

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee,
held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 9th July 2024
at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Cllr Mark Purvis, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr John Tully, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr Gemma Hemsley, Cllr Bob Walkinshaw and Cllr Graeme Wright.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant.

FGS24/020 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by the Chair Councillor Lynne Grimshaw.

FGS24/021 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Paul Wright, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert and Cllr Glyn Davies.

FGS24/022 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

FGS24/023 DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were received.

FGS24/024 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

FGS24/025 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25th June 2024.

FGS24/026 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES

The following update was **RECEIVED** which had been sent out in advance of the meeting.

Flytipping

Following our contact with NCC Cabinet Members and Leader, members have been advised of the item being part of the Cabinet meeting yesterday. A summary of the report, which was emailed on 2nd July, is below. You can view the papers received at the meeting below:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 9th July 2024, 10.00 am - Northumberland County Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](https://modern.gov.co.uk)

The issue of fly tipping was discussed, with particular focus on bin stores. It was noted that some consider items left in bin stores not to be fly tipping. When asked about plans to address this, it was suggested that if surveillance cameras were to capture individuals depositing unauthorised waste in bin stores, it could present an opportunity for community education. It was observed that while visible fly tipping on streets has decreased, there appears to be a redirection of this activity to bin stores. Consequently, the overall rate of fly tipping is neither increasing nor decreasing, but rather shifting location.

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Summary of Cabinet Paper

Current situation

Fly tipping incidents in Northumberland peaked at 5,040 in 2019/20, reduced for 3 years, but increased 10% in 2023/24 to 4,429 incidents.

Ashington and Blyth are identified as hotspot areas, with most incidents involving household waste in residential streets/back lanes.

New targets and measures

New target: 20% reduction in fly tipping incidents from 2023/24 baseline by end of 2025/26 (more ambitious than previous 5% target).

Increase Fixed Penalty Notice for fly tipping from £400 to £1,000 (£750 if paid within 7 days).
 Increase Fixed Penalty Notice for household waste duty of care offences from £400 to £600 (£450 if paid within 10 days).

Invest £75,937 to double CCTV resources in hotspot areas and hire an additional Environmental Officer for 12 months.

Campaign plans:

Allocate £10,000 for a high-profile campaign focusing on fly tipping as a criminal offense.
 Use "crime scene" tactics to highlight illegal dumping.

Increase enforcement and CCTV use, publicly name prosecuted offenders.
 Collaborate with local stakeholders and social housing providers.

Engage communities through Northumberland Communities Together initiatives.

Community engagement:

Work with existing community groups on environmental projects.

Conduct community conversations and surveys to understand perceptions.

Organise community action days for clean-ups.

Engage young people through schools and family hubs.

Performance:

Northumberland has the third-lowest fly tipping rate in the North East region.

Quick response times for fly tip removal and good access to waste disposal services.

Record high number of enforcement interventions in 2023/24.

The report emphasises a tougher stance on enforcement while also focusing on community engagement and education to tackle the fly tipping issue in Ashington and other affected areas.

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Here are the key points specifically relevant to Ashington from the report:

Much of the information detailed we know from the data provided at Partnership Meetings.

Hotspot Area: Ashington is specifically identified as one of the two main hotspot areas for fly tipping in Northumberland, along with Blyth.

Location of Incidents: In Ashington, the report mentions areas of concern in Maple Street, Rosalind Street, Ariel Street and Alexander Road.

Type of Waste: The majority of fly tipping instances in Ashington consist of medium or small volumes of household waste, primarily furniture and white goods, left in residential streets or back lanes.

CCTV Deployment: As part of a DEFRA-funded project, CCTV cameras have been deployed in Ashington to tackle fly tipping. This has resulted in additional investigations and Fixed Penalty Notices issued.

Community Engagement: The report proposes utilising the Hirst Working Group in Ashington to share and promote publicity in support of a local campaign against fly tipping.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD): There's a focus on engaging positively with the majority of Ashington residents who do not fly tip, building upon existing community groups and networks with environmental interests.

