

AGENDA 10, Enc x) REPORT OF ASHINGTON ENHANCED NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2026

PRESENT

Ashington Town Council

Cllr David Coyle (Chair), Cllr Marjorie Chambers (Vice-Chair), Cllr Kerry Davison, Cllr Jim Lang, Sarah Eden (Executive Officer)

Northumberland County Council

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

1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Cllr David Coyle opened the meeting and welcomed everyone following the summer break.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Jessica Appleby, Cllr Melanie Fox,

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

No disclosable pecuniary interests or dispensations were declared.

4. 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.

5. DRAFT AGREEMENT FOR THE ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL – NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Chair invited comments and questions.

Following a question from Cllr Marjorie Chambers, NCC Officers confirmed that Partnership resourced operatives would only be used for winter services in Ashington. To clarify the use of Neighbourhood Services resource on Highways, the meeting was advised that in winter alerts the priority is health and safety and the response to any risk, by all teams.

The Chair introduced the Executives Officer's notes on the draft agreement, with specific reference to Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and Resource Capacity, noting that the resourcing capacity included in the agenda pack showed some weeks when the resource (5 operatives) was working as low as 52%, and that this was apparent in the work completed in that period.

It was acknowledged that there is no pool of staff that can be brought in to off-set sickness and holidays, however holidays are planned in advance and having two Partnership operatives off on annual leave at the same it not beneficial. It was discussed that the board should agree a performance target in regard to resourcing %. Stephen Wardle confirmed that whilst performance targets are acceptable to a 'partnership agreement' the ramifications when missed often lend themselves to a contract, which is outside of the spirit of a partnership agreement.

The Executive Office asked if it was possible to include targets, to highlight if these are missed with a view to this prompting a discussion of the impact, and where necessary continued underachievement could be escalated back to the Partnership Board. It was noted that this was possible and would be explored.

The Chair advised that pavement sweeping was the number one priority for the Partnership, and having the right equipment to do the job was essential. The Chair had measured the problem avenues and further work was being undertaken as to a suitable sweeper for the job. With this in mind a pavement sweeper should be included in Partnership Resource. NCC side acknowledged that the ATC funded resource as part of partnership agreement was three caged vehicles but understood that this was no longer the requirement. NCC do have two pedestrian

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sweepers as part of Core. One is the Hako 1250 Citymaster which is not suitable for the narrow streets with obstacles. The alternative to a mechanical sweep is trim and blow.

ATC side confirmed that what was required was a pavement sweeper (with an operative), and then two vehicles to carry the remaining team of four with associated works. A sweeper that would service the narrow streets with obstacles would be required and how this is delivered is being explored. It was noted that NCC need to speak to Fleet concerning how the vehicles within the agreement can be changed, so that the partnership resource reflects what is needed and used. Peter Bowman advised that members should be aware that a sweeper driver is a Band 4 operative, whereas the grounds team are Band 3. It was noted that for optimum efficiency there should be two trained sweeper drivers on the partnership team.

It was noted that LEQ inspections by the Team Leader and Senior Team Leader should be used as part of performance monitoring. It was also noted that Ward Cllr sign-off on completion of wards would also be a good indicator of success, alongside the before and after photographs.

The Chair raised the delivery of the Core Service and the standards in this regard, with particular reference to weed control and grass-cutting. Stephen Wardle acknowledged the Council had written regarding the standard operating procedure for strimming/grass-cutting and that this was being looked at. Weed control was also being looked at County-wide. Cllr Chambers asked if the BEST Programme was near completion as it was expected to bring about a new service standard in grounds maintenance. Stephen Wardle advised that there would be information shared in April 2027. Cllr Chambers did note that weed growth appeared to have been suppressed in the Haydon Ward and she believed it was in those areas where the kerb appeal had been carried out. However, it was noted that blowing arisings back onto the grass appeared not to be carried out. Cllr Kerry Davison thanked Chris Mordue for his own efforts in strimming back.

It was noted that the other area included in the notes on the Draft Partnership Agreement could be worked through by officers prior to representing for endorsement. This included the Scope of Works, Budget, Governance, Performance Monitoring and the Schedules.

6. BUDGET FOR 2026-27

A finalised budget was not presented due to several changes. A budget and spending against the budget would be brought to the next meeting.

Cllr Kerry Davison asked if salaries would be adjusted to take into account the grade of pedestrian sweeper drivers – this was noted.

It was agreed that the previously requested removal of the Town Council's own vehicles from the Partnership Budget could be revoked and applied more easily at the start of the next financial year.

NCC side explained what Corporate Recharges covered, currently £15k annually. This was 7% of the overall cost and related to senior managers time, and administration costs – the things needed to carry out the work but not necessarily seen.

7. KERB APPEAL PROGRESS REPORT

Members viewed progress photographs of the areas completed at the end of phase three and phase four to date, as below. The presentation was shared with all Cllrs by email.

The Executive Officer passed on positive feedback from Cllr Grimshaw following receipt of the presentation.

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Stephen Wardle asked members present if the works shown was what members wanted to see. It was agreed that some areas were very impactful.

Chris Mordue advised that when choosing areas for ward cycles care should be taken as spade edging and leaf clearance were very time consuming and could take up a large chunk of time. Members needed to think carefully about what can be achieved in the timescale and what will have most impact. The Executive Officer advised that members may have a wish list and Chris may have to be honest in his response as to what is feasibly achieved, also noting that it is helpful if ward Cllrs share consolidated priorities rather than doing this separately.

The Executive Officer commented the work currently being carried out on Woodhorn Road, which was hugely impactful and had been noticed by residents who had shared positive feedback.

8. WEED RE-GROWTH FOLLOWING KERB APPEAL TREATMENT

Chris Mordue introduced the issue with weed regeneration after hard surfaces have been cleaned, as this offers prime conditions. It was discussed that it was hoped that weed treatment would be applied ahead of Kerb Appeal works, which could then remove die-back. Chris confirmed this was being done but it didn't stop the regeneration afterwards.

It was agreed that a follow-up weed spray would be carried out where kerb appeal works have been completed. This would require taking an operative from the next ward cycle for one-day, but the time would be paid back in the sequence and rotation when operatives drop back to that ward to spray.

Cllr Kerry Davison and Chris Mordue left the meeting.

9. CLEANSING SERVICE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Detailed discussion was deferred as Chris had left the meeting. The Executive Officer advised that new bins would be brought to the Council's next meeting and that she would work with Chris to strategically replace what was insitu, questioning the exact location and size of the bin prior to replacement. Cllr Marjorie Chambers commented that some bins in the Haydon ward could be removed. Cllr Coyle commented on the fly-tipping at litter bins.

Cllr Chambers commended the speed at which fly-tipping she reported via the office had been collected.

It was noted that the opening of the new college would alter routes and therefore litter challenges.

10. REVIEW AND NEXT STEPS

- ✓ PB to speak with FLEET about changing the vehicles in the Partnership.
- ✓ SE to investigate smaller sweeper to potentially hire in for narrow streets with obstacles.
- ✓ SE/PB to draft potential KPI's/Performance Targets.
- ✓ SE/PB to draft new agreement taking on board comments and notes.
- ✓ CM to schedule LEQ at the end of each phase on ward cycle.
- ✓ SE to request Ward Cllr involvement in Ward sign-off following works.
- ✓ SE/CM to schedule bin replacements/removals.

11. NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to hold a meeting in November, either 17th or 24th – an email would be sent to confirm best date.