

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**AGREED Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee,**  
**held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024**  
**at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr Bob Walkinshaw, Cllr Liam Lavery, Cllr Paul Wright, and Cllr Graeme Wright.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

Sharon Parmley – Events and Engagement Officer, Stephen Humphrey – Assets and Development Manager and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant.

**FGS24/049 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Welcome by the Chair, Councillor Lynne Grimshaw.

**FGS24/050 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Mark Pervis and Cllr Matthew Cuthbert and Cllr Gemma Hemsley.

**FGS24/051 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

**FGS24/052 DISPENSATIONS**

There were no dispensations requested.

**FGS24/053 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present.

**FGS24/054 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

**FGS24/055 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES*****ATC Neighbourhood Services***

***Bus Shelters*** – Deep clean of shelters around the town taking place w/c 30<sup>th</sup> September, including minor repairs and improvements as part of the action week.

An application for funding to purchase two replacement bus shelters at Wansbeck General Hospital has been made to Northumberland County Council, under North East Combined Authority funding.

***Play Areas*** – Vandalism at Alexandra Road Play Area – we are liaising our contractor, Kompan Ltd, to address the damage to the soft pour at the earliest opportunity following a successful insurance claim. The Play Area will remain closed till the works are carried out.

Paddock Wood Play Area – works to install self-closing access gates to the play area will take place in October. The gates will replace the existing aging gates and other minor works will be carried out as part of the work.

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**Trees** - a maintenance check is currently taking place on all planted trees funded by the Town Council in recent years. Works to repair damaged stakes and adjust tree ties will take place before the winter season.

**Floral Planting on Station Road on Station Bridge** – following the Council meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, work has taken place to remove the hanging baskets and troughs in this area. Please note that there is still a hanging basket in situ on Station Road; when our NSOs went to remove the basket there was an active bird's nest. We will monitor and remove the basket at the earliest opportunity.

**Flower Towers & Planters** – New winter planting is currently being installed by our contractors Wansbeck Garden Centre across the town. Two new planters, with reservoirs, have been installed at 11<sup>th</sup> Row (Kwik fit) to replace the two aging planters. The planters were purchased with funding from Bothal Ward Cllrs environmental improvements.

**Bulb Planting & Wildflower Schemes** – work will take place in November, on bulb planting schemes at the following locations:

- Holy Sepulchre Church – grassed area adjacent to church
- Green Lane – grassed area adjacent to Kenilworth Road
- North Seaton Road – grassed area next to new tree planting, close to workshops
- Nursery Park entrance – grassed area next to cemetery
- College Road – grassed area next to College Shops
- B1334 / College Road & Wansbeck Manor roundabout area
- Ridgeway – grassed area next to Northern Social Club

A wildflower planting scheme will also take place at Woodhorn Lane (next to the Football Club) to complement the recent improvement works, with the cost met by ward environmental improvement funds.

### **Projects**

#### **Ashington Memorial Garden**

To be further updated. Meetings have taken place with Sarah & Stephen, Rachael & Karen, of NCC, regarding proposed connectivity works as part of the redevelopment of the Wansbeck Square area. The aim is to enhance access, visibility, and the overall aesthetic of the memorial garden linking to the new development.

Work requested to include.

- New robust paving and associated works from new public realm, from existing Memorial recognising conflicts after 1945 and around exiting War Memorial, to current entrance to the Memorial Garden on Kenilworth Road. This will create a smooth and durable connection between the newly developed public realm and the Memorial Garden.
- Resurface of existing Resin Bonded Gravel path around Garden the area which will be accessible and attractive, enhancing the visitor experience while maintaining the natural charm of the garden.