Multi-Agency Approach: The plan includes multi-agency door knocking days in hotspot areas, which would include Ashington Town Council, to engage residents and educate them about fly tipping.

Social Housing Collaboration: Given the nature of the affected areas, there's a particular emphasis on working with social housing providers in places like Ashington to ensure joined-up messaging and explore further collaborative opportunities.

Environmental Partnership: The report mentions existing environmental partnership arrangements with Ashington Town Council that include enhanced arrangements for street cleansing and fly tip removal.

These points suggest that Ashington is a key focus area for the proposed fly tipping action plan, with targeted measures and community engagement strategies specifically designed for the town.

Town Council Involvement

Based on the information provided in the report, Ashington Town Council could get involved and support the fly tipping action plan in several ways:

- ✓ Support and participate in the community conversations proposed by Northumberland Communities Together (NCT).
- ✓ Help organise and promote community action days for clean-ups.
- ✓ Assist in distributing campaign materials and flyers to local residents.
- ✓ Provide insights into specific problem areas and potential causes of fly tipping in Ashington, helping to tailor the campaign to local needs.
- ✓ Actively participate in and support the Hirst Working Group to share and promote publicity for the local anti-fly tipping campaign.

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- ✓ Help organise educational events or workshops about proper waste disposal and the impacts of fly tipping.
- ✓ Use Town Council communication channels (website, social media) to spread awareness about the campaign and proper waste disposal methods.
- ✓ Help identify and engage with local community groups interested in environmental issues.
- ✓ Promoting the increased penalties for fly tipping and encouraging residents to report offenders.
- ✓ Work with local schools and youth groups to involve young people in anti-fly tipping initiatives, possibly through poster competitions or youth-led community clean-ups.

Memorial Garden – Potential Regeneration Funds

Thank you for your email. I've discussed the possibility of gates with the designers who feel that the introduction of the gates would make the connection less seamless and if they were not locked up, skaters might as well keep them open to use the shortcut. The gates send out the wrong message that we are trying to achieve by connecting the memorial garden with the public realm at Wansbeck Square. The use of tactile paving can be used instead to deter the skaters if this were something you would like us to consider?

I've also discussed with Karen who believes there will be restrictions on gates from the funders.

2025-26 Local Transport Plan (LTP) Programme

Details were emailed on 2nd July, and the Council's agreement of their top three priorities for Transport will be included on the September FGS agenda.

Meetings in July/August

The Youth Advisory Committee is meeting on Thursday 11th July at 5:30pm, the Personnel Committee on Tuesday 23rd July at 5:30pm, and the Climate Change Committee (5:00pm) and Full Council (6:00pm) on 30th July.

There are no Council meetings in August. Our first meeting back following the summer break is Finance and General Services Committee, on Tuesday 10th September.

Allotments (Capital Works)

All capital works have now been completed for the current financial year.

Allotments (General)

Two very successful weekends at our Woodhorn Road site whereby several agreements were signed, and rents collected. Plot holders have also visited the town hall to sign their agreements and pay their rent. Our new card machine has been used on several occasions. Over 80% have now signed and paid.

More clearance work has been continuing at our North Seaton Colliery site, creating less overgrown areas and to prevent fly-tipping.

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New gates have been installed at our Nursery Park site, locks to be fitted in the coming weeks. This has been welcomed by plot holders.

ATC Neighbourhood Services

Work has been undertaken with an Ashington business regarding the installation of seating in the town’s bus shelters that currently do not have seating, giving consideration to accessibility challenges. A design and costs will be brought to the next meeting for consideration.

A focus for work in coming weeks will be repainting a number of the towns public seats and ensuring the play areas are clean and tidy for the busy summer holiday period. We have suffered some recent vandalism to equipment, but these will be addressed in the next two weeks.

Projects and Development

Ashington Cricket Club Commemorative Tree Project

No further update, but funding applications and requests have been progressed.

