AGENDA 9, Enc xiii) YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING, HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2026 AT YMCA, COMMENCING AT 2:00PM

Present:

(Chair) Cllr Caroline Ball, ATC
Michelle Brannigan, Full Circle Food Project
Rob Cox, YMCA
Cllr Melanie Fox, ATC
Cllr Karl Green, ATC
Dave Johnson, Beyond Youth
Ricky Murray, YMCA
Sharon Parmley, ATC
Ellie Turner, Mortals Fools
Jess Whittle, Mortals Fools
Linn Widell, Active Through Football

Welcome and summary

Cllr Caroline Ball welcomed everyone, attendees introduced themselves and the meeting began.

ATC summer event funding update

The Sound Futures Festival report recommends that the Council supports YMCA Northumberland to deliver the festival again and reviews whether the budget can be increased. Rob Cox opened the item by showing a video of the event, filmed and produced by young people, and presented the report's findings.

Main findings

- **Overall:** Feedback, including from Councillors who attended, was overwhelmingly positive. The festival is seen as a strong foundation for an annual event.
- **Young people:** Their visible role in delivering the day, from performing to helping run the site, was the key success. It gave them real experience and opened doors in events, technical production, performance and the creative industries.
- **Professionalism:** A green room for performers, helpful runners, good stage production and sound made the event feel very different from the former Fair Day.
- **Paid performers:** Paying young performers, all under 25, was a deliberate YMCA decision and is highlighted as one of the event's most significant achievements.
- **Atmosphere and commercial success:** The t-shirts were well received, performers supported one another, traders were happy and food vendors sold out. Local sponsors were valued, and attendees covered a wide range of ages.

Area for improvement

The only negative feedback was about publicity, raised through Facebook comments, despite heavy social media promotion. The report asks that this is viewed in the context of a limited budget and a short lead-in time. Suggestions for future years:

- Paid social media advertising, which the Council cannot fund but the YMCA or partners might
- Direct requests for invited dignitaries to share event details

- A headline act with its own following
- Printed publicity such as flyers and adverts in local papers
- A large billboard in People's Park

Summer packed lunch scheme

Full Circle Food Project handed out 310 free packed lunches in summer 2026. The scheme ran alongside its Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) provision, as a separate and accessible offer for children and families.

What was achieved

- Over 90% of those collecting were from the Ashington area.
- The lunches eased pressure on household food budgets while children were away from school meals.
- They gave families a welcoming reason to visit and connect with the project.
- Staff and volunteers prepared, packed and helped deliver the lunches.

Building on it

The scheme's success has led the project to develop a family tea, where families sit down and share a meal. This creates a route into the project's wider cooking, gardening and community activities. The main lesson is that food works well as a starting point for family engagement, and pairing a free meal with activities gives families more reasons to attend, stay and build relationships.

Recommendations

- Continue the free holiday packed lunches and the family tea, depending on securing enough funding and delivery capacity. The budget agreed for summer covers half-term also.
- Include a dedicated activities budget alongside food funding, covering materials and staff or sessional time for activities such as family cooking, planting, nature play and creative sessions.
- Plan food and activities together, with delivery commitments that match staff and volunteer capacity.
- Keep monitoring simple: record lunches provided, family attendance and repeat visits, and gather brief feedback to show what families value and to support future funding applications.

Creatively Healthy Ashington

Mortal Fools have worked with the Hirst Welfare and Family Hubs to create a three-year pathway plan, Creatively Healthy Ashington. The proposal has been submitted to the Arts Council, which will decide between November 2026 and January 2027.

ATC small grants round 3

Round 3 of the small grants fund closed on Wednesday 21 October, with decisions due on Wednesday 28 October. The next round, which is also the final one, is in January 2027.

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Wansbeck Community Links pilot update

Wansbeck Community Links updated the meeting on its pilot drop-in space. The room has been made ready, with thanks to Rob Cox, and the paperwork has just been signed. Furniture is going in that week, and staff will be in the space by the end of October.

The drop-in will run jointly with the organisation's counselling team. Pre-booked counselling sessions will therefore be able to run from the room for young people and their parents or carers.

NCC Young Futures Hubs funding

Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Northumberland County Council (NCC), is invited to the next meeting on 14 Decemeber 2026. He is keen to hear directly from the organisations working with young people in Ashington.

Summary of the NCC announcement

Northumberland County Council has been selected for the Government's Young Futures Hubs and Local Youth Transformation Programme, part of the National Youth Strategy. The programme aims to create a network of 50 Young Futures Hubs across England by March 2029.

- **Funding:** Northumberland is one of 26 local authorities selected and one of 16 allocated two hubs. Each hub is eligible for up to £300,000, so up to £600,000 in total.
- **Purpose of the hubs:** They will offer safe, welcoming spaces and bring together services on mental health and wellbeing, education and employment, and reducing young people's vulnerability to crime and exploitation.
- **Local Youth Transformation strand:** Further funding will support workforce development, partnership working and long-term improvement of youth services across the county.
- **Rural challenge:** As one of England's largest rural counties, Northumberland wants joined-up services that reach young people wherever they live.
- **Co-production:** Planning and co-creation has begun, with young people leading the design of the hubs and the wider youth offer. The council will keep engaging with young people, schools, youth organisations and community partners over the coming months.

Opportunities and updates

Beyond Youth funding proposal: ice skating trip

Beyond Youth proposes taking 18 young people aged 11 to 18, all regularly involved in its activities, to Whitley Bay Ice Rink in December 2026. It would be the third annual trip. Based on previous years, about 10 of the young people are expected to live in Ashington and the rest in Newbiggin or Lynemouth. All of those living outside Ashington attend school in the town.

The case for the trip:

- **Youth led:** Young people asked for it. Trips stand out in Beyond Youth's ongoing informal consultation, and many request ice skating.

- **Broadening opportunities:** There is no local ice rink, so skating is outside many young people's experience. Those who return each year can build on the skill.
- **Confidence and memories:** Young people start out unsure on the ice, then grow in confidence and regularly help one another. Young people from different activities share the experience.

Staff funding, volunteers, a minibus and cars are already secured. The funding requested covers the following:

Item	**Cost**
Entry and skate hire: 18 young people at £13 and 4 leaders at £13.50	£288
Diesel for the minibus and refreshments for attendees	£62
Total requested	**£350**

Other updates

- **Beyond Youth, Ashington Nativity:** Saturday 12 December, 3.30pm to 6.16pm. An all-age interactive Christmas celebration starting at the Holy Sepulchre Church at 3.30pm and finishing with a nativity at St Andrews Church at 5.30pm.
- **Mortal Fools, Hirst Festival:** Saturday 28 November, 11am to 6pm, at the Hirst Welfare Centre. A free mini festival of creative community activities for all ages, including a silent disco, a free community lunch and face painting.
- **Northumberland College:** The move to the new building has started but is slightly behind schedule. The hope is to be in by the second week of November, though this could be delayed further. More will be known from a youth work perspective once the college is in.
- **Junior Park Run:** Going from strength to strength. The first run had 28 young people and the second had 38, with 32 volunteers. The Hirst Welfare cafe provides free toast and cereal.
- **Playzone:** The Playzone in Hirst Park is currently unlocked. Linn Widell is looking for more provision to create a regular programme.

Agreed Actions and Next Steps

The following actions were agreed:

All partners — share Christmas programmes.

Cllr Caroline Ball / Youth Advisory Committee — Take the Beyond Youth Funding Proposal to the next Finance and General Services meeting.

All partners – prepare questions for Cllr Renner-Thompson attending the next meeting

Next Meeting – Monday 14th December, 2pm, venue TBC.