AGREED Minutes of the Finance and General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024

at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

#### COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Cllr Mark Purvis, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr John Tully, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert, Cllr Gemma Hemsley, Cllr Bob Walkinshaw, Cllr Paul Wright and Cllr Graeme Wright.

## **ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

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

### **FGS24/001 ELECTION OF CHAIR**

In accordance with Standing Orders, **it was AGREED** to receive nominations for Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Ashington Town.

It was AGREED to elect Cllr Lynne Grimshaw as Chair of the Finance and General Services Committee.

### **FGS24/002 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

In accordance with Standing Orders, it was AGREED to receive nominations for Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Ashington Town Council.

It was AGREED to elect Cllr Matthew Cuthbert as the Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Services Committee.

### FGS24/003 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Marjorie Chambers and Cllr Jim Lang.

# FGS24/004 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Gemma Hemsley disclosed an interest for FGS24/189 DEFIBRILLATORS in respect of The Baldy Butcher location.

Cllr Graeme Wright disclosed an interest for FGS24/170 ANNUAL GRANTS 2024/25 in respect of Northumberland Citizens Advice.

Cllr Paul Wright disclosed an interest for FGS24/170 ANNUAL GRANTS 2024/25 in respect of Koast Radio.

## **FGS24/005 DISPENSATIONS**

No dispensations were received.

### **FGS24/006 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present.

## **FGS24/007 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

It was AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

## **FGS24/008 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES**

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

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## Annual Report 2023/24

The report is available online, and we have hard copies that have been distributed to community hubs. We have kept some back so if there is somewhere that copies are not available, let us know.

## **Ashington Market**

Sarah updated the Markets Manager that as the market is a County Council responsibility our County Cllrs are going to suggest this is brought to the Local Area Council, adding that this was expected previously but wasn't placed so hopefully there will be some dialogue and address any concerns moving forward.

Markets manager responded seeking any further feedback on any other issues. Sarah responded to advise that Cllrs who witness 'issues' have been encouraged to share photographs. From a general perspective the issues being brought forward are appearance, encroaching, non-standard stalls, and what is being done to 'market' the market. When the animating Ashington is awarded, could there be some themed markets?

### Allotments (Capital Works)

Contractor has been contacted in relation to starting work on the site. No confirmed dates but looking to get the work carried out over the summer.

## Allotments (General)

We have written to Woodhorn Road allotment site contacts regarding new tenancies and agreements. We have dedicated three days in the Town Hall, and two weekends at the site to have agreements signed and database of plot holders and contacts details updated. This is expected to be an onerous task first time around. We are investing in a card machine to take payments to minimise cash handling and streamline the collection of rents.

We offered tenants the opportunity to come into the office to sign tenancies and pay rent across 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> June. We were pleased to welcome 21 different plot holders which gave a further opportunity to iron out any flaws in the system before we do the same from the hut on the last two weekends of June.

Our second Allotment week has seen some positive news, previously disused plots have been worked on to provide new plots for our ever-growing waiting lists! A lot of hard work has been carried out to return these plots into good order. Two plots at Hirst East End have new tenants and are raring to go!

Taps and tap boxes have also been replaced or repaired.

Improvements carried out at our Green Lane site, with the grass verge cut, cleared and litter picked. Litter picks conducted on several sites, with help from our partners at NCC to remove the rubbish.

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## North Seaton Colliery Allotment (the trot)

Sarah is periodically liaising with Advance Northumberland and their solicitors on the potential/draft easement over the trot. A draft has been presented to Advance Northumberland which was initially rejected by their solicitors as they take issue with the termination clause. The suggestion by them was that they re-write an easement agreement.

It was also suggested by them that they have prescriptive rights over the land and therefore have a right to continue to use the road without a formal agreement but agree that a formal agreement would be better. Sarah has initially indicated there would not be a problem with their solicitor drafting an easement agreement, as the primary objective is to reach a fair and reasonable agreement that addresses the needs of both sides. However, maintaining the position that prescriptive rights cannot be claimed over the land in question as the informal permission granted for the use of the road over several years undermines the "hostile" or "adverse" nature required for establishing prescriptive rights. Additionally, that a termination clause should be included.

