

## AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026

### Neighbourhood Services

#### **Play Areas**

Repairs and maintenance continue across all play areas following each site having a RoSPA Play Safety inspection. We await part for some and better weather for repainting and surfacing works.

North Seaton Colliery Play Area is complete apart from the basketball net, and some internal verge works. Once the weather improves we will arrange an opening event.

#### **Bus Shelters**

We are still waiting for funding information back in regards bus shelters. The funding is expected from NCC via NECA, however I cannot order shelters until I have confirmation. Once this is confirmed we will be able to order those identified as requiring replacement. This includes replacement of the ageing existing bus shelters at The Northern, with a new transparent shelter with additional accessible seating. Improved entry and egress for bus users. More light with upper poly panels so users can see when bus is coming. Also, Briardene, as noted and also with improved egress onto pavement which is currently lacking. Finally funding towards accessible seating made locally for all shelters without.

#### **Town Seats**

We expect those seats that have been ordered for Haydon ward (5) to arrive this week.

#### **Horticulture**

It is a terrible time of year for gardening, but all areas will be visited again in February for a clean-up. Our priority is the Memorial Garden in readiness for some new planting on the west border, but it is too early at the moment.

The wall surrounding the Woodhorn Gateway was hit by a car in the New Year. A local contractor is carrying out the repair in the next couple of weeks.

### **Allotments**

The following report provides an update on maintenance activities, site improvements, and ongoing issues across all allotment sites under management. Key accomplishments include completion of rent collections, resolution of fly-tipping incidents, winter tap repairs, and clearance of overgrown plots.

### **NORTH SEATON COLLIERY**

#### **Rent Collections**

Rent collections are complete.

#### **Fly-Tipping Resolution**

Assistance was secured from Northumberland County Council (NCC) regarding fly-tipping incidents.

Materials removed included:

- Multiple hedges and branches
- One bandit machine located in the hedge row.

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- Plot holders successfully recycled chippings.

### **Hedge and Tree Maintenance**

Work has been completed on hedge and tree cuttings on both sides of the North Seaton Colliery site.

### **SEATON HIRST**

#### **Tree Management**

Bernicia Housing has completed cutting of an overhanging tree from a neighbouring property that borders the allotment site. Liaison with Bernicia regarding this issue has been ongoing since summer.

#### **Safety Concerns**

Three gas canisters were safely removed from the site. Thanks are extended to Northeast Caravans for their assistance with this matter.

### **HIGHMARKET**

#### **Scheduled Maintenance**

NCC is scheduled to cut back the hedge line within the churchyard which currently overhangs into the roadway.

### **WOODHORN ROAD**

#### **PLOT CLEARANCE PROGRAMME**

Significant progress has been made with the clearance programme initiated in summer with assistance from the Woodhorn Team. Overgrown gardens have been cleared and are now being rented out, providing excellent opportunities for plot holders heading into spring.

This achievement would not have been possible without the dedicated help from a group of plot holders.

NCC assistance for clearance work where fly tipping has occurred.

Current Status: Three abandoned plots began clearance work last week.

### **HIRST EAST END**

#### **Asbestos Clearance**

Two asbestos clearances have been completed. Plot holders were made aware of the latest clearance through new signage on the noticeboard.

Occupancy: New plot holders are now on the site.

### **NURSERY PARK**

#### **Water Management**

A meeting has taken place with the local garage regarding rainwater potentially running into gardens. Further meetings will be held if required.

#### **Water Usage**

We have identified an error in water costs dating back to February 2017. Payments of £2,502.33 will be repaid.

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### **ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES**

#### **Bird Box Installation**

Bird boxes are to be placed across all sites. Woodhorn Road has started the rollout of this initiative.

#### **TAP REPAIRS - ALL SITES**

Multiple tap repairs have been carried out across most sites, with more to follow. Poor weather conditions at the start of the year, with temperatures reaching -5°C, resulted in several taps bursting.

Remedial Action: Tap week was implemented in mid-January, during which extra insulation was added to tap boxes to prevent future incidents.

#### **CONTINUING ACTIONS**

Continue monitoring tap infrastructure across all sites, particularly during cold weather periods.

Continue plot clearance programme to maximize site utilisation.

Monitor water drainage situation at Nursery Park and schedule follow-up meeting if issues persist.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks are extended to:

Northumberland County Council for fly-tipping assistance

Bernicia Housing for tree maintenance

Northeast Caravans for gas canister removal support

Woodhorn Team for plot clearance assistance

### **Events and Engagement**

#### **Community Film**

Annual grant filming is almost complete. Cllrs have been sent sneak previews by email. We are really looking forward to the finished film by LukLuk Productions and groups will also be able to use promotional videos.

#### **Grant Funding**

The final round of small grant funding is open for invitations, with a closing date of 18<sup>th</sup> February and officer decisions by 25<sup>th</sup> February.