Skate Park Project

A meeting is planned to take place on the 25th July with Shred the North who are the leading organisation in the NE in relation to developing skate facilities and are currently supporting Blyth Town Council with their skate project.

Bird Boxes

Mark and Ryan have made up 130 Bird Box kits which have been distributed. We have a request for 66 to fulfil and will follow-up with those below who have not responded yet.

Alligator Klub
Pride Action North
TEAM Residents Association
Mortal Fools - Creative Mondays
Teen Bar
Buzz Learning

Talking Marras
Being Woman
Veterans & Elders
Get On Side, Hirst Welfare, YMCA and Family Hub
Ashington Library

We will wait until the new school term before writing to schools.

Events and Engagement

Hirst Working Group Meeting – Wednesday 3rd July 2024

The Hirst Working Group convened at the Ashington Family Hub on Wednesday 3rd July, this is an officer meeting which Sharon is invited to attend by NCC’s Ian Stephenson. This report highlights the collaborative efforts of various organisations to improve community life, youth engagement, and safety in Ashington. The group continues to address challenges while implementing new initiatives to benefit local residents. The meeting discussed various community initiatives and updates.

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Community Engagement and Youth Activities

Several partners shared updates on summer activities for local youth. **The Full Circle Food Project** announced plans for summer trips, including a visit to a working farm on 13th August and a beach outing. They are currently taking bookings for children aged 9-13. Carla has been tasked with creating a comprehensive **Summer Activity Timetable** for the Ashington area. **YMCA** reported their recent takeover of Ashington Children's Community, with a current focus on safeguarding measures and school readiness programs. Additionally, **Ashington Family Hub** has launched a new Young Dads Group, catering to fathers up to 25 years old.

Infrastructure Updates

Jake from Northumberland County Council (NCC) informed the group about a delay in the Playzone build, which is now expected to commence after the summer holidays. The council is seeking ideas for project engagement from the community.

A skate park update was provided by **Ashington Town Council (ATC)**. Sharon and Stephen are scheduled to meet with Shred it North for a consultation on the project.

Community Challenges

The group addressed the issue of fly-tipping in Ashington, noting high levels of illegal dumping. A proposal was made to create a community-led task force to tackle this problem, focusing on education and initiatives. This will be further discussed at the December meeting.

Crime and Safety

The Ashington & Blyth Reoffending Group shared concerns about child exploitation and drug dealing in Ashington. However, recent CCTV improvements have helped reduce anti-social behaviour. Project Shield, a partner model to address anti-social behaviour, has shown success in Cramlington and is now being rolled out in Ashington and other parts of the county. A mobile safety unit is now operational in Ashington as part of Safer Northumberland.

Other Updates

NCVA announced they are advertising for a Digital Inclusion Post. Ian provided a demonstration of the LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) system to the group.

The next Hirst Working Group meeting is scheduled for September.

Event Summary - Ashington Community Fair Sunday 7th July 2024

The Ashington Community Fair took place on Sunday 7th July 2024, bringing together local residents, businesses, and community organisations for a day of entertainment and engagement.

Event Overview

This year's fair showcased a diverse array of attractions and activities. Guerilla PA and Event Hire provided a stage, walkabout dinosaur, PA system, and musical entertainment. Richardson's Amusements contributed fairground rides, adding to the atmosphere. Local talent was on display with performances by Ashington Sea Cadets, Gladwins Ballet and Stage School and Control, Move and Fitness.

Community engagement was strong, with 26 market stalls representing various community groups and traders. The Ashington Women's Institute ran a popular tea tent, while other activities included craft sessions, face painting, a youth zone, football training, and storytelling.

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Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service were also in attendance, enhancing community-service relationships.

Highlights and Successes

Feedback from attendees and participants was overwhelmingly positive. Market stalls reported good sales, with Asda raising £200 for Children in Need by early afternoon. Performing bands expressed gratitude for the opportunity to showcase their talents. The event saw increased attendance compared to the previous year, likely due to the expanded range of free activities made possible through successful partnerships.

