

Ashington Town Council
AGREED Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at
6:00pm on Tuesday 12 April 2022
in The Council Chamber, Town Hall

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Eleanor Armstrong, Caroline Ball, Michelle Brannigan, Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Matthew Cuthbert, Jim Lang, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis, Pauline Thompson, John Tully, Bob Walkinshaw.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE.

Sarah Eden – Clerk/RFO
Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Facilities Manager
Sharon Parmley – ATC Administration Officer (minute taking)

FGS 22/167 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs., Victor Bridges, Lawrence Henderson and Sophie Robinson.

FGS 22/168 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest.

FGS 22/169 DISPENSATIONS.

There were no dispensations received or to consider.

FGS 22/170 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

On invitation by the Chair, the Clerk read an email from a member of the public and resident of Ashington, as follows:

“When I received my Council Tax bill for this year, I was concerned with a leaflet that said we could not recycle plastic except for plastic bottles.

For years I have been carefully washing, drying and placing plastic with the recycle logo in our green bin assuming it would be dealt with appropriately. So, I wrote to Councillor Sanderson for clarification of the leaflet and to ask why we did not recycle. He confirmed that the leaflet was correct and clearly, we have an underinvestment in recycling. I remember Councillor Peter Jackson making a similar comment in a full Council meeting when he was head, so they have been aware of the issue for some time!

By coincidence a recent comment was made on Facebook, Morpeth Matters about the leaflet where the Council was criticised with comments from newly relocated residents that their past councils offered much better services.

I am lucky in having local Coop and a car so am able to recycle more than via the Council green bin, but many cannot. I have lost confidence in the County Council over issues with councillors and highly placed officials that I gather are the most highly paid in the Country. Perhaps they should start to justify their appointments.

I write to ask that the Ashington Town Council Climate Committee raises this issue and perhaps you could let me know when my e-mail will be discussed by you and the outcome.

I thank you for your help.

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It was AGREED to add the matter to the next meeting of the Climate Change Committee, and to advise the resident of this.

FGS 22/171 CASUAL VACANCIES.

It was AGREED to declare a casual vacancy for the seat of Town Councillor for Seaton Ward following the death of Cllr Avril Chisholm.

In response to a question from Cllr Ball, the Clerk confirmed that it was not possible to delay declaring the vacancy at a meeting, but that advice would be sought from the Elections Office as to whether the Vacancy Notice could be post-dated and placed after the funeral. **This was AGREED.**

FGS 22/172 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 15th March 2022 as a true record.

FGS 22/173 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the following reports, which were sent out in advance of the meeting.

New Website

This is a standing item on Clerk and Officer updates. Recent updates to the website news page include the following, as well as other local events:

- Details of the Great British Spring Clean Launch and after photos
- Our NSO Vacancy
- The Queen's Jubilee Funding Launch
- Annual Grant Aid Launch (including updated Grants page)
- NCC Local Plan – Adoption
- Civic Head attending Platinum Anniversary of Ashington residents Mr and Mrs Auld

Jack Charlton Statue/Charlton Brothers Commemorative Project

The Assets and Facilities Manager is seeking costs and plans for the groundworks to install the statue at Hirst Park; this will include the specification for foundations. Once these are received, the Clerk will go through the mandatory process to establish whether planning permission is required. A draft licence has been received from Strategic Estates, which is on the agenda for the Council to agree 'in principle.'

Once the remaining pledged funding is received, it is expected that £8,437 will remain in the Jack Charlton Statue budget, which will cover the groundworks required. Subject to the Council's approval, any unspent funding from the Council budget could be re-directed to the Charlton Brothers Commemorative Project.

Presently, the Council has £5,000 pledged towards the Charlton Brothers Commemorative Project from Northumberland County Council. Additional funds will be required. A concept is being drawn up that celebrates both Jack and Bobby, World Cup success, and celebrated footballers from Ashington. It is envisioned that there will be four storyboards set into a structure which will also be in Hirst Park, near to the statue of Jack.

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Barry Mead has offered to take forward the work on the storyboards (text and images) and is offering his services as a volunteer. Barry would then lead the design element in consultation with the Working Group and Officers, and Green Spaces Officers from Hirst Park. A worked-up design and will be brought back to the Council for approval, along with an estimate of costs.

Recruitment

There have been several applications for the post of Neighbourhood Services Officer. The closing date is Thursday 14th April. Interviews will be scheduled for w/c 9th May 2022, date to be agreed with the Personnel Committee.

The Queen's Jubilee Funding

The closing date for applications is 29th April. At the time of writing, we are aware of four applications that are forthcoming. As well as being shared across our media periodically, Community Groups were emailed directly, and have received reminders.

