

AGENDA 7, Enc ii)

Ashington Town Council, AGREED Minutes of the Climate Change & Environment Committee Meeting held at 5:00pm on Tuesday 29th October 2024, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Louis Brown, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davis, Lynne Grimshaw, Gemma Hemsley, Jim Lang, Paul Wright, Bob Walkinshaw, John Tully, Pauline Thompson (arrived 5:05pm), Graeme Wright (Arrived 05:11pm) and Caroline Ball (Arrived 5:26pm).

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant (Taking Minutes)

CCE24/014 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcomed by Cllr. Paul Wright.

CCE24/015 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Marjorie Chambers and Cllr Victor Bridges.

CCE24/016 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests from Councillors.

CCE24/017 DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations from Councillors.

CCE24/018 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

CCE24/019 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and sign as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on 30TH July 2024.

CCE24/020 OFFICERS UPDATE

The following update was shared by the Executive Officer having been sent out with the meeting papers.

Update on Tree Management in Ashington, 2nd August 2024

Following concerns raised by residents and Cllrs regarding tree removals in various areas of Ashington, the Town Council officers took swift action to gather information from Northumberland County Council (NCC) and Bernicia. The report and linked press release outlines the findings and actions taken by both organisations in response to inquiries.

Ashington Town Council engaged NCC and Bernicia to clarify the reasons behind recent tree removals. Both organisations reassured that no healthy trees are felled unless absolutely necessary. The following details were confirmed:

NCC Tree Management: Two trees were felled in Hirst Park – a dead Beech and a diseased Cherry, both leaving habitat stems for local biodiversity. A replacement tree for the Cherry will be planted in the Autumn/Winter.

Bernicia Tree Management: 154 trees were removed in Ashington, all due to significant issues such as ash dieback, fungal infections, or unsuitable self-seeding. Bernicia planted 109 new trees earlier this year and plans to plant 3,000 trees over the next three years across their estates.

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This proactive approach demonstrates Ashington Town Council's commitment to transparency and environmental stewardship, ensuring that tree management is handled responsibly. Officers will continue to work with both NCC and Bernicia to monitor tree health and contribute to replanting efforts that benefit the local community.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-08-02-ashington-town-council-addresses-tree-removal-concerns-quick-action-yields-facts>

Metal Recycling Initiative at North Seaton Colliery Allotments

The Town Council is pleased to report the success of a recent metal recycling effort at North Seaton Colliery allotments. Led by our Allotment Officer, Alan Bunker, and with the support of dedicated allotment holders, significant metal waste accumulated over the years was collected and recycled, preventing it from ending up in landfill.

This initiative highlights the importance of sustainable practices in allotment management, promoting the "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" philosophy. The success of the metal recycling project has opened discussions about extending this approach to other materials, such as glass, and involving all allotment sites.

The Council appreciates the ongoing efforts of our allotment community and encourages further ideas for improving sustainability on allotments. Officers will continue to explore and implement effective waste management practices.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-08-14-town-council-applauds-successful-metal-recycling-at-north-seaton-colliery-allotments>

Councillor Louis Brown commended the success of the recycling initiative at North Seaton Colliery Allotments and expressed his hope for its continued implementation in the future.

Installation of New Bus Shelter Seating

Ashington Town Council recently completed the installation of locally manufactured seating at two bus shelters in the town, demonstrating our commitment to sustainability and supporting local businesses. The seating, expertly crafted by Tony Webster of Webster's Workshop at Green Lane Workspace, provides a resting place for residents, improving accessibility and convenience for public transport users.

The seats were installed by the Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers, Mark Air and Ryan Appleby, saving costs by handling the installation in-house. This initiative reflects the Council's "local first" approach, reducing transportation emissions and external contractor expenses, while promoting sustainable solutions.

Further assessments of bus stops in Ashington will be undertaken to identify potential future seating installations. Additionally, a clean and minor repairs to other bus shelters are scheduled and taking place.

This project aligns with the Council's goals of encouraging greener travel and enhancing the quality of life for residents through practical, locally focused actions.

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<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-10-01-new-bus-shelter-seating>

Support for Climate Action Wansbeck Allotment Project

Ashington Town Council has actively supported Climate Action Wansbeck's allotment project at Wansbeck Road, providing both grant funding and hands-on assistance. In addition to the financial backing, the Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers, Mark Air and Ryan Appleby, worked alongside volunteers, assisting with heavy lifting and gravel spreading to prepare the site. Materials were sourced from the Council's local suppliers, further supporting our commitment to using local resources.

This initiative demonstrates the Council's approach of not only offering grant funding but also providing practical, measurable help. By actively participating in the project, the Council reinforces its commitment to promoting sustainability and supporting community-driven efforts. A press release is ready to go out when photographs are available.

Celebrating Ashington's Charity Shops and Sustainable Shopping

Following a suggestion from Administrative Assistant Gary Holmes, the Council's website was used to highlight the role of the town's charity shops in promoting sustainability and supporting the circular economy. These shops are becoming increasingly popular with younger residents and university students, who are turning to charity stores for affordable clothing and other items.