Once we have an acceptable draft easement, this will be brought to Council. If we cannot agree on an acceptable draft easement the matter will be brought to Council.

## Ashington Memorial Garden

Officers met with members of the Regeneration Team, and Ryder Architects to look at how the memorial garden could be included in improvement works. The aim being to improve connectivity, public realm and to hopefully divert funding that would have been used to 'green' Station Road West to this more fitting use of funding. A proposed plan is on the agenda.

## **ATC Neighbourhood Services**

Four new bus shelters have been installed, along with shelters being repaired, repainted, and deep cleaned. We are also looking at seating in bus shelters. All new shelters are installed with adequate seating. We appreciate the decision to remove seating from several bus shelters around the town in an effort to deter anti-social behaviour and prevent groups from gathering in these public spaces. However, we must also consider the accessibility challenges this now creates for our elderly residents and those with limited mobility who rely on having a place to sit while waiting for the bus. Striking the right balance between ensuring public safety and accommodating vulnerable populations is an ongoing effort. We have been contacted where seats are missing and we are looking at the most feasible seating solutions, which will be brought back to Council.

## **Projects and Development**

# Ashington Cricket Club Commemorative Tree Project

Work is continuing on the project with all quotations received. The total cost of the project is £66,815, however, with support from local businesses and the offer of providing trees, by NCC, the total funding required to complete the project is £26,830.

The Assets & Development Manager has commenced working with the Chair of Ashington Cricket Club to attract this amount from external funding and donations. A letter of support has been requested from the Town Council.

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If funding is secured for the project a provisional date of Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2025 has been set for the unveiling event to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII.

# Ashington Community Woods - Improvement Project

As per the agreement of the Council, Stephen has met with interested parties to form a steering group, including participation from Friends of Ashington Community Woods, Ashington & Hirst Running Club, the Park Run Group, Groundwork NE & Cumbria and relevant County Council staff. Work will initially improve the Miners Meadow area as well as possibly supporting other improvement works where possible such as drainage issues and in promoting walks/runs etc.

### Skate Park Project

A site meeting is planned to take place in July with Shred the North. Shred the North have recently supported Blyth Town Council in the development of a significant Skate Park in the town.

## **Bird Boxes**

Mark and Ryan have made 100 ready to pack Bird Box kits, as well as improving the box front, creating ATC stamp for box, and improving the assembly instructions. All 60 of the woodland boxes are made and ready to be installed.

At the time of writing, we have written to 19 community groups. Schools will be contacted after the summer holidays. The boxes are packed up and ready to go, some having already been delivered.

Alligator Klub
Full Circle Food Eco Club
Ark Youth Club
Pride Action North
Escape Family Support
TEAM Residents Association
Mortal Fools - Creative Mondays
Teen Bar
Buzz Learning
Reiverdale Scouts

Ashington Girl Guiding Division
Talking Marras
Brightside
Being Woman
Veterans & Elders
Family Hub, Ashington Assemble
Get On Side, Hirst Welfare, YMCA and
Family Hub
Wellbeing Wednesdays
Ashington Library

Groups have been advised that we will do our best to accommodate as many requests as possible, prioritising groups that align with our goals of promoting inclusivity, nature appreciation, and environmental stewardship. Also, that the boxes will be provided by the Council free of charge, and there should be no cost to members to participate in the activity.

We have assured groups that although we may not be able to supply bird box kits immediately, we have a commitment from Cllrs for further funding so more will become available when they can be made. We expect to have the first one hundred boxes made up by the end of June, and we would like to get them out as have limited storage space. When space is available the next batch can be made.

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## **Events and Engagement**

## D Day Flag of Peace Raised

Councillors and members of the public were invited to attend Ashington Memorial Garden on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June for the raising of the special commemorative flag signifying the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day.

https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-05-30-ashington-honours-80th-anniversary-of-d-day-landings-with-commemorative-flag

#### Miners Picnic Memorial Service

This was held on Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The Memorial Service started at 10.30am, with picnic activities starting afterwards. The full time table for the day can be found on the ATC website at, Ashington Town Council Meetings List

### **Princes Trust**

Sharon met with a representative from the Prince's Trust recently. You can view all of the Prince's Trust services on their website here; <u>Confidence, courses, careers | The Prince's Trust (princes-trust.org.uk)</u> A representative from the Prince's Trust has been invited to the next Youth Services Gathering on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June.

