

AGENDA 10, Enc vii) REPORT OF ASHINGTON ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24TH MARCH 2026

Present

Ashington Town Council

Cllr Marjorie Chambers (Chair), Cllr David Coyle (Vice-Chair), Cllr Jessica Appleby, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Kerry Davison, Sarah Eden (Executive Officer)

Northumberland County Council

Stephen Wardle (NCC Divisional Manager Neighbourhood Services), Chris Mordue (NCC Senior Team Leader)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Jim Lang, Peter Bowman

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

No disclosable pecuniary interests or dispensations were declared.

3. PREVIOUS MEETING

The Board received the report of the Partnership Board meeting held on 21st January 2026 and agreed it as a fair reflection of that meeting.

4. KERB APPEAL TRIAL – INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

Overview and Progress

The Board received an interim progress report from NCC on the Kerb Appeal Trial, which commenced on 1st December 2025. The report included photographic evidence of work undertaken across the trial areas for part of phase 2 and was well received by the Board, with members noting some excellent examples demonstrating the impact of the approach. It was observed that certain areas chosen for the trial had delivered particularly striking transformations, especially in locations that had perhaps been overlooked for many years.

Operational Observations

Chris Mordue reported that the main operational challenges encountered during the trial had been the weather and parked cars, both of which had affected the ability of operatives to complete work in certain locations.

The Executive Officer asked whether NCC could offer some guidance to assist Councillors in identifying areas likely to have the greatest visual impact for the next phase, noting that it was clear from the photographic evidence that some selections had delivered a more significant transformation than others. Chris Mordue agreed to provide this steer.

Councillor and Resident Feedback

Cllr Coyle passed on the thanks of Cllr Lynne Grimshaw for the work carried out in Bothal, particularly on the rows, and noted that a member of the public had also commented very positively on this work. Cllr Chambers noted that the community litter pickers had observed that there appeared to be less litter in the Hirst, which was a positive sign.

Bins at the Riverside

Cllr Coyle flagged that he had received reports of full bins at the Riverside and asked whether the frequency of collections could be reviewed for this location. This was noted for consideration by NCC.

5. CLEANSING SERVICE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Volunteer Litter Pickers

Cllr Davison asked whether there were any issues relating to the volunteer litter pickers, particularly in regard to Saturday collections being left until Monday. Chris Mordue confirmed that there was no issue with this arrangement.

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Litter – Seasonal Pressures

Chris Mordue expressed some concern about litter management as the partnership moves into the spring and summer months when more people are out and about and demand on cleansing increases. He noted that grass cutters do pick litter ahead of cutting, which provides some assistance, and that grass cutting operatives had observed more litter than at the start of the previous season. It was acknowledged that this may in part reflect the impact of cleansing being reduced to a core service during the trial period.

Dog Fouling Stencils

Cllr Coyle raised the matter of dog fouling stencils. Chris Mordue confirmed that NCC Dog Control had now provided these and he wished to explore whether the kerb appeal teams could deploy them in the areas where they were working. Cllr Coyle handed over a further stencil. Following discussion, it was agreed that the areas selected for kerb appeal work are not necessarily dog fouling hotspots, and that it would be more appropriate to target the stencils at known hotspot locations. Applying them in areas where dog fouling is not an identified issue would not be the best use of the teams' time.

Cllr Appleby noted that the Hirst would particularly benefit from increased enforcement in relation to dog fouling, as it is a real issue for residents in that area and the streets concerned have been identified as hotspots.

6. TRIAL REVIEW AND NEXT STEPS

Phase 3 – Nature of Work

Cllr Brown asked about the type of work to be carried out during phase 3. Chris Mordue explained that the focus would move away from edging work and towards spade work and similar tasks. The work to be carried out in each ward would be directed by the ward Councillor, with the emphasis on whatever that Councillor considered would have the most positive impact in their area.

