Ashington Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 14TH February 2023, in Hirst Welfare, Alexandra Road.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:
Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Caroline Ball, Victor Bridges, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Glyn Davies, Jim Lang, Mark Purvis, Sophie Robinson, Pauline Thompson, John Tully and Bob Walkinshaw.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:
Sarah Eden – Clerk/RFO, Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Facilities Manager, Sharon Parmley – Administration (Minute taking)

FGS23/320 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Michelle Brannigan, Matthew Cuthbert, Lawrence Henderson, and Liam Lavery.

FGS23/321 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS
There were no disclosures of Interests.

FGS23/322 DISPENSATIONS.
There were no requests for dispensations.

FGS23/323 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
There were no members of the public.

FGS23/324 MINUTES OF FGS MEETING HELD ON 17th January 2023
It was AGREED to RECEIVE the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 17th January 2023 as a true record.

FGS23/325 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES
It was AGREED to RECEIVE a verbal and tabled update on items actioned since the previous meeting.

Updated Town Hall Closure

Damp proofing works at Ashington Town Hall:
Strip out – 6th and 7th February, Damp works – 8th – 17th February, Services, decoration, and reinstatement 20th February – 3rd March.

Meetings

Hirst Welfare has been booked for the following meetings:
FGS - Tuesday 14th February, 6:00pm
Climate Change & Environment Committee - Tuesday 21st February, 6:00pm
We also have an Extraordinary Full Council meeting at Bothal School on Tuesday 7th February, commencing at 6:00pm.

Contact with Officers

Officers, not including NSO's, will be working at home during the works, with limited access where we must print things off for meetings. The systems in place fully support working from home, with all files available via a shared dropbox, so there is no interruption to work. If members wish to meet officers in person, there are several venues in the town where this can be arranged.

Ashington Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 14TH February 2023, in Hirst Welfare, Alexandra Road.

Telephone System

At the time of writing the landline is not working. Sharon has been researching alternative systems that will better meet our needs and a proposal will be brought to the March meeting. Having our own provider, rather than via NCC is more expensive but we can manage the service directly. The main needs of the system, that are not available presently are:

- ✓ One direct number to ATC, that can be picked up by all officers.
- ✓ Different answerphone messages, depending on out of office, holiday, on the other line.
- ✓ Callers able to select to external line (Northumberland County Council)

Neighbourhood Services Officers

The Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers, Mark and Ryan have been busy repairing litter bins and planters, ensuring they are in tip top condition. We will shortly be sharing some positive messaging about this. Bus shelters have also been cleansed, as happens periodically, another example of looking after our assets that we will be sharing across our media.

Officers have installed three new public seats as agreed in September; two on B1334 path/cycleway, and one in People's Park. We are planning a press release about Town Council seating when the weather improves which will focus on our ethos of maintaining not replacing, and also equipping seats with armrest to support those with accessibility needs.

Neighbourhood Services Officers will be working closely with NCC to improve the environs of the bus shelters recently installed on Alexandra Road, near Berrymoor and Windy Gyle.

Northumberland County Council Consultation – Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) For The Control Of Dogs, Antisocial Behaviour, Crime And Policing Act 201, Part 4

Ashington Town Council agreed a response to the consultation at Full Council in November. We asked that Sports Fields be included in a ban on dogs, with specific reference to Hirst Park. Recently, Durham County Council started a consultation to update their PSPO which ends in May 2023, and they are seeking to include 'dogs on leads' for designated sports fields, not a full ban, but an attempt to reduce the issue of dog fouling ahead of sports being played.

This week, NCC Senior Animal Welfare and Environmental Enforcement Officer answered to the Council's consultation response:

"Thank you for your response to the dog control consultation. Here is an update:
Generally, the proposal to extend the current was well supported so the orders will continue for another 3 years. As for the suggestion to ban dogs from all sports fields in Northumberland, this is something that has been discussed a number of times over the years. One of the main problems is that many of the sports areas do not have a clear boundary, like a fence.
Under the current legislation it is an offence to take a dog into a fenced off children's play area (with swings and slides etc) but areas that have play equipment and are not fenced off are not covered.