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- Tidy & Reduction of North and South border hedging to approximately 1.5m in height and East border hedging (Next to Wansbeck Square) to 1m in height.
- New planting around Memorial recognising conflicts after 1945 (as part of connectivity to new public realm).
- The introduction of new plants in the two borders near the east border, as well as refreshed planting around the memorial recognising post-1945 conflicts, will beautify the space while considering the existing tree canopy. This will soften the transition between the garden and surrounding spaces, providing a more cohesive environment.
- Refresh and Improvements to two borders that adjoin Kenilworth Road. Enhancing the planting in these borders will create a welcoming entrance to the garden, improving its visual appeal from Kenilworth Road and making the memorial more engaging for passersby.

**Ashington Cricket Club Commemorative Tree Project to Mark the 80th Anniversary of the ending of WWII**

Work is continuing on the project. More information will be provided at the next meeting.

***Ashington Community Woods Improvements***

The first Steering Group meeting of the Ashington Community Woods Improvements Project will take place on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, at Ashington Town Hall. The steering group is made up of users of the woodland (FACWs / Ashington Running Club / Park Run / NCC Officers), to discuss and plan improvements and for the Town Council to assist in developing external funding bids with partners, as and when required. The initial focus on addressing drainage issues, improving the Miners' Meadow area and looking to increase positive usage of the woodland through developing walking trails etc.

***Town Twinning Update***

Work is continuing for Town Twinning Civic Day on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October, which members are all invited to attend. Full details of activities will be sent to members in coming days.

***Remembrance Day Service***

Work is on-going in the planning of the Remembrance Day Service in Ashington Memorial Garden. The Service will take place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November, commencing at 10:45am.

***Events and Engagement***

***Opportunities Fair – Hirst Welfare Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September***

Sharon to update.

***Youth Services Roadshows at Northumberland College (23<sup>rd</sup> September) and Kirkley Hall (24<sup>th</sup> September)***

Sharon to update.

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***Allotments (General)***

Allotment Action week was held w/c 16<sup>th</sup> September, officers worked proactively to carry out the jobs identified as being able to be achieved in-house. This included fencing works, clearance, taps, and weedkilling.

Inspections have been postponed at sites we manage; these will be rescheduled as well as looking at alternative means of carrying out inspections.

Further work is expected in regards the burned down shed at Hirst East End in regards assessing the risks of reletting this plot and the neighbouring plot.

As is usual at the end of the season, some plot holders hand give notice on tenancies. An assessment and plan to re-let will be carried out as soon as possible in October.

***Allotment (Capital)***

Those capital schemes identified in budget planning that were not taken forward in 24/25 remain outstanding and we will seek new costs for these. The most pressing which is the water system at Nursery Park has been received and is 10% more than the quote received in November 2023.

As well as the water system at Nursery Park, there are outstanding roadways at Woodhorn, Seaton Hirst and High Market, and boundary fencing at High Market. Additionally, new capital projects may be identified.

***Events and Engagement***

***Opportunities Fair – Hirst Welfare Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September***

The Opportunities Fair at Ashington Hirst Welfare brought together a diverse array of employers, training providers, and volunteer organisations. This event provided valuable opportunities for job seekers, students, and community-minded individuals in the area. The fair showcased employment options, training and skills development programs, volunteering opportunities, and youth-focused initiatives.

***Employment Opportunities***

The fair demonstrated a vibrant job market in the region, with various sectors represented:

- **Law Enforcement:** Northumbria Police promoted various career paths.
- **Healthcare:** Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust offered placements for young people (13+) in pharmacy, human resources, nursing, and digital/information services.
- **Construction:** Rainton Construction and MGL Group represented the industry, with MGL Group highlighting their award-winning apprenticeship programs.
- **Care Services:** Home Instead is currently hiring care professionals with flexible working hours.
- **Social Care:** The Direct Payments Team presented Personal Assistant roles for immediate start. (Contact: 01670 629090 or [directpayments@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:directpayments@northumberland.gov.uk))

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### **Training and Skills Development**

Several organisations offered resources for skill enhancement and career exploration:

- Northern Learning Trust's Learning Hives: Employability support, functional skills training, and one-to-one mentoring.
- Winnovation Training: Two-week Health and Social Care courses.
- Northumberland Skills: Information on careers in childcare, teaching assistant roles, and Early Years Apprenticeships.
- Open Doors: Support for unemployed individuals looking to enter the workforce.