## Whistle Art Stop

Sharon met with Alison from Whistle Art Stop recently. Alison is a local artist who has just recently relocated in Ashington from Haltwhistle. Alison has already been working with community groups in Ashington to deliver art workshops and is currently looking for premises to set up a new art studio. You can meet Alison in person at our Community Fair Day, where she will be delivering an art workshop throughout the day.

# News Items (with links)

Civic Head Attends Ashington Male Voice Choir Concert

Northumberland Miners' Picnic Returns with Nostalgic Flair on 8th June

Ashington Gears Up for The Great Big Green Week

Ashington Town Council Publishes 2023/24 Annual Report

New Civic Head and Deputy for Ashington Town Council

Ashington Town Council Welcomes Newly Co-opted Councillor Gemma Hemsley

Ashington Honours 80th Anniversary of D-Day Landings with Commemorative Flag

Ashington Town Council Opens Second Round of £500 Small Grants for 2024/25

Temporary Traffic Disruption for Ashington Community Fair

**Bus Shelter Improvements** 

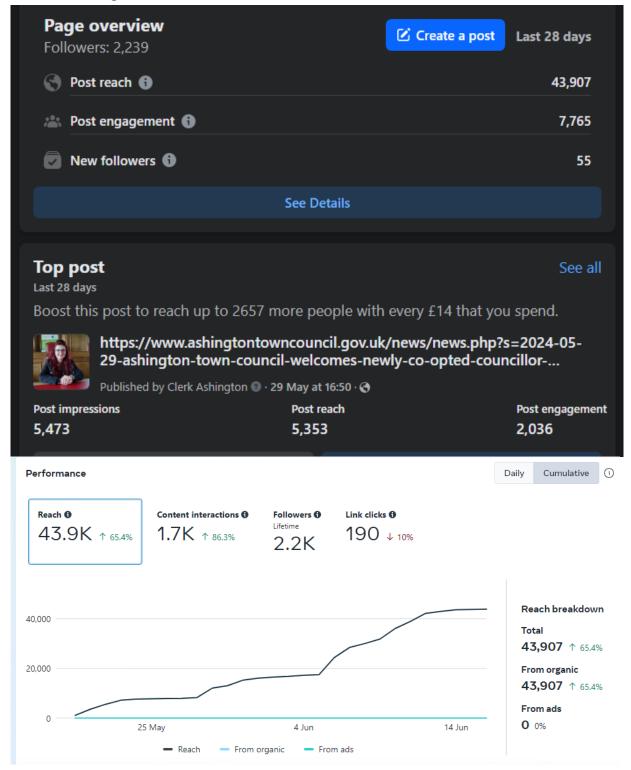
TOWN COUNCIL SUPPORTS TALKING MARRAS

Reviving Traditions: Northumberland Miners' Picnic 2024 Shines Bright

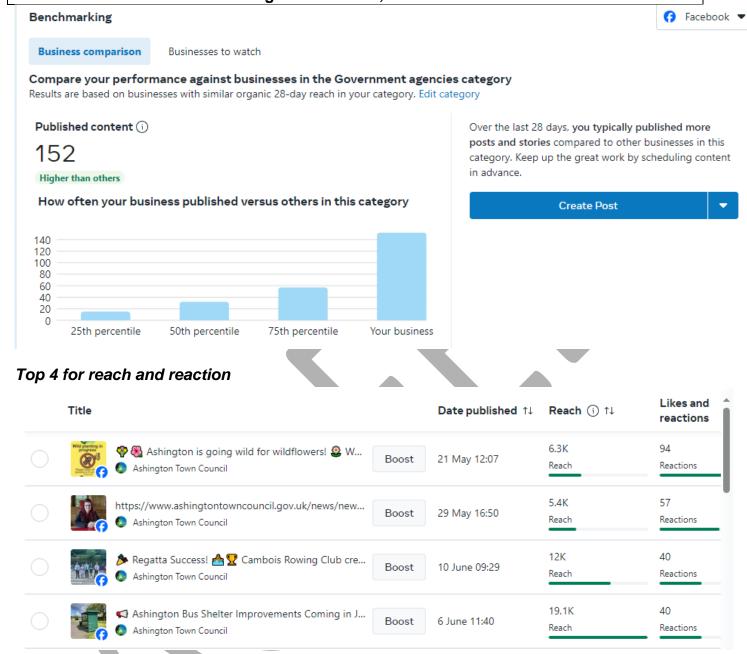
Great Big Green Week a Sustainable Success at Ashington Tuesday Market

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# Facebook Page Overview



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## FGS24/009 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2024/25

### a) Updated Budget Report

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the updated budget report. No questions were put forward to the Responsible Financial Officer.