You are probably aware that our department is currently carrying out monitoring of the Hirst football pitch to determine if there is a problem with dog fouling in this area. Officers will be visiting the area at different times of the day to witness how many dog owners are using the fenced off area to exercise their dogs. We will also look for any dog fouling inside the fenced area and of course if we witness anyone not cleaning up after their dog a fixed penalty notice

will be issued. We will continue the monitoring until April/May then our findings will be discussed at a higher level to decide if any changes need to be made.

I would imagine that if it was decided that the Hirst field could be added to the current no dog zones then other sports areas could then be looked at going forward."

Hirst Masterplan

Members have been invited to a Teams online meeting on Thursday 16th February to discuss the work carried out on the development of a masterplan for the Hirst. NCC's Neil Quinn and the commissioned architects are seeking feedback from Cllrs.

West Sleekburn Recycling Plant Visit

Following an invite to attend a tour, fives spaces have been given to visit on Thursday 23rd March at 2pm. Along with the Clerk, Cllrs Brannigan, Thompson, Chambers and Ball promptly confirmed they wished to take part. Unfortunately, they cannot add numbers to this visit, as there are waiting lists, but if anyone cannot attend, following confirmation of the date/time, another could go in their place.

Lynemouth Windfarm 106 Funding

Funds provided by Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) are linked to Lynemouth Windfarm and under the agreement with SPR must be used for the purposes of Regeneration and Enterprise. The funds are available to Ashington and Newbiggin by the Sea Town Councils.

We have recently reclaimed funding for the installation of bus shelters (x3 Shelters for Woodhorn Rd, Alexandra Rd and A197) at £21,665.75. There is £4,563 remaining that is expected to part-fund a further shelter.

Between £14,000 and £16,000 will be available in the next financial year, again for Enterprise and Regeneration. The Town Council can accumulate funding, but we need to keep officers updated of any plans in the pipeline. Members are encouraged to think how funding could be put to best use.

Tree Planting Schemes

As agreed at the Climate Change Committee in October, Brambledown has planted 73 semi mature trees at 5 locations: Woodhorn roundabout, A196 Wansbeck Riverside, Alexandra Road, Paddock Wood area and South Side in North Seaton. 12-month watering and maintenance will be carried out by Brambledown.

A further 13 semi mature trees are due to be planted by local contractor GS Wright Tree Surgeons at Woodhorn Villas and A197 Pegswood; watering and maintenance will be carried out by our own Neighbourhood Services Officers.

Allotment Works

All taps that that have recently been installed on allotment sites across the town have passed Northumbria Water inspections, carried out on behalf of DEFRA.

Significant perimeter fencing and associated improvement works have been completed at North Seaton Colliery Allotment Site by HFF, as agreed by Council in February 2022.

FGS23/326 NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BANK
It was AGREED to RECEIVE an update on work this year to date from Northumberland Community Bank.

It was FURTHER AGREED to release the third and final instalment of annual funding of £1,250.

FGS23/327 YMCA
It was AGREED to RECEIVE an update on work this year to date from the YMCA.

It was FURTHER AGREED to release the third and final instalment of annual funding of £3,000.

FGS23/328 NORTHUMBERLAND CITIZENS ADVICE
It was AGREED to RECEIVE an update on work this year to date from Northumberland Citizens Advice of £3,000.

It was FURTHER AGREED to release the third and final instalment of annual funding.

FGS23/329 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2022/23

a) Updated Budget Report

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

There were no questions from members to the RFO.

b) Accounts Paid

It was AGREED to **RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid since the January Finance and General Services Meeting, and to endorse those accounts paid according to the Council's Financial Regulations.

It was FURTHER AGREED to endorse tabled Payments Schedule for February 2023.

FGS23/330 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL – ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
It was AGREED to RECEIVE a summary of the enforcement action undertaken in 2022 calendar year from John Robertson (NCC Principal Environmental Enforcement), along with updated costs for the continued provision of an Environmental Enforcement Officer (0.5 FTC) for a further year under Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Northumberland County Council, sent out in advance of the meeting.

