

AGENDA 11, Enc vii) DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 21st November 2023, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

Members Present:

Cllr Matthew Cuthbert (Chair of Meeting), Cllr Glyn Davies, Stephen Wardle – NCC Divisional Manager Neighbourhood Services, Ray Wealleans – Area Manager Neighbourhood Services, Peter Bowman – NCC Senior Team Leader Neighbourhood Services, Robin Wallace – NCC Team Leader.

Also, in Attendance

Sarah Eden – ATC Executive Officer/RFO, Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets & Facilities

1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Cllr Matthew Cuthbert to welcome everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were given for Cllr John Tully.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None received.

4. DISPENSATIONS

None required.

5. PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Report of Previous Meeting

It was **AGREED** to receive the report of the last meeting, held on 19th September 2023, as a true record.

b) Update on actions agreed and progress

It was noted that all matters were included in the agenda.

6. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET

a) 2023/24

Members received the updated report to the end of September. The Report sent in advance by Ray highlighted the following, but reported everything on track in the main:

Salaries

The YTD figures on the Partnership are currently showing an underspend, but the wage increase for this current financial year has now been agreed and all payments of back money will be shown in November and December month end. The increase was £1,925 across all pay bands, which is more than the 4% committed but the underspend and 4% allocated should cover this.

This YTD figures on Core are showing an overspend which is a concern as the back pay rise is not included; the expected end overspend is approximately £7k.

When asked about the impact on overtime, officers confirmed that there would be a freeze on overtime, and whilst winter services must be provided, it would be very difficult.

AGENDA 11, Enc vii) DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 21st November 2023, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

Other Costs

Other cost centres within the partnership are showing some underspends year to date in both ATC and Core, the Fuel costs have now been reconciled which shows in the September figures and fuel fobs have been corrected. I am conducting an audit of the fuel sheets to rectify and will report on the next meeting.

Vehicle Hire costs (£6,810) for the partnership are for the pickup in use by Ashington Town Council workforce.

b) 2024/25

Members received an update on 2024/25 Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership expected costs based on the current resource input.



	2023/24 Budget	2024/25 Forecast	Difference
Employment Costs	£169,180	£189,270	£20,090
Training & Development	£200	£200	£0
Protective Clothing	£630	£630	£0
Equipment & Maintenance	£2,300	£2,300	£0
Corporate Recharges	£15,490	£16,810	£1,320
Vehicle Hire	£6,810	£6,810	£0
Vehicle repair & Maintenance	£2,990	£2,990	£0
Vehicle Fuel	£15,090	£15,090	£0
Internal Transport in/out	£24,010	£24,010	£0
	£236,700	£258,110	£21,410
<i>Employment Costs as division of 6</i>	<i>£28,197</i>	<i>£31,545</i>	
<i>*ATC NSO Cost x 1</i>		<i>£34,494</i>	

RFO Note added after meeting

* ATC NSO Employments costs shown for comparison.

To achieve the same resource input an increased budgetary commitment of £21,410 is needed which equates to 9%. All costs relate to salaries and the increases applied to 2023/24 and expected in 2024/25.

7. ENHANCED SERVICES PERFORMANCE

a) Clerk's Summary

It was AGREED to receive a summary of information from the monitoring tool provided by Northumberland County Council.

The report overview and conclusion are presented below and included in full at the appropriate agenda item (*in italics*), with comments from the meeting included.

AGENDA 11, Enc vii) DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 21st November 2023, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

Overview

The information presented is broken down into the following. There are other areas but only the areas included in the Partnership Agreement have been included:

- 1. Mechanical Sweepers, for each of the 4 zones.*
- 2. Bin emptying and cleansing, for each of the 4 zones.*
- 3. Staffing for both Core and Partnership resource.*
- 4. Street Cleansing LEQ Inspections*

Concluding Comments

Street cleansing averages decreased in Zone 1 but increased in Zones 2 and 4, indicating uneven trends in different areas. Zone 3 remained steady.

Mechanical sweeping was impacted by staffing issues from Sep 4 - Oct 16, resulting in incomplete coverage. This highlights the importance of adequate staffing.

Rapid response fly-tip removals and weights increased significantly compared to last year. This points to an ongoing issue with illegal dumping that needs continued focus.

Fly-tipping remains concentrated in certain areas like Central, Hirst, and specific streets. Targeted solutions in problem areas could be beneficial.

All LEQ inspections resulted in scores of 3 or 4, suggesting street cleanliness is meeting acceptable standards during the inspection period. Regular monitoring should continue.

With staffing challenges, it will be important to ensure resources are adequate to maintain cleansing operations and improvements. Investment may be needed in problematic areas.

