

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021, on-line via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Mark Purvis (Chair)	Eleanor Armstrong
	Marjorie Chambers	Avril Chisholm
	Nicola Chambers	Matthew Cuthbert
	Stephen Fenwick	Lynne Grimshaw
	Jim Lang	Liam Lavery
	Ken Parry	Pauline Thompson
	Bob Walkinshaw	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer (minutes)
Inspector Phil Patterson – Northumbria Police
Members of the Public – 0

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Inspector Phil Patterson, of Northumbria Police, provided a detailed report on local policing issues;

- Following a rise in drug misuse and drug related burglaries and assaults in Ashington, Northumbria Police launched Operation Momentum in September 2020. The operation targeted those causing harm in the town with the aim of disrupting activity and dismantling drug operations.
- Over the past six months, 17 raids and nearly 250 arrests have taken place with significant quantities of illegal drugs taken off the streets.
- Operation Momentum has been hailed a success and will continue in coming months.
- Inspector Patterson highlighted that it is a minority of residents involved in drug misuse and associated crimes. The Policing team are working closely with Social Services to identify children and adults at risk and remove them from harmful situations.
- Inspector Patterson encouraged anybody who suspected drug misuse or supply in the town to report their suspicions to Northumbria Police.
- Overall crime is down 6% in Ashington.
- House burglaries are down by 25%, with outbuilding thefts down by 55%.
- There has been a slight rise of 5% in violent crime, however, 99% of incidents are linked to Organised Crime Gangs.

- Anti-Social Behaviour has increased by 103%, with the majority of cases relating to Covid-19 breaches. Illegal Motorbiking issues have also been an issue with Officers targeting offenders.

C21/926 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Victor Bridges, Brian Gallacher, Lawrence Henderson, Kris Lavery and Tom Wilson.

C21/927 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest from members present.

C21/928 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

The minutes of the last meeting held on the Tuesday 26 January 2020, were agreed and signed as a true record.

C21/929 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

C21/930 5. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.

The Leader Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert provided an update report;

- Planning applications have been submitted for the Northumberland Passenger Rail Line including a new station in Ashington. Cllr. Cuthbert reiterated that the reintroduction of a passenger rail service from Ashington to Newcastle has been a long-held hope and ambition of the Town Council and that the Town Council welcomes the submission of the applications and seeing the rail line become a reality.

Subject to approvals and final funding it is envisaged that the construction phase of the project will begin in early 2022 with passenger trains hopefully running by 2024.

- A meeting of the Northumberland Association of Local Council (NALC) County Committee meeting took place on the 19 March 2021. Due to work commitments Cllr. Cuthbert was unable to attend but had received the detailed minutes.

Cllr. Cuthbert highlighted that NALC, are pursuing a court ruling to allow digital meetings to continue for parish and

town councils but the hearing is not likely to happen till late April.

- Cllr. Cuthbert reported that the first edition of the Ashington Town Council E-Newsletter was produced earlier this month.

Given Covid-19 restrictions, the Town Council like many other parish and town councils, is developing new ways of using social media to keep residents up to date with news, issues and developments. The aim of the E-Newsletter is to keep residents up to date 'with all things Ashington' as well as highlighting improvement projects in the town.

- Cllr. Cuthbert reported that Town Council work was continuing and thanked staff for their efforts in these difficult times.

C21/931 6. APPLICATION FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.

Ashington Rugby Club

Ashington Rugby Club requested the sum of £1,200 to support the purchase of new outdoor furniture including 6 picnic tables.

Like many similar community-based organisations, the Club has been without significant income since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown. The purchase of the picnic tables will allow trading activities to commence, adhering to Government guidance.

The picnic tables will improve the outdoor space and support bar activities, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the Club.

Ashington Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) Social Centre

The RVS requested the sum of £500 to support the cost of providing transport for meals and keeping in touch with elderly residents, many of whom are over the age of 80 years old.

The group aims to prevent loneliness and social isolation for older people. The branch has approximately 25 beneficiaries with the majority coming from Ashington.

Josephine Butler Primary Campus (NCEA)

NCEA requested the sum £970 to purchase 8 reconditioned Cellos for use in extra-curricular musical activities and to give pupils the opportunity to perform and take part in musical competitions.

Up to 50 children, aged between 8 and 11 years old, will initially benefit from the purchase of the Cellos and it is envisaged that the skills gained will aid the pupils in other academic studies.

Bad Apples North East

Bad Apples North East requested the sum of £750 for two projects; Easter activities and new office accommodation.

Easter activities will include the provision of costumed characters presenting children with Easter eggs in the Hirst and North Seaton areas, accompanied by the Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service.

Funding would also support new office accommodation, in Ashington, including the fitting out of an office and internet access. The office will support young people to find employment as well as assisting with business start-up. A school uniform project is also planned to run from the site.