A notable highlight was Councillor Hemsley's appearance dressed as Pudsey, which was particularly popular with children. One young attendee even declared it "the best day of my life," encapsulating the event's success in creating a joyful community atmosphere.

Improvements and Challenges

This year's fair saw several improvements over the previous event. A new toilet provider helped prevent the theft issues experienced last year. The increased number of free activities, made possible through community partnerships, was well-received by attendees. Car parking was better with traders having a sectioned off space and more parking for visitors, and Koast Radio were located beside the stage and providing PA.

The main challenge faced was a bout of heavy rain around 2:30pm, which led to some early departures. However, this did not significantly impact the overall success of the event.

Conclusion

The Ashington Community Fair 2024 was a resounding success, offering diverse entertainment and activities for all ages. The event demonstrated improved attendance, successful collaborations with various organisations, and a strong sense of community spirit. Despite brief weather-related challenges, the fair provided a platform for local talents, supported charitable causes, and fostered community engagement.

This report underscores the value of such events in bringing together diverse elements of the community and highlights the positive outcomes that can be achieved through collaborative efforts and careful planning.

The **budget** for the event was £14k which we expect to be over by just under £150.

News Items (with links)

[Public Consultation: Portland Park Cinema Development](#)

[Ashington to the Future: Children at NCEA Schools Envision the Next Era of Their Hometown](#)

[Ashington Town Council Awards £66,000 in Annual Community Grants](#)

[Full Council and Finance & General Services Committee Meeting on 09/07/24](#)

[Ashington Commemorates Armed Forces Day 2024](#)

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[Leadership Continuity in Finance and General Services Committee](#)

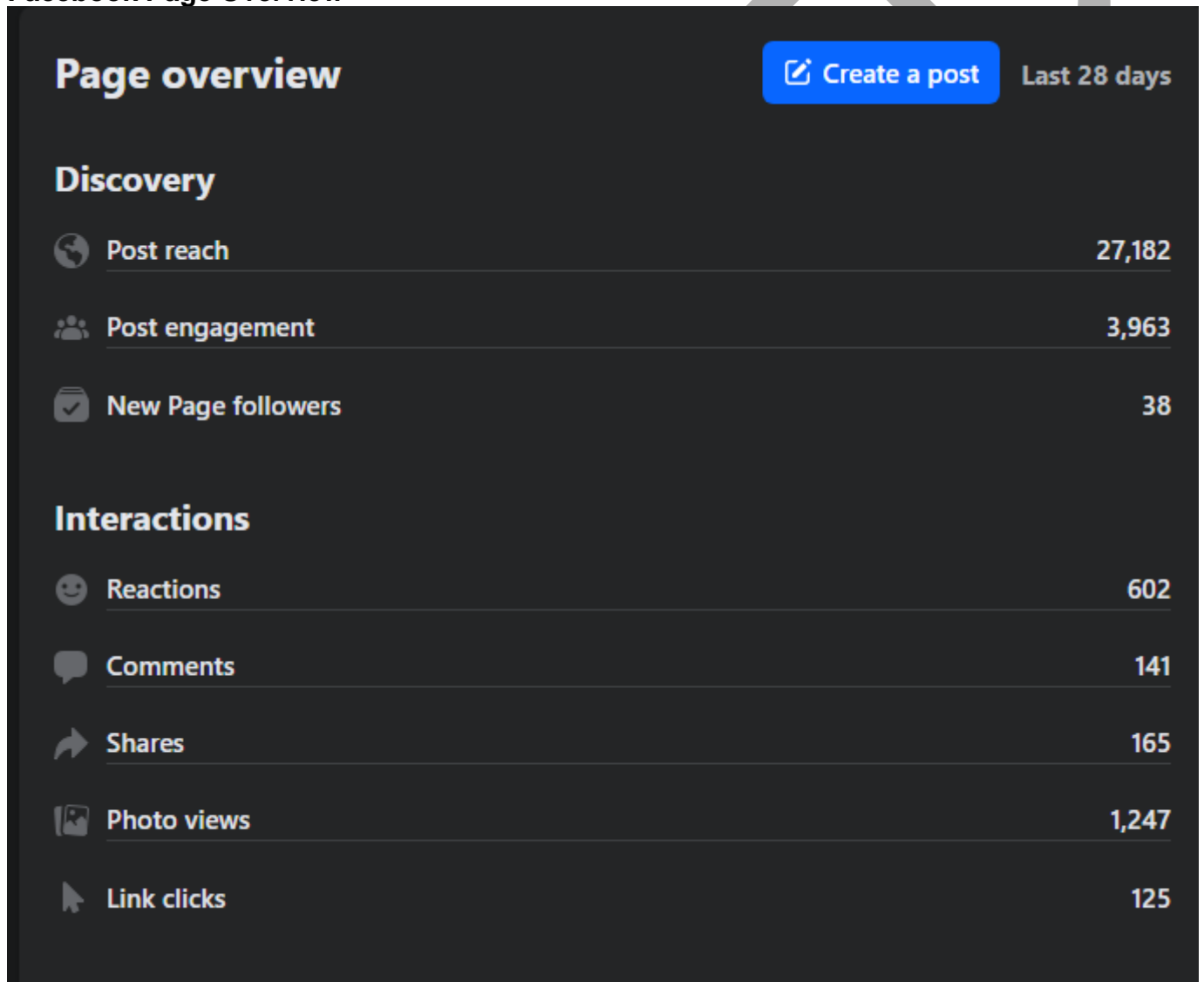
[Ashington Town Council Concludes Financial Year](#)