It was AGREED to reaffirm the agreement at budget setting not to include the provision for this Service Level Agreement in 2023/24, and to formally advise Northumberland County Council of the Council's decision.

Ashington Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 14TH February 2023, in Hirst Welfare, Alexandra Road.

FGS23/331 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – FEBRUARY 2023
It was AGREED to RECEIVE a summary of the small grant funding applications received between 3rd January 2023 – 7th February 2023, sent out in advance of the meeting.

It was FURTHER AGREED that Ashington RVS Social Care be awarded £500 help support running costs, which includes hot lunches, refreshments and activities.

It was FURTHER AGREED that Talking Marras be awarded £500 towards the costs of new growing beds in their allotment garden at Ashington Hirst Welfare.

It was FURTHER AGREED that Ashington Veterans & Elders Institute be awarded £500 to help support costs of increases in energy bills for the coming year.

Cllrs discussed the current funding policy and agreed to review the criteria for applications in the new financial year.

The Clerk to prepare suggested new criteria to be agreed at the next meeting of the Finance and General Services Committee before invitations go out again in April.

FGS23/332 COMMUNITY DEFIBRILATORS
It was AGREED to RECEIVE a report on the supported locations for installation of twelve community defibrillators sent out in advance of the meeting.

It was FURTHER AGREED to proceed with the order and works associated with the installation and registration of the defibrillators.

FGS23/333 NEW AND REPLACEMENT BUS SHELTERS

a) Woodhorn Road

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a proposal from Hirst Ward Cllrs and supporting report from the Assets and Facilities Manager, on the installation of a new bus shelter on Woodhorn Road (following consultation).

It was AGREED to proceed with the installation of a 2-bay cantilever shelter in this location, and to delegate that the Assets and Facilities Manager place an order with the Council's preferred supplier, GW Shelters.

b) Bus Interchange

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a proposal from Cllr Caroline Ball, and supporting report from the Assets and Facilities Manager, to install two new shelters on the South carriageway of the bus interchange, with a view to being funded via Cllr Ball's Members' Local Improvement Scheme.

It was AGREED to delegate that the scheme be progressed by the Assets and Facilities Manager, and that following approval the shelters are ordered from the Council's preferred supplier, GW Shelters.

Ashington Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 14TH February 2023, in Hirst Welfare, Alexandra Road.

c) Station Road – Adjacent St Aidan's Church

It was AGREED to receive a proposal from Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, and supporting report from the Assets and Facilities Manager, to install a new shelter, with a view to being funded via Cllr Grimshaw's Members' Local Improvement Scheme.

It was AGREED to delegate that the scheme be progressed by the Assets and Facilities Manager, and that following approval the shelter is ordered from the Council's preferred supplier, GW Shelters.

d) Replacement Shelters

It was AGREED to delegate to the Assets and Facilities Manager (in consultation with ward Cllrs), the purchase of up to four replacement shelters, from the Council's preferred supplier, according to lifespan, as included in the 2023/24 budget, and to proceed with the ordering these from 1st April 2023.

FGS23/334 PUBLIC FOOTPATH 100 – EXTINGUISHMENT ORDER
It was AGREED to RECEIVE in accordance with Highways Act 1980, Section 118A, to formally receive the extinguishment order from Northumberland County Council.

Cllr Caroline Ball informed members that this was the final stage in closing the crossing. Cllr Ball stated that she is in full support of the Extinguishment Order.

FGS23/335 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS
Following approval of the Chair, **it was AGREED** to suspend standing orders to allow that an item deferred from the previous Full Council meeting, held on 31st January 2023, to be brought, having not been formally placed on the agenda.

"9b - No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least seven clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice, or the day of the meeting."

FGS23/336 HOMEWORKING POLICY
It was AGREED to adopt the Homeworking Policy recommended by the Personnel Committee, following their meeting on 29th November 2023.

Cllr John Tully commented that he had addressed those questions put forward by members.

FGS23/337 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING
Tuesday 14th March 2023, 6:00pm, venue to be agreed due to works at the Town Hall *(meeting rearranged to 21st March).*

Meeting ends 6.35pm