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

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** the schedule of accounts paid and to be paid; the accounts paid were endorsed and it was **AGREED** to those paid since 6<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

#### **FGS24/010 ANNUAL GRANTS 2024/25**

A summary of the Annual Grant Aid applications between 13<sup>th</sup> March – 10<sup>th</sup> May was **RECEIVED**, alongside the proposed awards.

The awards as proposed were AGREED.

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It was AGREED to AWARD Northumberland Citizen's Advice £10,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Wansbeck Valley Foodbank £15,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Full Circle Food Project £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Cambois Rowing Club £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Hirst Welfare Centre £5,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Koast Radio £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Mortal Fools £2,000 for Monday night work with YMCA.

It was AGREED to AWARD YMCA Northumberland £2,000 for Monday night work with Mortal Fools.

It was AGREED to AWARD Narrow-gauge Railway £1,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Escape Family Support £3,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Northumberland County of Sanctuary £3,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Joint Welfare Rugby Football Club £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Sea Cadets £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Football Club £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Northumberland Wildlife Trust £1,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Pride Action North £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Hirst Running Club £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Cricket Club £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD Ashington Male Voice Choir £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD ARK Youth Club £2,000

It was AGREED to AWARD NCC Sports Facilities £2,000

Cllr John Tully also proposed that the Executive Officer liaise with him as Leader to convey the response to those groups who applied for Grant Aid and were unsuccessful, including providing appropriate feedback and arranging to meet with groups if appropriate. **It was AGREED.** 

Cllr John Tully proposed that the Executive Officer verify that those successful in achieving funding towards projects, where the Council have not agreed the full sum, have secured the full project funding required, prior to our award being paid over. Cllr Tully emphasised that this would safeguard the appropriate use of grant funds, ensuring that they are used for the intended purpose as outlined in the application and agreed by the Council. **It was AGREED.** 

In response to Cllr Lynne Grimshaw's question as to why NCC Sports Facilities was being awarded more than their requested amount, it was confirmed that some groups were being awarded the same amount. It was confirmed that this was intentional and not a typing error as previously thought. Cllr Lynne Grimshaw asked the minute to reflect her objection to this process of agreeing equal amounts regardless of the project or request.

## FGS24/011 EVENTS

Further event proposals for Summer 2024 were **RECEIVED**.

## a) Family Fun Day in Partnership with NCC Get Onside

**It was AGREED** to work in partnership with NCC Get Onside team to deliver a family fun day at Hirst Welfare Centre, on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August including a walking football tournament, family attractions, and community groups.

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Cllr Caroline Ball raised a question about funding towards this event that would be funded via other sources. Sarah Eden confirmed that the Council was funding via the direct payment of invoices in support of the event, this included first aid, hire costs, and publicity.

It was AGREED to allocate £2,000 from the Events, Community, and Engagement budget, and to delegate spending to the Communications and Engagement Officer.

## b) Pride Picnic in the Park

**It was AGREED** to work in partnership with Pride Action North to deliver a Pride Picnic in Hirst Park, on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September, with stalls and attractions that raise awareness, offer support, and promote inclusivity, to include refreshments.

It was AGREED to allocate £3,000 from the Events, Community and Engagement budget, and to delegate spending to the Communications and Engagement Officer.

#### FGS24/012 HIRST EAST END ALLOTMENT SITE

## a) Former Hirst East End Allotment Association Outbuilding, and Plot Shed

Following the deferment of the item from the previous meeting, the Executive Officer confirmed that an asbestos report had been completed, and no asbestos was present, but that the safety of the roof was still uncertain. As a result, a revised quotation has been sought from the contractor able to carry out demolition, asbestos removal and clearance.