[Neighbourhood Services Officers, Mark and Ryan Beat the Heat: Swift Bin Reinstalls Keep Ashington Tidy](#)

[Ashington Community Fair Day Set for Sunday 7th July 2024: A Celebration of Local Talent and Family Fun](#)

['Good' news for NCEA Thomas Bewick School](#)

Facebook Page Overview



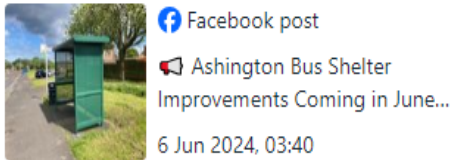
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Top Performing Posts

Top-performing organic posts

Here are posts that have performed well over the last 90 days. Understanding what's working can help you decide what to create and share next, so you can keep up the great work.

Highest reach on a post ⓘ



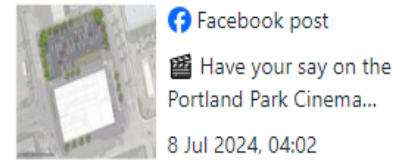
This post's reach (19,133) is **11,221%** higher than your median post reach (169) on Facebook.

Highest reactions on a post ⓘ



This post received **5,800%** more reactions (59 reactions) than your median post (1 reaction) on Facebook.

Highest comments on a post ⓘ



This post received 41 comments compared to your median post (0 comments) on Facebook.

FGS24/027 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2024/25

a) Updated Budget Report

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the updated budget report. There were no questions asked of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

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

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid and to be paid; accounts paid were **ENDORSED** and those to be paid since 11th June 2024 were **AGREED**

FGS24/028 NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC)

The invoice for 2024/25 subscriptions was **RECEIVED**, alongside AGM minutes that agreed increase and note on calculation.

Cllr John Tully gave an update:

The Council's relationship with NALC was discussed. It was noted that while the Council has no issues with its NALC membership and values the national NALC's contributions, concerns were raised about the performance of Northumberland NALC.

Difficulties in providing feedback were mentioned, as discussions often focussed on NALC's internal operations rather than matters pertaining to external councils. It was suggested that the Council should review its NALC membership annually.

Additionally, it was reported that NALC had agreed to establish a larger Council forum, which will allow for the discussion of local council issues within NALC meetings.

It was **AGREED** to insist that the Council receive the agenda and minutes of NALC meetings going forward. It was **AGREED** to pay the invoice and provide appropriate feedback.