Annual Grant funding was launched and agreed late, therefore interim evaluation reports were not requested until January. We have received what was requested and will assess format and expectations with the Grant Funding group as part of the review. Most 2<sup>nd</sup> payments have been made, with three groups that were funded for projects awaiting completion.

#### **Youth Engagement**

We participated in a community roadshow at Dukes Academy on 28th January 2026, organised by Northumberland County Council's Locality Team and the school. Sharon engaged directly with students to promote the Council's online survey for young people, using a prize tombola

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(including Amazon vouchers, power banks, and other items) to encourage participation. The event brought together multiple local organisations providing services and opportunities for young people. These roadshows occur several times annually at Dukes Academy and Northumberland College, helping students access information about local support and activities, with the next event scheduled at Northumberland College on 12th February 2026. We have received an invitation from Dukes Primary School to attend their World of Work Day on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, we attended last year which proved to be a really good event highlighting what type of work ATC do.

### ***Keep Britain Tidy - Spring Clean***

We have planned to facilitate KBT Spring Clean inspired stalls at the Ashington Market on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March. This will include relevant partners including NCC Recycling & Waste Management, Green Dog Walkers, Ashington Community Litter Pickers, and Northumbrian Water.

We will also be offering up litter picking equipment to anyone who wants to take part in litter picks around the town – litter pickers, gloves, bin bags, and we will liaise with NCC for their removal.

### ***Free Swims***

Free swims continue in both half-term and easter holidays, on Wednesdays and Saturdays 1-2pm at Ashington Leisure Centre.

### ***Northumberland Miners Picnic***

We have met with Woodhorn Museum staff who continue to support the Memorial Service which opens the Northumberland Miner's Picnic event on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

### ***Ashington Saturday Market***

Brite-side Events was expected to commence the Saturday Market in February, however there are a couple of outstanding matters between the organiser and NCC in respect of logistics with set-up and take-down and how this will be managed – with or without a road closure.

### ***Christmas Lights***

In view that the projections which were part of the Christmas Lights display did not work as expected, we negotiated a discount. As a result, we longer have the expected overspend (£1,160) which was for the replacement motifs on columns due to kids motifs failing.

We will be looking at alternative Christmas trees at the earliest opportunity.

### ***NCC Highways – Gullies***

#### ***Background***

For new Members, following a proposal brought to Council for proactive measures on gully clearing, we were pleased to receive news of a dedicated 22-week programme operating in Ashington. This systematic plan sees the gully sucker operating Monday to Thursday in Ashington, with Fridays reserved for emergencies.

As we are now halfway through the programme, I sought an update from the NCC Area Manager.

#### ***Current Position***

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Overall, the programme is going well. However, the recent spell of poor weather has impacted progress, with NCC estimating they are approximately 2-3 weeks behind the original schedule.

At present there are:

- Approximately 90 missed gullies (majority due to access issues such as parked vehicles)
- Around 50 gullies requiring further action beyond routine cleaning

### **Recovery Plan**

To address this and get back on track, NCC are arranging for an additional tanker to operate in Ashington for approximately 3-4 weeks. This means two tankers will be operating in the town during this period, allowing them to:

- Revisit missed locations
- Deal with gullies requiring further attention
- Recover lost time

After this period, work will revert to one tanker to complete the programme.

The plan is to review with NCC at the end of the programme and maintain the proposal of how we work with them to keep on track.

### **Public Spaces Protection Order – PSPO**

Following the Council's agreement to respond to the consultation with hopes of a future survey on 'dogs on sports fields', we received the following positive response...

*Thanks for your email. I spoke with my manager in relation to this and we thought the email you sent detailed it perfectly. We are going to do some evidence gathering going forward and the PSPO's are looked at every 3 years. This will then hopefully give us intel as to what this could look like going forward.*

*I have your contact details so may be in touch to organise a meeting when we look at this.*

### **Website and Social Media PR**

#### **Website**

Widescope was contacted to add an extra slot to meetings to upload scanned copies of the signed agreed minutes of each meeting.

The Town Councillor page ([Ashington Town Council - Town Councillors](#)) has also been redesigned for better readability and easier reference of which Councillor is part of which committee.

The following items appeared on our website news page since the previous officer's report. Members are reminded that we maintain active Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages to promote Council activities and engage with our community. You can read them in full by visiting the website.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/>