Annual Grant Aid Funding

There has been a lively response to the Annual Grant Aid funding being launched. Funding has been updated on the [website](#). Cllrs will be invited to review applicants on a date between 16th May and 1st June, allowing a recommendation to come to the Finance and General Services Committee on 14th June 2022. Dates/times will be agreed with members when we know how many applications we have.

The first instalment of Small Grants will not be launched until after the Annual Grant Aid has closed.

Christmas Lights – Preferred Supplier

We have briefly met with a few contractors who are very keen to present to members, with the aim of being the council's preferred supplier for Christmas Lights.

Members will be asked to agree to attend presentations on 25th, 26th or 27th April depending on the availability of all parties. It is important that members can attend all presentations for ease of comparison, and we will try out best to schedule these for the same afternoon/evening.

Station Road Planting

Sean Murray of Garden Narratives is due to present the designs for Station Road on 30th May, these will be brought to the Finance and General Services meeting in June, to endorse and agree to source plants, as being proposed for the Gateways on this agenda.

Alexandra Road Play Area

At the time of writing Ward Cllrs were looking at designs. As per delegated authority and order for the equipment will be placed by the Assets and Facilities Manager.

It is expected that a proposal to install CCTV will be brought to the May FGS, as well as costs to repaint fencing.

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In response to the wording of the response on Grant Aid, and to questions from Cllrs, the Clerk confirmed that a 'lively response' related to the fact that groups were waiting to apply as the launch had been late, but not that there were necessarily more applications.

Members discussed that the Council could agree to make more funding available on an emergency basis. **It was AGREED** that this would be added to the next agenda for formal approval.

FGS 22/174 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2021/22.

a) Updated Budget Report

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the updated final Budget Report for 2021/22, sent out in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that following a question from Cllr Brannigan regarding budget overspend, it was identified that a town seat had been incorrectly allocated to furniture and equipment.

b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the schedule of accounts and to endorse those accounts paid via delegated authority, and approve those accounts to be paid, since 15th March 2022.

FGS 22/175 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2022/23.

a) Updated Budget Report

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the updated Budget Report 2022/23, sent out in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk explained that the yellow highlighted items, had been carried forward from the 2021/22 budget as they represented commitments already made and included in budget planning.

The Clerk also highlighted that some liabilities for 2022/23 had been paid in 2021/22 and therefore the Council would have surplus cashflow that could be allocated; this would be confirmed at the official year end.

Cllr. Louis Brown requested members consider and plan further Councillor training, starting with 'Effective Decision Making' delivered by the National Association of Councils. The Clerk to obtain, dates and costs.

b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the schedule of accounts and to endorse those accounts paid via delegated authority, and approve those accounts to be paid, since 22nd March

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FGS 22/176 PARTNERSHIP MEETING.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the report of the meeting held on 22nd March 2022, sent out in advance of the meeting.

Members commented that the presentation of the report was improved and there appeared a conscious effort to get on top of the NCC Partnership Agreement, but that monitoring was still a cause for concern.

The Clerk confirmed that NCC Officers and Members were keen to address the Council's concerns about Core and Enhanced Services, and that as soon as the Council Chamber was available for meeting, this would be arranged.

FGS 22/177 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL (NCC) – PLANNING VALIDATION CHECKLIST RE-CONSULTATION.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE details of the consultation sent out prior to the meeting.

It was further AGREED that Cllrs should email the Clerk and their responses would be included in a Town Council response.

FGS 22/178 LITTER BIN REPLACEMENT.

a) Litter Bin Purchase

It was AGREED to purchase twenty-four Broxap Derby litter bins at a cost of £322 each. Total cost £7,728, using the annual budget for litter bins, with bins delivered in two stages taking advantage of free carriage.

b) Replacement Bins

It was AGREED to delegate to the Assets and Facilities Manager, in consultation with the Neighbourhood Services Officer, the order of litter bins to be replaced, depending on their condition.

FGS 22/179 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next Finance and General Services Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 10th May 2022 at 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

FGS 22/180 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Town Council AGREED to pass the following resolution:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, permitted under Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Exempt Information) (England) Order 2006) Act; as the matter is confidential, for reason of 'terms of tenders, and proposals and counter proposals in negotiations for contracts'

FGS 22/181 ASHINGTON GATEWAYS.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE & ACCEPT the planting and maintenance plans for the four Ashington Gateways from Garden Narratives, with the design costs totalling £600 and costs for planting to be met from the Environmental Improvements budget.

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It was AGREED the Town Council would utilise their own workforce and any additional local labour required to prepare and plant the Gateways under the direction of Mr Sean Murray.

It was further AGREED the Town Council would utilise their own workforce and any additional local labour required to prepare Station Road flowerbeds with much needed compost mulch, under the direction of Mr Sean Murray and in readiness for sustainable planting in September.

The meeting ended 7:15pm.

Signed:

Date:

AGREED