Overall, the data indicates street cleanliness is relatively stable, but fly-tipping and hotspots remain an issue. A targeted approach, along with sufficient staffing and resources, could help drive improvements. Continued monitoring and data-driven decisions will be key.

b) Rapid Response

Over the period there have been 434 fly-tips removed via Rapid Response (315 in the same period last year), that is an average of 43 each week (32/week in the same period last year), approximately 8.5 each day (6/day in the same period last year). The weight of collections over the period is 20,160kg (17,920kg in the same period last year).

Comparing to the previous quarter averages there has been a significant increase from 37/week to the present 43.

In previous evaluations, the incidents of fly-tipping are primarily 'other household waste', with Central making up more than 50% and Hirst more than 25%. Sycamore St, Maple St, Chestnut St, and Castle Terrace are the main areas for rapid response activity.

It was discussed that the information being presented each quarter seldom changes, but there are no resolutions being put forward. Amnesties have been discounted as they are contrary to the message put out by NCC.

Robin commented that sometimes residents may pay for what they believe is a reputable waste carrier, but the collection is fly tipped, leaving the resident, as well as the carrier

AGENDA 11, Enc vii) DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 21st November 2023, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

open to legal proceedings. Following discussion, Sarah advised the Town Council could put out a PR on the importance of checking this via DEFRA.

Robin also commented that those streets where the issues are most prevalent are those with a high turnover of residents and landlords often dump onto the pavement in between tenants. Sarah noted that it would be good to know the results of the selective licensing of landlords currently being trialled in Blyth.

Cllr Matthew Cuthbert asked about the possibility of a heatmap identifying the areas where incidents occur most. Stephen Wardle confirmed this was possible. It was discussed that this would show the information in a different way, but would it educate and deter.

Stephen Humphrey asked about a property on 5th Avenue (Pont Street/Milburn Road) which had been a concern previously, and action had been taken. It was confirmed that action would be taken by Environmental Enforcement if reported.

Sarah highlighted that since the Council ceased supplementing Environmental Enforcement activity there appeared to be a reluctance to report and that should not be the case as this is a core service. Sarah agreed to send a reminder to members that accumulations, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, etc. should all be reported as usual.

More positively, it is hoped that the new bin stores, for which photographs were provided, would see a decrease in litter and fly-tipping. They are now 95% complete and will have a thorough cleanse on the last Friday of each month.

c) Street Cleansing and Sweeping

There have been no exceptions to the cleansing schedule in the period w/c 4th September – w/c 6th November.

The averages for each zone are shown below. Those that have gone down are highlighted green, those that have gone up are highlighted yellow.

- ❖ **Zone 1 – Average 1,568kg/wk (prev 2,030kg)**
- ❖ **Zone 2 – Average 1,596kg/wk (prev 1,533kg)**
- ❖ **Zone 3 – Average 1,426kg/wk (prev 1,426kg)**
- ❖ **Zone 4 – Average 1,316kg/wk (prev 1,175kg)**

Zone 1
1 - Jubilee
2 - Haydon Road
3 - Nursery Park
4 - Fallowfield
5 - South Green Lane
6 - Peoples Park
7 - West End
8 - Portland
9 - Wellhead
10 - Bothal / P1

Zone 2
11 - Hirst A
12 - Hirst B
13 - Hirst C
14 - Hirst D
15 - Hirst E
16 - Hirst F
17 - Cavendish
18 - Roseneath
19 - South View
20 - Library
21 - North Green Lane
22 - Kielder
23 - Cricket Field

Zone 3
24 - Rivers
25 - Moorhouse
26 - Seaton Vale
27 - College
28 - Sweethope
29 - JBA
30 - Thorn tree
31 - Barnston
32 - Highfield
33 - Paddock
34 - Demesne
35 - Manor
36 - Colliery
37 - Castle Island

Zone 4
38 - Woodhorn
39 - Lintonville
40 - Centre

Neighbourhood Services Partnership between ATC and NCC

The inclusion of street sweeping in the Partnership Agreement enhances street sweeping from 4 times a year to 6/7 times/year. In the period 4th September – w/c 16th October there was limited activity due to sickness, and then a vacancy left due to retirement. During this 7-week period Zone 1, maps 4,5,6 and 7 were not completed and in Zone 3, maps 25, 35, 36 and 37 were not completed. In the following 4-week period w/c 23rd October – w/c 13th November the routes have all been covered with weed clearance which remains the main priority on all sweeping routes.

Robin clarified that Zone 1 was most likely seeing a reduction as the gater visiting parks was no longer off-loading onto this zone vehicle.

Following a question, Peter confirmed that street sweepers would check those routes that were being visited less regularly before deciding to move to those with greater need.

