

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Thursday 29 June 2021 at YMCA Northumberland in Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Mark Purvis (Chair)	
Caroline Ball	Michelle Brannigan
Victor Bridges	Louis Brown
Vicky Brown	Marjorie Chambers
Matthew Cuthbert	Lynne Grimshaw
Lawrence Henderson	Jim Lang
Liam Lavery	Sophie Robinson
Pauline Thompson	John Tully

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Assets & Facilities Manager
Sharon Parmley – Senior Admin Officer/PA (minute taking)
Members of the Public – 1

C21/946 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Eleanor Armstrong, Avril Chisholm and Bob Walkinshaw

C21/947 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest from members present.

C21/948 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

The minutes of the meeting held on the Tuesday 30 March 2021, were agreed and signed as a true record.

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 May 2021, were agreed and signed as a true record.

C21/949 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

C21/931 6. APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.

Cllr. Grimshaw reported that the three pop-up events organised by Ashington Communities Together, funded by Ashington Town Council, had been a huge success and well received by the residents of Ashington.

C21/950 5. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.

The Leader Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert provided the following update report.

- Two new pieces of play equipment and safety surfacing were installed at the Bywell Road Play Area in May,
- As part of the ongoing programme several new litterbins had been installed in recent weeks,
- Some additional floral planting took place in flower beds on Station Road as well as 29 new troughs on Station Bridge. The consensus was that the works had been well received.

Disappointingly there had been vandalism and thefts from flower beds and towers around the town. The Police had been informed and reported that other towns have had the same problems.

Some additional planters are to be placed opposite St John's Church, as requested by Cllr. Purvis, as well as flower towers requested by Haydon Ward Councillors.

- Work is currently underway at Hirst East End Allotment Site to improve the roadways along with the clearance of redundant plots to create a wildlife area. North Seaton Colliery Allotment Association have moved the site gates to address fly tipping issues.
- Ashington Town Council organised several litter picks earlier in June, as part of the Great British Spring Clean campaign. Over 50 volunteers took part over 4 days of litter picking at; Wansbeck Riverside, North Seaton Colliery, QEII Country Park, Peoples Park and Paddock Wood. Over 70 bags of rubbish and larger items were collected.

The events were supported by students from Brightside Adult Services (who provide specialist services and educational opportunities for 18-35 year olds with additional needs) as well as staff from Ashington Co-op Stores as well as Town Councillors.

- The Leader concluded his report by reading a very recent press release from the newly formed Ashington Town Board of which he was a member on behalf of the Town Council.

“A new partnership is aiming to bring transformative change to Ashington and is seeking public views.

Made up of business, public sector and community leaders the Ashington Board will develop an ambitious Investment Plan for the town. The board will work with the community and Northumberland County Council and Ashington Town Council, to deliver change, while also celebrating and promoting what makes Ashington unique.

The Board has launched a new website, and an online survey has taken place on the Ashington Investment Plan. Residents are being asked to comment on it, as well as feedback on the best and worst aspects of the town. The feedback will be used to prioritise things that need to change.

The Investment Plan will help cement the vision, objectives and priority themes for the town, and help identify the challenges people in Ashington would like addressed. Over the coming weeks a range of projects will then be developed, with further consultation on these planned for the Autumn.”

C21/951 6. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2020/21.

The Town Clerk referred members to the full 2020/21 report of the Internal Auditor (Mr. Peter Basnett) and the Internal Control Assessment previously circulated for consideration and review. Members welcomed the detail and coverage of the report, carried out in accordance with the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission and noted the Internal Auditor was satisfied that a robust system of financial and administrative management continued to operate effectively and efficiently and provided a sound audit trail.

The Town Clerk also referred members to the Internal Auditors letter and brought to their attention the fact that this would be his last Internal Audit report for the Town Council as he would be retiring. The Town Clerk advised members that another Internal Auditor would need to be appointed for the 2021/22 financial year onwards.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Internal Audit Report for the Financial Year 2020/21 be formally accepted and approved,**

- (ii) It be duly noted and welcomed that the Town Council's robust systems of financial and administrative management continue to operate effectively and efficiently and provide a sound audit trail,**
- (iii) It be noted that there were no matters that the Internal Auditor wished to draw to the attention of the Town Council,**
- (iv) It be noted that the Town Council's Internal Auditor, was to formally retire from the role in 2021 and that the Town Council will be required to appoint a new Internal Auditor for the 2021/22 financial year.**

C21/952 7. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2020/21.

The Town Clerk presented in detail the Final Accounts and Governance Statement for the Financial Year ended 31 March 2021.

Members thanked the Town Clerk for the presentation and information provided and for the clarity of the regular financial reporting throughout the year. The Town Clerk outlined to members the proposed and planned use of the General Reserve balance as at 31 March 2021 and stressed the importance of recognising the need for the retention of an adequate working balance for identified projects that had been postponed and deferred in 2021 because of the Covid pandemic.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 (Section 1 of the Annual Return) be formally approved,**
- (ii) The Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 (Section 2 of the Annual Return) be formally approved; and that,**

(iii) The use of the Town Council's General Reserve Balance as at 31 March 2021, be agreed as follows:

- Elections Provision	5,000
- Provision for replacement Christmas Features	10,000
- New/Replacement Bus Shelters	10,000
- Play Area Refurbishment Programme	20,000
- Town Hall Service Charge	10,000
- Environmental Enhancement Works	40,000
- Climate Change Projects & Initiatives	20,000
- Covid 19 Support Fund	7,500
- Jack Charlton Statue Project	18,980
- Charlton Brothers Commemoration Project	2,500
- Allotment Sites – Capital Provision	25,000
- General Reserve Provision	<u>317,549</u>
General Reserve Provision at 31 March 2021	<u>486,529</u>

C21/953 8. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS.

Further to discussion, members agreed the following Council members to represent the Town Council and to provide regular reports on the organisational activities.

Members agreed in principle to elect a reserve Councillor from each ward to attend the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board meetings should anyone be unable to attend.

Resolved:

That:

- **The Leader of the Council, Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert be appointed representative to Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC),**
- **Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert be appointed representative to Wansbeck Valley Foodbank,**

- **Cllr. Mark Purvis be appointed representative to Northumberland Community Bank,**
- **Cllr. Bob Walkinshaw be appointed representative to Northumberland Federation of YMCA's,**
- **Cllr. Pauline Thompson be appointed representative to Real Deal Plus (Ashington Life Centre),**
- **Cllr. Eleanor Armstrong be appointed representative to Citizen's Advice Northumberland,**
- **The following members be appointed to the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board**
 - **Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert**
 - **Cllr. Marjorie Chambers**
 - **Cllr. Avril Chisholm**
 - **Cllr. Eleanor Armstrong**
 - **Cllr. Vicky Brown**
 - **Cllr. Pauline Thompson**

C21/954 9. ESTABLISHMENT OF DISCIPLINARY & APPEAL PANELS.

The Chair requested nominations for a Disciplinary Panel and nominations for an Appeal Panel.

Resolved:

That:

(i) Cllr. M Cuthbert, Cllr. L Grimshaw and Cllr. M Purvis be appointed to sit on the Disciplinary Panel,

(ii) Cllr. C Ball and Cllr. V Brown and Cllr. S Robinson be appointed to sit on the Appeal Panel.

C21/955 10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Full Council was provisionally scheduled for Tuesday 14 September 2021, time and venue to be agreed.