Cllr Glyn Davis commented that whilst it may have taken a little longer to get to the position of a satisfactory quotation to complete everything, safety was the most important factor, and the Council did the right thing.

Cllr Paul Wright questioned only having one quotation. The Executive Officer confirmed that at the previous meeting, prior to deferment the Council had sight of three separate quotations but only two contractors could deal with both clearance and demolition, and asbestos. The contractor able to carry out both, and least expensive was asked to requote, but to include removing items from the outbuilding, in view of safety concerns.

## b) Removal and Disposal

It was AGREED to receive the single quotation for demolition, removal, and disposal of the fire-damaged outbuilding (and all contents) formally owned by the Hirst East Ed Allotment Association, at a cost of £2,988 plus £580 from WL Straughan and Sons. The Executive Officer noted that the price had increased only by £580 for the removal of contents from the outbuilding. The works specification is detailed as:

Supply 360 Excavator and Dumper with operatives, 2nr 20-yard roll-on/roll-off Skips (Clean Hardcore Waste Debris).

To strip roof and dispose separately from concrete rubble.

To demolish the building down to ground level, using 360 Excavator.

To transport all debris (using Dumper) into the appropriate skip located on Ashfield Mews due to poor access into allotment site.

To 'Peck' the existing concrete base back, and supply and lay concrete to form a transition ramp.

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It was AGREED to receive the single quotation for removal, and disposal of the fire-damaged shed on allotment plot at a cost of £8,378 from WL Straughan and Sons. The works specification is detailed as:

To supply 3-man team, each supplied with suitable ppe for asbestos, including jsp full face mask- force 10, class p3 heavy-duty protective filters for full face mask, cat 3 type 5/6 microporous asbestos coveralls, cat 3 over boots and nitrile gloves.

To supply 360 excavator and dumper with operatives.

To supply 2nr 20-yard roll-on/roll off skips (mixed waste debris).

To supply 1nr 12-yard enclosed asbestos skip (asbestos only).

To strip 1nr plot clear of all fire damaged debris, and to separate and double bag asbestos waste (red & clear bags).

To transport all debris (using dumper) into the appropriate skip which will be located on Ashfield Mews due to poor access into allotment site.

To stack neatly to one side, salvageable material (paving, bricks etc).

The quotations were received, and **it was AGREED** to place an order for the work with £11,946 moved from the contingency budget in view that this was as a result of vandalism and not planned works.

#### **FGS24/013 CCTV MEETING**

## a) Report of Meeting

It was AGREED to receive a report of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

It was noted that it was the first meeting with another scheduled for the following day, and it was expected that the information provided would be more detailed as the contract progresses.

## b) Members

It was AGREED that those members to be included in future quarterly monitoring and evaluation meetings with Asset Watch and Police would be Cllr John Tully, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw and Cllr Caroline Ball.

#### FGS24/014 CIVIC REGALIA

**It was AGREED** to receive quotations to add additional links to the Civic Head Regalia, and to complete engraving dating back to 2018.

Quote A - £3,039.80

Quote B - £3,436.67

Quote C - £2,300.00

It was AGREED to place an order for the work to be completed locally by Northern Jewelers (Quote C) at a cost of £2,300.

## **FGS24/015 ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS**

**It was AGREED** to receive a proposal from Hirst Ward Cllrs for works to the entrance of Ashington Association FC, off Woodhorn Lane, to be funded from their Environmental Enhancement budget for the following work (*noting that future maintenance is not included, and will be carried out by NCC):* 

- Cut back existing vegetation on site.
- Address low lying utility hole entrances to utilities.
- Level area adjoining path to access road to Ashington Football club and aesthetically place existing boulders and grass seed area (this will enable NCC grass cutting machinery to access and maintain this area).

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- Level 2m stretch on adjoining path from electric substation to junction of road to Wansbeck General Hospital, approximately 200m (this will enable NCC grass cutting machinery to access and maintain this area).
- ➤ Level of rest of site (consider wildflower planting for 2025).
- > Trim and tidy several existing trees on the site.