Representatives from Scope, Sense, and the British Heart Foundation reported an increase in younger customers, reflecting a growing trend toward sustainable shopping. Additionally, the charity shops are making significant contributions to waste reduction, with unusable items being recycled creatively. For example, some shops use rag merchants or repurpose materials for carpet under-lay, as noted by Claire from Sense and Christine from the Salvation Army.

This initiative underscores the importance of charity shops in helping reduce waste while providing affordable goods to the community. The Council appreciates the hard work and dedication of these shops and encourages further use of these sustainable shopping options.

Thanks to Gary Holmes for the idea to spotlight this vital aspect of Ashington's community.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-09-11-one-persons-rubbish-is-another-persons-treasure-celebrating-ashingtons-charity-shops>

CCE24/021 BULB PLANTING

The plan and specification for bulb planting that would commence in November was **RECEIVED**. This was included for information and endorsement as the order was delegated to the Assets and Development Manager to place.

Members endorsed the order placed to supply and plant, to be carried out by WL Straughans, at a cost of £7,000, with additional wildflower planting as part of environmental enhancements from a separate ward budget.

	square metres	cost
(REQUIRED) LABOUR & TRANSPORT		£440.00
#1 – HOLY SEPULCHRE CHURCH, NE63 8HZ	75	£1,500.00
#2 – GREEN LANE, NE63 8EQ	30	£600.00
#3 – NORTH SEATON ROAD, NE63 0EF	45	£900.00

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#4 – NURSERY PARK ROAD, NE63 0HP	57	£1,140.00
#5 – SHOPS, COLLEGE ROAD, NE63 9RGP	25	£500.00
#6 – B1334 COLLEGE RD / NEWBIGGIN RD, NE63 OTN	60	£1,200.00
#7 – NORTHERN SOCIAL CLUB, RIDGEWAY NE63 9TL	36	£720.00
total	328	£7,000.00

WOODHORN LANE NE63 9JJ – ASHINGTON FOOTBALL CLUB	240	£600.00
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Cllr Tully commended the aesthetic appeal of the wildflower displays, particularly along the riverside, when in bloom, and asked that the Council focus more on wild flowers than bulbs planting. He emphasised that the Town Council should shift away from bulbs to align with environmental priorities, noting how wildflowers provide essential habitat, food sources and pollination opportunities for local insects.

Councillor Lynne Grimshaw acknowledged the aesthetic value of wildflowers and supported the Town Council's transition from bulbs to wildflower planting. However, she emphasised the importance of carefully considering planting locations due to associated maintenance requirements.

Councillor Glynn Davis agreed with previous comments regarding the superior aesthetic appeal of wildflowers compared to bulbs.

It was discussed that wildflower planting does have an appeal, and obvious environmental benefits, but it can take time to convince members of the public that they are as attractive. The Chair agreed that this was certainly something to move towards, and that it would be important to take the public with the Council on this.

CCE24/022 BIRD BOX PROJECT

The report on bird box project was **RECEIVED**.

The Executive Officer described that the bird box initiative was a conservation project focused on supporting local wildlife and engaging community groups in Ashington. The Council provided £7,700 in funding from various budgets to support the project.

In total, 440 bird boxes were made, including 240 for woodland installation and 200 assembly kits for local groups. While 11 out of 22 invited groups responded to participate in the assembly kit program, the level of engagement was mixed. As a result, the focus shifted more towards the woodland bird box installations, which were determined to be more cost-effective. The Executive Officer made clear that the kits and bird boxes were produced to an extremely high standard, thanks to Mark and Ryan.

The total project cost was £6,581, with £1,711 spent on materials and £4,870 on overtime resources. The woodland bird boxes were more financially efficient to produce compared to the assembly kits. The report recommended installing the remaining 40 woodland bird boxes using the £1,200 in leftover funds, and that careful consideration should be given prior to executing similar projects in the future.

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Councillor Lynne Grimshaw expressed the Council's satisfaction with the project's success and commended the overall excellent execution of the initiative.

CCE24/023 FUTURE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

The Council discussed ongoing efforts to address climate change in the local area. Cllr Graeme Wright suggested it would be beneficial if waste bins could be split, with one bin dedicated to waste and another for recycling. This would help encourage proper waste sorting and recycling among residents. The Executive Officer noted this and would bring the suggestion to the Partnership Board meeting as any change to how refuse is collected must be agreed with NCC.

Several councillors mentioned existing climate-focused organisations operating in the region that would benefit being part of the Committee.

It was AGREED to ask the groups operating in the town, in this area, if they would be interested in being part of the Climate Change and Environment Committee. The Executive Officer advised that they would be asked in the first instance, and an amendment to the Terms of Reference would be brought to Full Council. It was also noted that as well as the membership be amended to include non-councillors, it could also be amended to only include those Cllrs who wish to be on the committee as have an interest in the area, rather than all Cllrs.

CCE24/024 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 11th March 2025.

Meeting ends 5.41pm.