

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL/NORTUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
DRAFT Report of the HIRST PARK MAINTENANCE MEEING held at 10:00am on Wednesday 5th
October 2022 at Hirst Park Pavilion

PRESENT:

Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr Vicki Brown, County Cllr Ken Parry, Neil Dawson - NCC Countryside and Green Spaces Manage, Jimmy Reith – Parks and Green Spaces Team Leader, Peter Bowman – NCC Senior Team Leader

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE.

Sarah Eden – ATC Clerk/RFO

Cllr Louis Brown (present but not taking part in meeting)

Sarah Eden introduced that the previous meeting was less formal, but at the time it was explained that the meetings would benefit from following the same format as the Enhanced Services Partnership Meetings.

1. CHAIR

It was AGREED appoint Cllr Pauline Thompson as Chair of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Neil Dawson advised that both Sarah Bredin-Kemp and Carla Thompson were unable to attend the meeting.

Apologies were noted for County Cllr Mark Purvis, Cllr Sophie Robinson and Cllr Victor Bridges.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests in items on the agenda as required by the Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011 were received.

4. DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were requested.

5. PREVIOUS MEETING

It was AGREED to receive and approve the accuracy of the note of the previous and first meeting of the group, held on 25th May 2022.

In regards the actions agreed at that meeting, Neil Dawson acknowledged that a schedule of action days had not been formally set-up and shared with the Town Council, although there were a variety of activities taking place. **It was AGREED** that Development Workers would be asked to action this. **It was also AGREED** that development activities taking place in the park and pavilion should be shared with Sharon at the Town Council, so these can be published on the Council's website and Facebook page.

Sarah Eden advised that Sharon was able to pick some things up from Facebook but that this required a trawl through pages, and that in the main community groups emailed the Town Council.

The meeting discussed that the Facebook Page used to communicate events in Hirst Park was often on the negative side with respect to comments, and seemed to be unregulated in regards what is posted. Neil Dawson clarified that the page 'Friends of Hirst Park' operated at arms-length from Northumberland County Council. It was discussed that this page was the main media for communication for the work taking place in the park so it would be appropriate to look at the content. **This was AGREED.**

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6. HERITAGE LOTTERY FUNDING

Neil Dawson updated that funding was up to the end of September 2023 which is all allocated to support the Development Worker posts and development work. This is at the activity plan stage with development workers supporting the events and volunteers in the park.

Although Development Work is not included in the services the Town Council contribute to, **it was AGREED** that it would be beneficial for Cllrs to understand the level of activity taking place, and if reports could be brought to provide this information it would be helpful for the future. It is likely that the Town Council may be asked to support the Development Workers roles in the future, that being the case, it would be advantageous to have a thorough appreciation of what they are and what they have achieved.

Neil Dawson explained that previously Northumberland College were using the Growing Zone but that this was now predominantly being used by Full Circle Food. Cllr Pauline Thompson asked if the space was being leased to Full Circle Food. Neil Dawson responded that NCC was heading towards a lease with the Town Council, but as needs changed the space became available. It was confirmed that the space was made available to the Town Council for the delivery of plants for Station Road and the Gateways. Cllr Pauline Thompson asked if the Town Council needed the space in the future, would Full Circle Food be asked to move. Sarah Eden advised that it was unlikely the Council would require the space, as the Council has moved towards sustainable planting, and has contracts for planters, tubs, and baskets. The Council would not be bringing plants on in the future, which is why the space was relinquished.

Neil Dawson summarised that work was ongoing to support Ashington Town FC with an annual football tournament in the summer, and that the Council was supporting new stands on the bowling greens. Additionally, most events in the park are organised by the Development Workers, in comparison to other parks when groups come into the park to organise events.

Cllr Ken Parry asked if there was a possibility that historical plans could be progressed for an outdoor gym, and whether there was funding available to support this. Neil Dawson acknowledged that he was not aware of previous work on this but would investigate it. In regards funding, there was no funding available from the HLF as this was all allocated, but other funding streams may be available. **It was AGREED** this should be investigated.

The meeting discussed the Hirst Park Memories website and how this was used to share events and stories from Hirst Park. [Hirst Park Memories | Sharing stories from Ashington's Flower Park](#)

7. JACK CHARLTON STATUE AND ASHINGTON'S FOOTBALLING HERITAGE PROJECT

Sarah Eden gave a verbal update on the event and confirmed use of the pavilion for guests of the family and Council. Also advising Sarah Bredin-Kemp was pleased to share that there would be a display based on women in football in the pavilion on the day.

8. MAINTENANCE OF HIRST PARK

The meeting received an update on maintenance of Hirst Park according to the operational Memorandum of Understanding in place.

It was discussed that the agreement was set up as a Memorandum of Understanding, as opposed to the format of the Enhanced Services Partnership and Environmental Enforcement which are Service

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Level Agreements (SLA). It is not understood why this is the case, and why this is an annual agreement, but there would be a reason. **It was AGREED** that Sarah Eden would investigate this. Peter Bowman advised that the full-time park worker had been promoted to a Team Leader role in Morpeth, but the role had been filled with another on a permanent contract. The additional seasonal worker post ends in October, however, there could be two apprentices starting soon.

a) HORTICULTURE

Peter Bowman gave an update on horticultural work and was honest that the park could not be maintained as the historical flower park that it was in the past, but the following was very positive:

- Hedges have been reduced from 6ft to 4ft.
- Some unsightly shrubbery areas have been grassed over near the car park.
- Wildflower areas are being added successfully with a mix of wildflower and perennials.
- Bark chippings have been added.
- Plants from Station Road were gratefully received from Ashington Town Council and have been utilised around the park.
- Pruning in the rose garden is done throughout the season

b) PLAY ZONE

Peter Bowman gave an update on the maintenance of, and use of play areas throughout the summer, including the splash pad. This included that the play zone remained very popular throughout the summer with users in the splash zone up to 7:30pm. As the splash zone is turned on/off manually, the area is checked during these times.

Peter Bowman reported that there was damage to wet pour and to some of the gates in the splash zone. The wet pour has been repaired but the gates in the splash zone had to be removed, and are very expensive to replace.

c) GENERAL PARK MAINTENANCE

Peter Bowman advised that incidents of antisocial behaviour and damage reduced the operational effectiveness of park maintenance as officers were moved to clear-up from the night before, rather than keeping to the schedule of maintenance.

The meeting was informed that incidents of anti-social behaviour were often visible on camera and Asset Watch would attend with a view to deterring and mitigating any incidents of damage. Sarah Eden asked if there was a possibility that young people could be engaged, and if lines of communication could be opened with Youth Services.

Officers reported that the new helpline installed had been activated for 'sport' rather than in the event of an emergency, but that cameras would pick this up. Officers confirmed that this type of behaviour was viewed the same as a false 999 call.

d) PUBLIC TOILETS

Peter Bowman confirmed that public toilets in Hirst Park are opened and closed daily by operatives, as well as being deep cleaned at mid-day.

9. HIRST PARK BUDGET

It was AGREED to defer this item to the next meeting. **It was AGREED** that it would be beneficial to see the costs associated with spending on Hirst Park outside of the maintenance agreement, but also to get a summary of spending against the agreed budget.

10. DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to be held in January 2023; a date will be proposed and sent by email.