### **Volunteering and Community Engagement**

The fair highlighted numerous volunteering opportunities:

- Escape Family Support and Citizens Advice Northumberland are actively recruiting volunteers.
- Northumberland CVA presented various volunteering opportunities in the area.
- Carers Northumberland promoted their Working for Carers Project, supporting carers in the workplace.
- Full Circle Food Project showcased volunteer opportunities in cooking and gardening, focusing on food sustainability and community nutrition.

### **Youth and Creative Opportunities**

The event also catered to young people and creative individuals:

- Mortal Fools shared information about their Youth Theatre groups, creative school interventions, and their mission to amplify young voices in the Northeast.
- YMCA Northumberland promoted their Creative Monday Sessions for ages 13-18.

The Opportunities Fair demonstrated the diverse and growing opportunities in the region. It successfully connected local talent with meaningful work and volunteer roles, contributing to the strengthening of the community and local economy.

### ***Youth Services Roadshows at Northumberland College (23<sup>rd</sup> September) and Kirkley Hall (24<sup>th</sup> September)***

Two Youth Services Roadshows were successfully held at Northumberland colleges, engaging over 600 young people. These events, organised by Carla Thompson from Northumberland Communities Together, took place at Ashington and Kirkley Hall on September 23rd and 24th, 2024.

The roadshows showcased a diverse array of community services and organisations aimed at supporting local youth.

### ***Community Collaboration***

The roadshows featured an impressive lineup of over 25 organisations, demonstrating a strong community commitment to youth welfare. Participating organisations included:

1. Northumberland County Council Childcare team
2. Carers Northumberland

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3. Cygnus Northumberland Recovery College
4. Everyturn Mental Health
5. Escape Family Support
6. Community Safety Officers
7. Full Circle Food Project
8. NHS Health Trainers
9. Northumberland Libraries
10. Mortal Fools
11. NCC Volunteer Coordinator
12. Sorted
13. NDAS
14. Koast Radio
15. Northumbria Police
16. Pride Action North
17. Kirkley Hall Zoo
18. Northumberland College Counselling
19. YMCA
20. Hate Crime Team
21. Beyond Youth
22. Northumberland Communities Together
23. Direct Payments Team
24. Bernicia
25. Sexual Health Team
26. Ground Works

These organisations provided information on a wide range of services, including mental health support, career guidance, and community resources.

### **Event Activities**

Both colleges created a welcoming atmosphere for attendees:

- Free donuts and treats were offered
- Fun games and creative crafts were available
- These activities encouraged student participation and interaction with the various services present

### **Ashington Town Council's Youth Forum Initiative**

Sharon attended for Ashington Town Council to promote the upcoming Youth Forum on Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at Ashington Football Club

The primary aim of this forum is to give young people a voice in local matters.

Sharon created an innovative "Ashington Monopoly" game to gather youth perspectives. This creative approach encouraged students to share their thoughts on services that need improvement or addition in the town.

### **Key Feedback from Students**

#### **1. Public Transport**

- Need for more bus stops and shelters
- Difficulties with public transport reliability

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- Issues with tardiness due to late buses and missed connections

## 2. Public Seating

- Call for more public seating areas around the town

## 3. Community Spaces

- Suggestion for creating more community spaces for young people to meet and socialise

## Conclusion

The Youth Services Roadshows proved to be an effective platform for engaging with Northumberland's youth. They provided essential information to young people and offered them a chance to voice their needs and concerns. The feedback collected provides valuable insights for local authorities and service providers, highlighting areas where improvements could significantly impact young people's daily lives.