FGS24/029 SMALL GRANT FUNDING – JULY 2024

a) 1ST Hirst Scout Group

The application from 1st Hirst Scout Group was **RECEIVED**.

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It was **AGREED** to **AWARD** 1st Hirst Scout Group £500.

b) Ashington Camera Club

The application from Ashington Camera Club was **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to **AWARD** Ashington Camera Club £500.

c) Northumberland Community Bank

The application from Northumberland Community Bank was **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** not to award funding.

d) Seaton Vale Neighbourhood Watch

The application from Seaton Vale Neighbourhood Watch was **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to **AWARD** Seaton Vale Neighbourhood Watch £500.

e) Friends of Ashington Community Woods

The application from Friends of Ashington Community Woods was **RECEIVED**.

It was **AGREED** to **AWARD** Friends of Ashington Community Woods £500.

FGS24/030 PARTNERSHIP MEETING

a) Report of Meeting, held on 18th June 2024

To receive and note the report, and address any questions to the EO or Board Members

b) Surplus Funds

It was **AGREED** to permit use of surplus funds of £12k-£13k for NCC to recruit a seasonal worker for 6 months, as recommended by the Partnership Board.

Concerns regarding the partnership program were discussed, particularly in relation to fly tipping and reduced frequency of high street cleaning.

It was noted that no formal complaints or reports about bin emptying have been received by the Council or raised at partnership meetings. Issues of overflowing bins in the Hirst area were mentioned. While concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the Fix My Street system, it was clarified that the public is actively using it, with reports being received daily.

The possibility of reviewing bin placement for efficiency was suggested, though it was reported that all current bins are being utilised. The Council may consider reassessing bin locations and quantities to optimise waste management in the area.

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c) Redirection of Partnership Team

It was **AGREED** to endorse redirected efforts of the Partnership team, carrying out additional enhancements when their primary tasks are completed, such as strimming, weed spraying, graffiti removal, and edging.

FGS24/031 CCTV MEETING

A report of the meeting held on 26th June 2024 was **RECEIVED**.

It was suggested that the Council should engage with various stakeholders, including the Police, major employers in the town, and the County Council, to explore funding options for the CCTV project in the future, and outside of the current 5-year contract.

Following the request for Safer Communities to attend future CCTV meetings, it was **AGREED** to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the project, that representatives are invited to attend a future meeting to provide further explanation and details.

FGS24/032 MINERS' MEMORIAL MEADOWS

The note of the meeting held on 17th June was **RECEIVED**.

At the meeting held on 17th June, it was noted that several trees require cutting back and the drainage in the area needs improvement. The following key objectives were agreed by the on-site meeting, and endorsed by the Council:

- ❖ Improve drainage on main pathway in the woodland.
- ❖ Restore the Miners Memorial Meadow and develop a structure to detail the history of the colliery site, reclamation works and the symbolism of the Miners' Meadow.
- ❖ Develop walking trails in the woods using QR technology.

It was AGREED:

1. To confirm the seed funding of £3,000 be allocated towards the revised aims as detailed above.
2. To allocate staff resources to lead project co-ordination, funding efforts (supporting groups where this would be appropriate), liaison with stakeholders, and overall project management.
3. To seek and receive quotations for the works to deliver the project, in consultation with NCC as landowner.
4. To lead and co-ordinate on the delivery of an information board to ensure accuracy in detailing the history of the site as part of the improvements to the Miners' Meadow area.
5. To receive a full breakdown of the costs of delivery as soon as available.

FGS2425/033 EMERGENCY ITEM – REQUEST FOR STREET NAMING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a request for street naming of a new housing development consisting of 25 new homes situated just off Norham Road, Ashington.

It was **PROPOSED** to suggest the following in keeping with St. Aidan - either St. Cuthbert (link to Holy Island) and/or St. Ebba (link to Beadnell). St. Ebba, St. Aidan, or St. Cuthbert be used as a street name as they are well known Saints with Northumberland.

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FGS24/034 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 10th September 2024, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

Meeting ended 19:05pm

AGREED