

AGENDA 9, Enc v) STRATEGIC DIRECTION: ESTABLISHING COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2025–2029

Proposed by: Cllr John Tully

Meeting: Full Council, July 2026

Status: Member proposal, with EO's note

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

— Bruce Lee

1. Background

We are now 18 months into a four-year Council term — well over a third of the way through — and it feels like the right moment to set our strategic direction as a Council.

Shortly after the 2025 elections, the Executive Officer prepared a Strategic Framework which set out the priorities of the previous Council, a values framework, and a detailed account of what had already been delivered. The first 18 months of this term have rightly been focused on the fundamentals: setting the budget, agreeing the precept, establishing grant funding allocations, and progressing the NCC Neighbourhood Services Partnership Agreement.

With that groundwork in place, this proposal asks Council to now take the next step — to agree our own priorities for this term, so that everything we do from here is pulling in the same direction.

37.5%

of this Council term has now elapsed

The time is right to agree our direction of travel.

2. Setting our priorities

Having a clear set of agreed priorities means that as a Council we know what we are working towards — and so does everyone else. It gives our decisions, our spending, and our activity a shared purpose. It does not need to be complicated. It starts with a simple question: what do we want this Council to achieve for Ashington during this term?

The proposal is that we agree a set of priorities now, and that those priorities become the basis for the work programme we build from here.

3. Are the priorities still right?

The priorities below were established by the previous Council and carried forward into the 2025 Strategic Framework. They focus on areas where the Town Council can make a direct difference — through our own staff, our own assets, and our own activity.

Before adopting them, Council should consider: do these still reflect what Ashington needs? Are they the right priorities for the next three years? Is anything missing, or anything that no longer fits?

-  Keeping the town's streets and estates clean and litter free
-  Taking urgent action to fight the effects of Climate Change
-  Supporting the community via events, engagement, and grant funding
-  Improving the environment by providing a pleasant and safe place to live

4. The proposal

This proposal asks Full Council to agree one of the following:

Option A — Adopt as stated

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Formally adopt the four priorities above as the strategic priorities of Ashington Town Council for the 2025–2029 term, with immediate effect.

Option B — Amend and adopt

Agree that the four priorities provide a sound foundation, but propose modifications before formal adoption. Amended priorities to be confirmed at the next meeting.

Option C — Agree a date

Agree to set priorities at a dedicated session, with a date fixed in the Council diary before the end of September 2026.

The proposal notes that:

- following agreement of priorities, Councillors may be encouraged to bring forward their own proposals and ambitions under each area, which the Executive Officer will support and develop to bring to Council.
 - we may end up with several proposals and ambitions that need future funding measures, but they will signal a direction of travel.
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Clerk's note

The following note is provided by the Executive Officer to assist members in their consideration of this item.

How I can support you

I am always here and ready to support Councillors in bringing forward proposals. Whether you have an idea at an early stage or a well-formed plan, I am happy to work with you individually to develop it — looking at what is operationally achievable, what it might cost, and how it could be progressed.

Supporting the Council's ambitions collectively

If Council wishes to go further — agreeing a more formal strategic direction of travel, a work programme, or a longer-term plan — I can support that too. The 2025 Strategic Framework is ready to be built upon. The groundwork has been done. What drives that forward is members deciding what they want to achieve and bringing that ambition forward for the Council to consider.

The Clerk's role

My job is to take your ambitions and work out the how — the operational plan, the resource requirements, the risk assessment, the budget implications. I cannot determine the Council's priorities, aims and objectives, but once those are set, I can work towards moving them into something real with the team, or growing team.

Clerk's recommendation: the Six C's values framework

The 2025 Strategic Framework set out a values framework built around six principles — the Six C's — which I developed but the Council never formally adopted. I think they are good, and I would welcome members' support in formally adopting them tonight as the Council's values framework for the 2025–2029 term

Community

We put the people of Ashington at the heart of everything we do.

Collaboration

We work with partners, residents, and organisations to achieve more together.

Competence

We are professional, skilled, and committed to doing things well.

Communication

We are open, honest, and clear in everything we say and do.

Consideration

We listen, we reflect, and we treat everyone with respect.

Championing

We advocate for Ashington and stand up for our community.