

**AGENDA 13, Enc xi) Ashington Town Council/Northumberland County Council
Draft Report of The Hirst Park Liaison Meeting, held at 2:00pm on Monday 9th October 2023, at
Hirst Park Pavilion**

Present:

Cllr Pauline Thompson (Chair), County Cllr Ken Parry, Neil Dawson - NCC Countryside and Green Spaces Manager, Jimmy Reith – Parks and Green Spaces Team Leader, Michael Bryant – NCC Neighbourhood Services, Robin Wallace – Senior Team Leader Neighbourhood Services, Carla Thompson – *former* Park Development Officer, Sarah Eden - ATC Executive Officer, Sarah Bredin-Kemp – *former* NCC Hirst Park Revival Project Co-ordinator (arrived 2:30pm).

1. Welcome

Cllr Pauline Thompson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Peter Bowman, and Cllr Vicki Brown.

3. Disclosure of Interests

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests in items on the agenda as required by the Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011 were received.

4. Dispensations

No dispensations.

5. Previous Meeting – 7th March 2023

It was **AGREED** to receive and approve the accuracy of the report, noting that the meeting was held some time ago, following postponement of the meeting scheduled for May.

6. Development Work

Neil confirmed that Carla was now employed by NCC in the post of Hirst Co-ordinator and was working from Hirst Welfare. Sarah BK was now employed by Full Circle as a Community and Relations Impact Officer. Both officers were pleased to have secured posts that would allow them to continue links in Hirst Park, as development work will continue using the pavilion as a satellite location for events and activities.

In response to a question from Sarah E, it was confirmed that the following continue to use the pavilion:

Warm Hub on Tuesday
Coffee Morning on Friday
Heart of Hirst continue to arrange activities and events
Blossoming Communities are keen to come back
Footballers and bowlers use the pavilion
A brain injury group is looking to use the facilities

Neil commented that officers moving not too far away is a very positive step as usually when posts that are funded come to an end, employees have left before then end taking their experience and links elsewhere. The success of the projects and the activity plan that remains are being put forward for 'Awards for All.'

With the budget that remains, they are looking to make some improvements to the pavilion. It was noted that the shutters are very outdated, but also very costly to replace. More general improvements will be taken forward that will see the rooms reconfigured so that underutilised space is used more effectively in respect of showers, toilets, and storage rooms. It was discussed that funding was not available to change the kitchen area. Neil will confirm the budget available and costs.

**AGENDA 13, Enc xi) Ashington Town Council/Northumberland County Council
Draft Report of The Hirst Park Liaison Meeting, held at 2:00pm on Monday 9th October 2023, at
Hirst Park Pavilion**

Neil confirmed that draft heads of terms had been drawn up for Full Circle, which included the Town Council having use of poly tunnels. It was confirmed that Cycling 4 Everyone did not have their own separate lease but would rent the space from Full Circle. Sarah E voiced concerns that Cycling 4 Everyone had little guarantee of their space on the site without their own lease.

7. Maintenance

Robin and Micheal reported that there had been some difficulties with the apprenticeship scheme in operation, and they were looking at how to address this in the future. There were benefits to having someone with an interest in horticulture, but on the other hand much of the work in Hirst Park is maintenance driven. An apprentice operating at the level recruited also needs a lot of supervision.

The maintenance issues are the splash zone which could contain chlorine in the future as weekly cleansing is a 2–3-hour task. Graffiti and responding to the effects of ASB takes time that would be better used doing the regular maintenance and rose garden.

Sarah E asked whether the resource that ATC contributed towards had been delivered (1 x full time operative, seasonal operative from April to October), this was confirmed. Following on, was the resource sufficient for the work required?

It was discussed that any local service could always make use of more resource, but that the funding was not there to provide more. It was discussed that in the past there had been two full-time operatives.

In view that the parameters of both the Heritage Lottery and Green Flag status were no longer pivotal, the group may wish to suggest going back to the drawing board with the Memorandum of Understanding between NCC and ATC.

Cllr Thompson suggested that it would be a good idea to go back to a clean sheet and look at exactly what is required and work forward from that.

Sarah E advised that any agreement of support and funding from ATC would need to be known in advance of budget decisions being taken in January, so it was imperative to seek the Council's support for the proposition of new MOU and funding contribution immediately, with agreement that the liaison group could move discussions forward.

Neil agreed to bring back the costs of all deliverables for a round table meeting to discuss this single item. Specifically, the general duties and activities required to maintain Hirst Park, and the costs, and what a future MOU could look like. The meeting was provisionally scheduled for 22nd November at 2:00pm. Sarah E advised that the Council's support for this plan of action would be added to the Finance and General Services Committee on 14th November.

It was agreed that considering future discussions all other agenda items under maintenance and budget should be deferred.

Robin is meeting the bowlers to discuss maintenance of the greens, which will include the standards that should be expected, and where to report if there are issues.

**AGENDA 13, Enc xi) Ashington Town Council/Northumberland County Council
Draft Report of The Hirst Park Liaison Meeting, held at 2:00pm on Monday 9th October 2023, at
Hirst Park Pavilion**

9. Playzone Match Funding

Neil updated that as far as he was aware the funding was in place for the Play Zone in Hirst Park which would be managed by NCC. There were no details as to how the booking system would operate.

8. Date, Time, and Venue for the next meeting

Wednesday 22nd November, 2:00pm Pavilion.

END

DRAFT