### It was AGREED to two separate quotes:

Quotation A - £8,269.80 Quotation B - £ 8,310.00

It was AGREED on the recommendation of the Assets and Development Manager to place an order for the work to be carried out by **Brambledown (Quote A) at a cost of £8,269.80.** 

Hirst Cllrs expressed thanks for the Town Council support. The Executive Officer clarified that while the Council is commissioning the capital works, ongoing maintenance will not be the Town Council's responsibility as the land is owned by Northumberland County Council, but that with maintenance the area could be considered for wildflower planting in the 2025.

### **FGS24/016 ASHINGTON MEMORIAL GARDEN**

The draft sketch was **RECEIVED** of an emerging proposal for a new access and footway to create public realm links between the newly developed Wansbeck Square and Ashington Memorial Garden area, with a view to NCC Regeneration Team seeking agreement from North East Combined Authority to direct funds towards this area, as opposed to the greening of Station Road west.

The designs were debated with concerns expressed about potential increases in foot traffic and anti-social behaviour if the garden were opened, conflicting with its purpose as a space for quiet remembrance. Counterarguments suggested that the garden should be inclusive for all Ashington residents, noting its current low usage. The possibility of including gates on the Wansbeck Square entrance to mitigate the likelihood of bikes and scooters racing through.

A vote was taken in support of the scheme, with 8 in favour and 3 against. It was suggested the inclusion of gates should be broached but that this was not a deal-breaker.

Cllr Caroline Ball asked that the record reflect her opposition to the scheme, and that she voted against the proposal, for the reasons given, that the garden would be opened up to anti-social behaviour and misuse.

It was AGREED to respond to NCC Regeneration that the Town Council supports the scheme and would like to explore funding opportunities as part of the redevelopment, and to ask if the architects could consider gates on the redeveloped Wansbeck Square side of the garden.

### **FGS24/017 DEFIBRILLATOR**

#### a) Central Ward

A request was **RECEIVED** from County Cllr Caroline Ball to take ownership of, install and upkeep an additional defibrillator, to be located on the outside wall of The Baldy Butcher, Hawthorn Road, that she will fund via NCC Member's Local Improvement Scheme (MLIS), with

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the store proprietor as guardian. Its is noted that maintenance costs are negligible, and the defibrillator will become a Town Council asset.

### It was AGREED.

## b) Ashington Hirst Running Club

A request was **RECEIVED** from the running club for a defibrillator in the vicinity of the woods, and/or business park for use during runs in woods, and training sessions in the business park.

The Executive Officer noted that previously the police station was not in favour of a defibrillator on their building due to the guardianship, but they would likely be amenable if Ashington Hirst Running Club were the guardians and carried out necessary checks. In respect of the business park, the club had suggested Polar Krush.

Members raised concerns about the suggested locations in view that the running club run all over the town. A near-by public access defibrillator was also available at McDonalds near the business park. It was posed whether a portable defibrillator would be more appropriate.

The Executive Officer confirmed that the suggestions for locations came from the running club, and a portable defibrillator would not be deemed public access. It was posed that perhaps their training runs are in the vicinity of Polar Krush, and they have connections with police station.

The Executive Officer also noted that there is currently no allocated budget for additional defibrillators, and funding would need to come from either a County Councillor's MLIS or Ward Clirs Environmental Improvement budget.

Cllr Lynne Grimshaw confirmed that Bothal ward Cllrs were in agreement with their budget being used to purchase a public access defibrillator at a cost of £1,235.

Cllr Paul Wright suggested the Council should write to businesses in Wansbeck Business Park to seek their support, including any potential financial support. The Executive Officer confirmed that the Council had not sought financial support from businesses or groups previously which could be perceived as inconsistent.

It was AGREED to liaise with the running club taking into account suggestions, and to write to businesses at Wansbeck Business Park seeking support as guardians and for financial contribution.

### FGS24/018 PLANTERS ON ELEVENTH ROW

It was AGREED, following a proposal from Bothal Ward Cllrs to replace the steel planters on Eleventh Row with Octagonal 'self-watering' Planters which will reduce the watering required by ATC NSO's during the warmer months due to having reservoir. It was AGREED to order two planters from Amberol at a cost of £389 per planter with additional, but yet unknown associated removal and installation costs. It was noted that this would but be undertaken until the end of the season for planting.

## FGS24/019 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 9th July 2024, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

Meeting ended 19:05pm