

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP BOARD held
at 2:00pm on Tuesday 22 March 2022 via Zoom

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Matthew Cuthbert (Chair), Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Lynne Grimshaw, Avril Chisholm, Pauline Thompson.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE.

Peter Bowman – NCC Neighbourhood Services Team Leader
Sarah Eden – ATC Clerk/RFO
Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Facilities Manager
John Robertson – NCC Environmental Enforcement Principal Officer
Stephen Wardle – NCC Neighbourhood Services Divisional Manager
Ray Wealleans – NCC Neighbourhood Services Area Manager

1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert welcomed attendees to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest on items for agenda discussion.

4. DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations received or to consider.

5. PREVIOUS MEETING

a) It was AGREED that the report following the last meeting, held on the 7 December 2021, was a true record.

Following the previous meeting; Cllr. Cuthbert reported that he will organise a meeting with John Roberston to focus on environmental enforcement in Ashington.

b) It was AGREED that future meetings will be called in accordance with section 11.8 (i) of the Agreement and that the agenda and accompanying papers are sent out five clear days in advance.

c) It was AGREED that future meetings will be properly minuted and sent out 14 days after the meeting, in accordance with section 11.8 (iii) of the Agreement.

6. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the following reports, by Ray Wealleans, sent out in advance of the meeting.

a) Updated Budget Report

Ray highlighted that costs were generally in line with expectations but highlighted the recent national pay award for staff in the report.

b) 2022/23 Budget

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Ray highlighted that the 2022/23 Budget would reflect both the recent pay increase and the significant increase in the price of fuel.

c) Budget Notes

Ray highlighted that vehicle costs to support ATC's floral displays would be discussed in coming weeks. The Town Clerk highlighted that ATC was in the process of investigating the purchase of two electrical powered vehicles however, the 'drop-side vehicle' currently used, via NCC, is currently not available in an electric format.

7. ENHANCED SERVICES PERFORMANCE

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the following reports, by Peter Bowman, sent out in advance of the meeting.

a) WEED CONTROL

i) Weed Control Update (Die-back removed under Enhanced Services)

Peter reported that weed spraying had commenced with Station Road and Woodhorn Road completed (from the Holy Sepulchre Church to the Hirst East End Allotment Site). Work has now commenced on the Castle Terrace area and will be moving southward.

ii) Operational Improvements

Peter highlighted that a 'No Mix' weedkiller was initially being used. The mixture does not require water, leading to increased efficiency and without the need to constantly refill spray packs. Subsequently more areas are being treated than with a more traditional weedkiller. A more suitable weedkiller will be used around the town's play areas in coming weeks.

To support the weedkilling; die-back will be removed, where required, either mechanically or by hand.

b) STREET CLEANSING

i) Contract Terminology

Ray provided pictorial examples to support contract terminology with a grading system determining the level of street cleanliness (Ray to circulate document).

ii) Cleansing Schedules

Peter highlighted that the new cleansing zones appear to be working well with a cleansing schedule for each particular day. Peter also reported areas in the town that needed increased cleansing due to seasonal considerations, such as the Wansbeck riverside, would be enhanced in coming weeks.

iii) Operational Improvements

Peter highlighted that staff have been included in planning new cleansing schedules, particularly in providing Friday afternoon provision through a new rota system. This flexibility allowed NCC staff to target fly tips and other related issues more efficiently.

Cllr. Cuthbert believed this was a positive development and encouraged greater input from staff in improving service provision across the town.

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c) STREET SWEEPER

i) Street Sweeper Schedules

Peter reported that the 40 new schedule maps had improved mechanical sweeper efficiency in the town with residential streets receiving a sweep every 8 weeks under the enhanced service.

ii) Operational Improvements

Peter reported an emphasis was targeting the more difficult to reach areas due to car parking and other factors. There was also a focus on pavements, particularly in the Hirst area, as well as sweeping around traffic islands and traffic calming measures which has recently commenced and would continue across the town in coming weeks.

d) RAPID RESPONSE

i) Rapid Response Reports

Peter reported that the team are currently tackling an average of 26 fly tips a week in Ashington, which is slightly down on previous figures. The focus for the team was in the Hirst area.

ii) Operational Improvements

Peter reported that he believed recent media coverage of convictions of fly tipping and garden accumulations has been a contributing factor to the recent reduction. Cllrs. Cuthbert and Thompson welcomed the recent coverage and encouraged NCC staff to fully publicise information when people are convicted. Cllr. Thompson also welcomed the focus on the Hirst area.

The Town Clerk reported that the agenda of the next council meeting, on the 29 March, would consider the licensing of private landlords and long-term empty housing in the Hirst area.

Cllr. Thompson requested that NCC consider a further 'Love Where You Live' campaign to target fly-tipping covering the whole of the town.

8. PRIORITIES

The Town Clerk reported that there was cohesion between NCC and ATC staff which would hopefully be built upon in coming months as we work to the common goal of improving the town.

9. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

TBC.