast Northumberland, at a cost of £106k. Efforts to identify contamination are being identified and programmes developed. Council tax leaflets included bin stickers. Household recycling bins are red flagged, and letters are sent to offenders, but the problem continues.

Cllr Caroline Ball suggested an online campaign to include live filming of the process at Sleekburn, educating residents of the physical and financial impact of contaminated bins, when the belt stops.

**Officers AGREED** to make this suggestion and find out from Suez if it would be possible,

### **10. PRIORITIES**

**It was AGREED to DEFER** discussion of priorities to the next meeting in view of limited members in attendance.

As an example, Ray Wealleans advised that the underspend would pay for two members of staff on weed control for four to five weeks.

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**11. DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022, 11:00am, Town Hall, Council Chamber.

**Meeting end 3:10pm**

DRAFT/FOR INFORMATION ONLY