Cllr Glyn Davies asked if there was contracted-in road sweeping in response to the work being undertaken in North Seaton by Virgin Media, as there was a need as well as reinstatement of grassed areas. Stephen Wardle confirmed that was usual and in Morpeth although quite late, the work had been completed, but it was a good point and worth checking.

Peter confirmed that the small sweeper post had been filled internally and this post now needed to be back-filled (closing date Thursday 23rd November).

d) Weed Control

Peter confirmed that substantive weed control was now done and wouldn't resume until better weather. Straughans have completed the work in the Hirst area which is a great help and although there is not mechanical access to footpaths via the Hako due to street columns, it is better as a result.

Sarah asked about the possibility of a follow-up letter to those residents concerned, thanking those who did take action, and highlighting why the Council had to then carry out the work for those who did not. Officers confirmed this would be taken up with Stephen Lister who sent the original letter. It was discussed that it would help appease those who may feel put out that they did the work when others did not, and that the Council did it anyway. In the longer term it could mean residents will see this as a routine job, rather than a one-off. The letter should encourage responsibility now that the hard cut back has been done.

8. INSPECTIONS

Between the period 11th September and 12th November 24 LEQ inspections have been carried out by Senior Officers all resulting in scores of 3 or 4.

Peter was pleased to confirm that inspections were back on track and additionally Robin supplied a suite of photographs showing evidence of the great work being carried out.

Cllr Matthew Cuthbert thanked officers for the photographs and commented that before and after shots were a good way to celebrate the work being achieved.

9. FUTURE CHANGES

It was AGREED to include the report of the meeting held on 6th November between Peter, Robin, and Sarah (with apologies from Ray) to review the suggested changes to frequencies and work carried out within the partnership.

The meeting discussed that the ongoing work schedules would reveal more over the coming months, with a better picture as we go into spring.

Neighbourhood Services Partnership between ATC and NCC

Background

The Partnership Agreement was set up to improve the environmental quality of Ashington. Primarily this would be achieved through increasing the numbers of staff, vehicles, and equipment available in the local NEAT Team. The 2019-24 agreement focused only on street cleansing and the response to fly-tipping.

The increase in front-line service which includes an additional six operatives, and three caged vehicles are fully funded by Ashington Town Council, including the management of that resource, at a charge of £236,700, or the actual costs in respect of those personnel and vehicles.

The additional resource is fully integrated to the Core Service team which results in a total twelve operatives, one team leader, five caged vehicles, two street sweepers, two vans and a shared road sweeper.

Negotiations and trials

Monitoring has shown that there is an opportunity to reduce the level of cleansing in some areas, this has been trialled to positive results.

Some areas are now visited once a fortnight for street cleansing, rather than weekly, although they are still visited for litter bin emptying. **Could this be reduced to Core Service in these areas?** The areas that are on a fortnightly cleanse are:

Zone 1

Fallowfield
Racecourse estate (Epsom Drive etc)
Nursery Park
New Moor Close

Zone 3

Wansbeck Manor
Barnston
Burnside
The Demense
South Ridge

The resource previously deployed for weekly cleansing can be redirected to Gateways improvements as a priority, to include:

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| √ Edging | √ Weed Spraying | √ Cut and collect grass-cutting |
| √ Strimming | √ Litter | |

Additionally, operatives can be redirected to heavily littered areas to help and can also be deployed in other tasks in those zones where cleansing has been reduced.

This means the resource is not lost from that area, but it is deployed in a different way to achieve visible environmental enhancements, which would include the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| √ Strimming | √ Strimming around street furniture |
| √ Weed Spraying | √ Traffic island cleansing |
| √ Edging | √ Leaf clearance |
| √ Cutting back shrubs | |

As this is trialled the resource input will reveal any additional capacity. There is a desire from the Council to increase the frequency of cutting back hedging and edging paths in visitor areas, paths, and cycleway. Equality of outcome is a priority, but this new way of working will also offer visible enhancements in other environmental areas where cleansing is not as frequently required, and therefore the variables in wards can be justified and explained.

DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 21st September 2023, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

Uniform and branding

A separate identity for Partnership as opposed to Core is not supported by the NCC team. The feeling is this would create a divide between the teams when they are working together.

The uniform of NCC operatives must remain but a response is outstanding on whether there can be a shared brand for those working in Ashington as part of the Core and Partnership Team.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

The new car park at the rail line was discussed. Stephen Humphrey was concerned about the lack of litter bins and sought a contact on who would have considered this. Sarah confirmed that there was no mention in the planning application, control of noise was mentioned but not litter.

It was AGREED Stephen would contact Mark at Rail and ask if a commitment to litter bins had been made, but in the meantime the Town Council would install a bin in a suitable location to replace the one that was removed before the works commenced.

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

Tuesday 16th January 2024, at 2:00pm.