

AGENDA 8, Enc viii) REPORT OF ASHINGTON ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24TH MARCH 2026

PRESENT

Ashington Town Council

Cllr David Coyle (Chair), Cllr Marjorie Chambers (Vie-Chair), Cllr Jessica Appleby, Cllr Kerry Davison, Cllr Melanie Fox, Sarah Eden (Executive Officer)

Northumberland County Council

Peter Bowman (NCC Area Manager - South East - Ashington, Blyth and Newbiggin), Chris Mordue (NCC Senior Team Leader)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr David Coyle was nominated and voted as Chair.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Cllr Marjorie Chambers was nominated and voted as Chair.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Jim Lang, Stephen Wardle (NCC)

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

No disclosable pecuniary interests or dispensations were declared.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND AGREEMENT FOR THE ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL – NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Terms of Reference (TOR)

The TOR as presented at the annual meeting of the Council were received and agreed.

Formal Partnership Agreement

Members received a report on the status of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Agreement with Northumberland County Council (NCC). The report noted that the partnership had been in place since 2014, with the most recent formal agreement covering April 2019 to March 2024. Since its expiry, the arrangement had continued a rolling basis without a new formal agreement, principally due to NCC's BEST Programme — a county-wide review of core grounds maintenance and street cleansing services — which must conclude before any enhancement to the core service offer can be meaningfully defined. The report further noted that the Kerb Appeal Trial was currently the only element of the partnership operating in practice, and sought clarity on the basis upon which both parties were presently operating.

Peter Bowman (NCC) confirmed that the grounds maintenance study remained ongoing and that its conclusion was not anticipated soon. He advised that other Town Councils in a similar position had opted for a Memorandum of Understanding in place of a formal long-term agreement.

It was AGREED that Peter Bowman (NCC) would produce a Memorandum of Understanding to govern the partnership arrangement in place of a long-term agreement, pending the outcome of the BEST Programme review.

5. PREVIOUS MEETING

The Board received the report of the Partnership Board meeting held on 16th June 2026 and agreed it as a fair reflection of that meeting.

6. BUDGET FOR 2026-27


Peter Bowman confirmed the budget projections; spending was not yet applied. In response to the question of whether the budget and subsequent costing applied to the Town Council were still applicable, Peter Bowman confirmed he believed this was still the most appropriate method.

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Members received a report examining the budget structure and cost recovery arrangements applied to the Town Council's financial contribution to the enhanced service, which remain based on the framework established at the outset of the partnership in 2014. The report noted that salary and on-cost elements were straightforward to follow. However, greater transparency was sought on Corporate Recharges (£14,998 in 2026/27), including how these were calculated and the extent to which they were genuinely attributable to the enhanced element of the service rather than NCC's core operational costs. It was accepted and appreciated that the smaller non-pay lines — staff training, protective clothing, equipment and equipment maintenance was much lower than the actual cost of these items.

Attention was drawn to vehicle costs, which appear across several budget lines — Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance, Vehicle Fuel, and the Fleet Vehicle SLA Recharge. Clarification was sought on how these costs were calculated and apportioned, whether the vehicles used to deliver the enhanced service were owned by NCC, what the SLA Recharge reflected, and whether the calculations had been fundamentally reviewed since 2014 or simply uplifted annually. It was emphasised that the overall cost of delivering the enhanced service was not in dispute; the purpose of the report was to establish clarity on what within the budget genuinely reflected the enhancement funded by the Town Council, as distinct from costs NCC would incur in any event through its core service delivery.

It was AGREED that confirmation would be sought from NCC on Corporate Recharge and the vehicle costs, including how these are calculated and apportioned across the relevant budget

Cost Centre Summary Report
Master  Northumberland County Council

E_217260: Ashington Partnership TC Contribution

26/27 Budget

	2026/26 In Year Budget £	Movement in Budget £	2026/27 Budget before 26/27 Pay award £	2026/27 Revised Budget After 3.5% pay award 26/27- 5% other expenditure £	2026/27 Total Movement £
M_100000: Salaries	£129,950	£90	£130,040	£134,590	£4,640
M_100200: National Insurance	£15,610	£-10	£15,600	£16,150	£540
M_100300: Pension	£23,910	£-5,180	£18,730	£19,390	£-4,520
Pay Total	£169,470	£-5,100	£164,370	£170,130	£660
M_101100: Staff Training & Development	£210	£0	£210	£220	£10
M_142001: Protective Clothing	£660	£0	£660	£660	£30
M_140000: Equipment	£1,900	£0	£1,900	£2,000	£100
M_140004: Equipment Maintenance	£510	£0	£510	£540	£30
M_196000: Corporate Recharges	£15,340	£-850	£14,490	£15,000	£-340
M_132000: Vehicle Hire	£6,530	£-6,530	£0	£0	£-6,530
M_130001: Vehicle Repairs and maintenance	£2,990	£-200	£2,790	£2,930	£-60
M_130004: Vehicle Fuel	£11,730	£-450	£11,280	£11,280	£-450
M_139996: Fleet - Vehicle SLA Recharge	£25,210	£0	£25,210	£26,470	£1,260
Non Pay Expenditure Total	£65,080	£-8,030	£57,050	£59,130	£-5,950
M_320073: Income from Parish Councils	£-234,550	£13,130	£-221,420	£-229,260	£5,290
Income Total	£-234,550	£13,130	£-221,420	£-229,260	£5,290
Grand Total	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

Corporate Recharges	£14,485	£14,998
Charge in year	£14,485	£14,998

lines.

M_196000: Corporate Recharges (*this is 7% of total costs*)

M_132000: Vehicle Hire (*has been removed and will be costed to ATC vehicle*)

M_130001: Vehicle Repairs and maintenance (*check on vehicles will be made to ensure this relates to the vehicle being used on the Partnership*)

M_130004: Vehicle Fuel (*to be checked*)

M_139999: Internal Transport Recharges In / Out (*an explanation and understanding have been requested*)

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7. KERB PROGRESS REPORT

Members viewed progress photographs of the areas completed at the end of phase two, and phase three to date and discussed positive feedback received.

With plans progressing for phase four members suggested some slight amends to the schedule to take in the bank holiday period.

Members discussed core grassing cutting schedules – confirmed that goal is every 15 days. In respect of weed spraying, three are scheduled in the season. The smaller sweeper has been using metal brushes to remove die-back, starting in Seaton and moving around each ward in a calendar week. Rat issues were discussed and it was again confirmed that if this related to a private property enforcement was the route to take.

8. CLEANSING SERVICE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Members discussed bin emptying frequency and litter bins generally. Sarah advised that a programme of litter bin repair and replacement was long overdue, and she hoped the Council would agree to move away from the metal bins to a much more durable and aesthetic Durapol® (contains recycled material and is 100% recyclable at the end of service life). Sarah and Chris would action following the summer, the college move and an assessment of what bin is needed where.

Fly-tipping issues continue but they do appear to be more prevalent in the bin bays than on the streets.

Dog fouling was discussed as a major issue, and it was agreed to contact the Green Dog Walkers. Chris confirmed that some stencilling had been done in hotspots in the Haydon ward, and this would be carried out in Hirst and Central when the teams were next there, as well as more notices on lamp posts.

The meeting ended.