These initiatives demonstrate a commitment to strengthening the connection between young people and their community services. Continued efforts in this direction promise to foster better engagement and support for the youth of Northumberland.

## Recommendations

1. Explore public transportation issues raised by students
2. Consider increasing public seating in key areas of the town
3. Explore possibilities for creating more youth-oriented community spaces
4. Continue attending similar events to maintain youth engagement
5. Follow up on the upcoming Youth Forum to ensure youth voices are heard and acted upon

[Ashington Town Council](#) News article published on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

## FGS24/056 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2024/25

### **a) Updated Budget Report**

The updated budget report was **RECEIVED**

### **b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid (including Bank Reconciliation)**

A schedule of accounts paid and to be paid was **RECEIVED** and **ENDORSED** the accounts **PAID** and **AGREED**.

## FGS24/057 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – OCTOBER 2024

### **a) Ashington Girl Guiding Division**

The application was **RECEIVED** and it was **AGREED** to award £500.

### **b) Ashington RVS Social Centre**

Concerns were voiced regarding the financial burden on members who are required to pay to attend, irrespective of any existing funding arrangements.

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It was **PROPOSED** and it was **AGREED** to grant a contribution of £200.

**c) *The South East Northumberland Rail User Group (SERUG)***

The application was **RECEIVED**, and it was **PROPOSED** to award £100, and it was **AGREED**.

It was brought to the Council's attention that the number of users affected by this decision within Ashington is relatively small. Consequently, it was noted that the overall community impact of this decision within Ashington would be limited. This observation was made to provide context for the Council's deliberations on the matter at hand.

**d) *Climate Action Wansbeck***

A question was raised regarding the location of the Orchard. It was clarified that the Orchard in question is situated within the Wansbeck allotments.

It was **PROPOSED** to use some of the Climate budget to fund the £500 and it was **AGREED** and it was **AGREED** to award the £500.

**e) *Other Small Grant Applications***

There were no other small grant applications.

**FGS24/058 PARTNERSHIP MEETING, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

There was no update at this time, and it was requested to get in touch with the board members if any questions are to be asked from the Council as no board members are present at this time.

Cllr Pauline Thompson raised two matters of concern. Firstly, she inquired about the progress of ongoing works to improve the strip of land on Alexandra Road adjacent to Windy Gyle. Secondly, she highlighted issues of weeds and litter accumulation in the colliery rows of the Hirst ward, particularly noting problems in the paths between the rows.

Cllr Caroline Ball reported that a resident had contacted her regarding a safety concern. The resident had observed that several paths around Ashington Academy had become slippery due to moss growth, presenting a potential hazard to pedestrians.

Cllr Graeme Wright requested consideration be given to tidying the area surrounding 'Doves roundabout', including the removal of redundant rockeries. In response, the Assets & Development Manager advised that a request for general tidying would be submitted to Northumberland County Council. However, more extensive works in this area, such as the removal of rockeries, could potentially be considered as a ward improvement project if additional funding was required. Cllr Graeme Wright agreed to liaise with Haydon ward Councillors to confirm their agreement for carrying out improvements in this area.

**FGS24/059 NCC DRAFT RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The following comments were made:

It was emphasised that a response is required by next week. The Council was urged to submit any comments before this deadline, given the time-sensitive nature of the matter.



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Attention was drawn to a project recently completed at the Highmarket Allotments site. The officer who managed this project was commended for their excellent work. Members were encouraged to contact this officer should they have any questions or wish to inspect the work carried out. It was noted that consulting with this officer would be beneficial for gaining insight into the project's implementation and outcomes.

*Full plan is available online using the link below*

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Public%20Rights%20of%20Way%20Orders/DRAFT-ROWIP-for-consultation-2024.pdf>

**FGS24/060 NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC)**

The minutes of the meeting of the County Committee held on Saturday 13th July were **RECEIVED**.

**FGS24/061 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

**Meeting ended 18:30pm**

AGREED