10-Day Rotation Model

Following discussion, it was agreed that the kerb appeal team would work in each ward for a period of 10 days before moving on to the next area. If the priorities supplied by the ward Councillor had not been completed within the 10-day period, the team would return to that ward in the following phase. If the team finished the identified work ahead of the 10 days, they would remain in the ward and carry out additional tasks directed by Chris Mordue.

Cllr Brown asked whether additional time could be allocated to the Hirst if needed. Chris Mordue clarified that this was not what had been requested; it had been agreed that time would be shared equitably across the wards.

Core Service

Cllr Coyle sought reassurance that the core cleansing service and core grounds maintenance would be maintained throughout the next phase. This reassurance was given by NCC officers.

Ward Councillor Representatives

It was AGREED that those Councillors on the Partnership Board would act as ward representatives for the purpose of receiving and communicating priorities for the next phase of the trial. This would help in the communication of areas of priority which have proven difficult to ascertain from all Cllrs. Cllr Lynne Grimshaw was agreed for the Bothal ward.

Annual Work Cycle Calendar

The Executive Officer presented a calendar setting out the 10-day ward rotation cycle for the full financial year 26/27. This was well received and will assist in planning and communicating the programme to all parties. The planner also included scheduling deadlines for priorities returned, acknowledging that Chris Mordue had to assess and schedule the work.

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7. FLY-TIPPING MONITORING AND ANALYSIS

The Board discussed the ongoing monitoring of fly-tipping and were advised by the Executive Officer that the analysis revealed that hotspot areas and the type of fly-tipping being recorded had changed. The Board noted that changes in fly-tipping patterns are most likely influenced by the presence of CCTV cameras and the introduction of bin bays, both of which have had an impact – not always by reducing the overall problem, but sometimes by displacing it to other locations.

A year-on-year comparative analysis will be brought to the next meeting. Cllr Davison requested information relating to the cameras; this was provided after the meeting.

In response to a question from a previous meeting, it was confirmed that where Fixed Penalty Notices are issued for fly-tipping, the income is retained by NCC. Where punitive action is taken through the courts, any resulting fine is retained within the justice system.

8. LITTER BIN REVIEW

The Executive Officer and Chris Mordue confirmed that, whilst there had been a previous agreement to reduce the number of litter bins in the town, on reflection it was considered more sensible to wait until after the summer period and after the opening of the new college, as footfall patterns and habits were likely to change significantly at that point. Waiting would allow for a clearer picture of which bins could be removed without detriment to the service. The Board agreed this was sensible.

It was also agreed that essential repairs to existing bins should be carried out regardless of the planned review. Cllr Chambers noted that she believed some bins may have issues with locks or required additional attention to ensure they were being properly closed, and asked that this be checked.

9. BUDGET IMPLICATIONS FOR 2026-27

Cllr Brown reminded NCC officers that the Council was still awaiting the figures requested at the previous meeting in respect of NCC's own investment in Neighbourhood Services in Ashington, to allow for a proper comparison of the two organisations' contributions. Stephen Wardle apologised for the delay and confirmed that this information would be provided in advance of the next meeting. Cllr Brown requested that the figures be shared prior to the meeting rather than on the day.

Stephen Wardle confirmed that updated 2026/27 financial information would be provided for the next meeting, taking into account the Executive Officer's request that the ATC vehicle recharge be removed from the Partnership cost code entirely and charged separately. This was agreed and would be followed up.

10. SCHEDULE OF REMAINING MEETINGS

The next Partnership Board meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 16th June 2026.

CONCLUSION

The Chair, Cllr Chambers, summed up a good and productive meeting. The trial continues to demonstrate positive results and the partnership is well placed to build on the momentum established, moving into a third phase with a clear structure, a defined rotation model, and an agreed focus on high-impact priorities identified by ward Councillors.

The collaborative approach between Ashington Town Council and Northumberland County Council continues to deliver visible improvements for residents, and the Board looks forward to this continuing, together with the financial information and fly-tipping analysis requested.