Northumberland Communities Together

At the commencement of the Covid-19 pandemic Northumberland County Council launched Northumberland Communities Together. The project aimed to ensure residents of the county were kept safe and well throughout the pandemic, coordinating support for volunteers, voluntary groups and communities. Partners include Age UK, Ageing well, Health Trainers, the Sports Development Team and Family Gateway.

Three pop-up events have been organised in Ashington with contributions from a number of partner organisations. Two events will take place at the Hirst Welfare Centre and one at the Bothal Cottages Community Centre. The project requested the sum of £750 to supports the cost of the events, which will be approximately £1,600.

Northumbria Police

Inspector Phil Patterson has requested £5,400 to purchase two electric bicycles for the force to use, particularly in the parks and woods of Ashington as well as in the Hirst area. The bikes will enable officers to improve visibility in these areas with the bicycles covering up to 30 miles a day. The limited operating noise of the bicycles also makes them a good asset for addressing crime in the town.

Resolved:

That

- (i) Ashington Rugby Club be awarded the sum of £1,200 towards the cost of new outdoor furniture,**
- (ii) The Ashington Royal Voluntary Service be awarded the sum of £500 to support the cost of providing**

transport for meals and keeping in touch with elderly beneficiaries,

(iii) Josephine Butler Primary Campus (NCEA), be awarded the sum of £970 to purchase eight reconditioned cellos to be used in extra curricular activities within the school,

(iv) Bad Apples North East be awarded the sum of £500 to help support Easter activity costs and fitting out new office accommodation,

(v) Northumberland Communities Together be awarded the sum of £750 to help support three pop-up events within the town.

(vi) Northumbria Police be awarded £5,400 from Cllr K. Parry's Northumberland County Council small schemes budget.

C21/932 7. NORTH SEATON COLLIERY – WORK REQUESTS.

Members discussed and agreed the proposed scheme, to move the North Seaton Colliery Allotment Site boundary gates. It is envisaged that the moving of the entrance gates will address the issue of fly tipping in and around this location.

Members also discussed and agreed the removal of a nearby redundant and ageing bus shelter near this location, at the request of both the North Seaton Colliery Residents Group and the North Seaton Colliery Allotment Association.

The total cost of the works will be £2,338.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The North Seaton Allotment Site boundary gate be moved to help combat fly tipping in the area,**
- (ii) The redundant bus shelter be removed from the nearby location,**
- (iii) The Town Council agree a contribution of £2,338 for the capital works.**

C21/933 8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE CONTROLS.

The Town Clerk presented the Risk Management Register for Members consideration.

Members were informed that there were plans to include a new Lone Working Policy as part of the recently acquired Hirst Park tenancy.

The Chair stated that, while the Town Council was satisfied that all risks were adequately assessed and managed and that appropriate insurance cover was in place, there was a need for a working group of Members to review the Council's corporate responsibilities and duties.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Register of Risk Management and Effective Controls be formally accepted and approved; and That,**
- (i) A comprehensive review of the Risk Register be undertaken prior to 30 September 2021.**

C21/934 9. PLANNING APPLICATION 20/04423/OUT.

Outline application seeking approval for access for construction of two-storey 58 bed care home and associated but physically separate single storey 12-bedroom specialist unit with associated parking and hard and soft landscaping. Essendene, Kenilworth Road, Ashington NE63 8AR.

Further to full discussion it is the considered view of the Town Council that the proposed development of a care home would prejudice the viability of the proposed station at Ashington. It was not considered the benefits of the care home would, in any way, outweigh the major public and economic benefits of delivering a strategic transport scheme across South-East Northumberland; the regional economic benefits alone resulting from the Northumberland Line are estimated to be up to £470M.

It was the view of the Town Council, that after all the years of neglect of the site, application 20/04423/OUT appeared speculative in both its timing and content. It was the view of members unquestionably the application could both delay and frustrate progress of both the work on the delivery of the Ashington station and the overall project for the Northumberland Line, a project of recognised major regional significance.

The Town Council were not in any way supportive of the application and strongly objected. It was agreed that the Town Council's views be brought to the attention of the Planning Committee and given weight in considering this matter.

C21/935 10. FLORAL DISPLAY – BLACK CLOSE BANK.

Members discussed and agreed a proposed scheme, from the Horticultural Officer, to develop a “rainbow” floral presentation feature that recognised the work of the NHS and the dedication of key workers in the town during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The cost to develop the scheme will be £3,430.

Resolved:

That the development of a “rainbow” floral presentation be agreed and the Town Council agree a contribution of £3,430 for the works.

C21/936 11. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Full Council was provisionally planned for Thursday 13 May 2021.

The meeting closed at 8:45pm