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Article Title	Date
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council Connects with Young People at Dukes Academy Roadshow</a>	5th February 2026
<a href="#">Finance &amp; General Services Committee Meeting on 10/02/26</a>	3rd February 2026
<a href="#">ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SETS AMBITIOUS BUDGET FOR 2026/27</a>	29th January 2026
<a href="#">Free Swimming Sessions Return for February Half Term - Extended to Run Throughout 2026!</a>	20th January 2026
<a href="#">Full Council Meeting on 27/01/2026</a>	20th January 2026
<a href="#">Exciting New Play Area Coming to North Seaton Colliery, Ashington</a>	13th January 2026
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council Opens Final Round of Small Grant Fund for 2025-26</a>	12th January 2026
<a href="#">Finance &amp; General Services Committee Meeting on 13/01/2026</a>	6th January 2026
<a href="#">Hirst Ward By-Election Result, 18th December 2025</a>	19th December 2025
<a href="#">Christmas and New Year Message from the Chair of Ashington Town Council, Councillor Mark Purvis</a>	18th December 2025
<a href="#">Christmas Window Competition Winners Announced</a>	18th December 2025
<a href="#">A Very Merry Christmas from Ashington Town Council - Holiday Office Times</a>	18th December 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Christmas Market 2025: A Festive Success Despite the Weather</a>	16th December 2025
<a href="#">NOTICE OF POLL: HIRST WARD BY-ELECTION</a>	11th December 2025

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Article Title	Date
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council Offers Free Swimming Sessions</a>	8th December 2025
<a href="#">Highways Gully Maintenance Programme Begins in Ashington</a>	5th December 2025
<a href="#">Finance &amp; General Services Committee Meeting on 09/12/2025</a>	1st December 2025
<a href="#">Relive the Magic: Official Video of Ashington Christmas Light Switch-On Now Available</a>	1st December 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council and Northumberland County Council Kerb Appeal Trial</a>	28th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council and Northumberland County Council Launch Kerb Appeal Trial</a>	27th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council Adopts Civility &amp; Respect Pledge and Commits to Enhanced Standards in Public Life</a>	26th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council to Distribute Reindeer Food at Tuesday Market Event</a>	25th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Christmas Market Moves to Hirst Park in Partnership with Heart of the Hirst Christmas Fair</a>	24th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington (Hirst Ward) Town Council Election - Notice of Nominations</a>	22nd November 2025
<a href="#">Transformed Doves Corner Sets New Direction for Sustainability in Ashington</a>	20th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington Town Council Applauds Success of Project Shield in Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour</a>	20th November 2025
<a href="#">Full Council Meeting on 25/11/2025</a>	17th November 2025
<a href="#">Ashington's Christmas Light Switch-On Draws Over 1,000 Residents Despite Challenging Weather</a>	14th November 2025

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Article Title	Date
<a href="#"><u>Notice of Election - Hirst Ward</u></a>	12th November 2025
<a href="#"><u>Ashington's New Christmas Tree – Give it a chance to shine!</u></a>	12th November 2025

### **Facebook**

Our Facebook page has demonstrated positive performance since the last Communications Officer's report back on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The reporting period (11th November - 6th February 2026) shows growth across key metrics including views, reach, and engagement, with particularly strong performance in link clicks and new followers.

Since the last meeting we had 3,400 followers and this has increased yet again by 400 reaching 3,800 followers.

Positive posts and posts concerning Ashington in general are still showing very strong community engagement, rather than shares that we post on behalf of other organisations, with a continued effort to share posts where applicable and possible.

Efforts are still ongoing on how to optimise Facebook to ensure the biggest reach and engagement possible while we still discuss the use of advertising to boost posts, if needed.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Youth Collaboration Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2:00pm

CCTV Meeting – 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2:00pm

Partnership Meeting – 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2:00pm

Full Council Meeting – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 6:00pm

NCC Town & Parish Council Conference – 5<sup>th</sup> March, from 4:00pm (held at NCC County Hall)

Ashington Town Forum – 1<sup>st</sup> April, 3:00pm (held at Bernicia Headquarters)

*Gary has a meetings list and has also created a scannable QR code that will put meeting dates into your calendar, please ask for this.*

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Title	Date published ↑	Reach ⓘ ↓	Likes and reactions	Shares ⓘ ↑
 It's great to see opportunities like this bein... <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 12 Nov 2025	31,244	34	47
 <a href="https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk...">https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk...</a> <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 19 Dec 2025	23,630	49	10
  Tell us what you think, Ashington! ... <a href="#">Multi media</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 9 Dec 2025	18,246	49	3
 Community Spirit Shines Through as Festiv... <a href="#">Multi media</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 14 Nov 2025	12,000	98	14
 12 Days of Christmas Market Postponed D... <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 13 Nov 2025	10,942	18	37
 (Click on the link to read in full) <a href="https://ww...">https://ww...</a> <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 13 January 16:00	10,596	22	13
  CHRISTMAS WINDOW COMPETITI... <a href="#">Multi media</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 18 Dec 2025	9,878	85	7
  NEW: Ashington Kerb Appeal Trial Laun... <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 27 Nov 2025	8,902	30	6
  TEMPORARY PARTIAL CLOSURE Station ... <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 9 Dec 2025	8,552	6	6
 <a href="https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk...">https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk...</a> <a href="#">Photo</a> •  Ashington Town Council	<a href="#">Boost</a> <a href="#">...</a> 11 Dec 2025	6,162	12	6