

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 6:00pm
on Tuesday 30th January 2024
at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllr Mark Purvis (Chair), Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Pauline Thompson, Cllr John Tully, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Sophie Robinson, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Cllr Victor Bridges, Eleanor Armstrong, and Cllr Matthew Cuthbert

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO, Alan Bunker – Allotment Officer, Stephen Humphrey - Assets and development Manager, Sharon Parmley – Communications and Engagement Officer and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant.

FC23/074 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by Cllr Mark Purvis.

FC23/075 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Vicky Brown.

FC23/076 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw and Cllr Jim Lang disclosed an interest in **FC23/087 PLANNING APPLICATION**

Members are also reminded that they need to regularly review their declarations of interest forms and ensure they remain up to date.

FC23/077 DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations.

FC23/078 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one member of public present.

FC23/079 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 28th November 2023.

FC23/080 REPORT FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a report from Inspector Wayne Daniels.

Inspector Daniels informed the Council that he had been away from Ashington for 6 months, during which time the neighbourhood policing team was understaffed. He expressed being pleased that new officers have joined the team since his return.

The data provided covered overall incidents for the Ashington area, including Newbiggin. There were 20,570 incidents recorded throughout 2023. The month of June 2023 alone saw 1,390 incidents, which was 255 more than the previous month. July 2023 had 1,550 incidents.

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Inspector Daniels stated his desire to place greater emphasis on rehabilitation and health initiatives. Many offenders go on to reoffend upon release due to underlying substance abuse issues. Addressing these root causes is a priority.

Officer Alan Bunker left the meeting at 18:25

FC23/081 REPORT FROM THE CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON (CLLR VICTOR BRIDGES)
It was AGREED to RECEIVE a report from the Civic Head of Ashington, which was sent out in advance of the meeting.

Over the past eight months from May 2023 to December 2023, I had the privilege of attending 43 civic engagements in my capacity as civic head.

These events allowed me to support and highlight a diverse range of charitable organisations and community initiatives. From charity concerts raising funds and awareness, to grant cheque presentations for a whole host of project and initiatives to benefit the community. Each engagement offered impactful opportunities to connect with community members and learn about meaningful causes.

I am grateful to have been welcomed into spaces that demonstrate the spirit of generosity that runs through our town. As 2023 ends, I look back with appreciation of the people I have met, and the inspiring work being done to make lives better.

Engagements attended since my last report include;

- ❖ Thursday 30th November – Ashington Christmas Light Switch-On
A successful event for ATC with hundreds turning out to see the lights switched on by Daniel James and join in the festive fun at the YMCA.
- ❖ Friday 1st December – Mortal Fools Youth Theatre
A showcase of Ashington groups work. A well-attended night which was also available to watch online.
- ❖ Wednesday 6th December – Blossoming Communities Small Grant Fund cheque presentation.

The contribution aims to cover the costs of arts and crafts materials for the weekly wellbeing workshops held at Hirst Pavilion. There were eight members of the group present at the session as well as Sharon who facilitates the crafts, today they were making pictures and cards with buttons.

- ❖ Saturday 16th December – Ashington Christmas Trail certificate presentations
An enjoyable morning spent at Ashington Library handing out certificates and selection boxes to all the children who took part in the Christmas Trail.

- ❖ Monday 18th December – Christmas Window Display Competition Winner Presentation
Heather and Jasmine of Mind Body & Spirit were delighted to win the window display competition. There were 13 shops took part this year, an additional ten shops compared to last year!

- ❖ Tuesday 19th December – Readley Charity Christmas Afternoon Tea Event
On the 19 December, Councillor Victor Bridges, attended a fundraising and awareness event for the Readley Charity, at the Grand Hotel in Sunderland. The Readley Charity was launched, in 2015, by Samantha Cox in memory of her father Paul Readhead. The Charity provides practical

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support to those who have suffered from Asbestos, particularly through Mesothelioma. During her father's illness Sam gained a personal experience of mesothelioma that highlighted the need for a holistic approach, encompassing emotional, physical, social and financial wellbeing in tackling the disease and its effects. The Charity works closely with Mesothelioma UK in supporting those suffering from the effects of asbestos and Mesothelioma. Support includes home visits, signposting and monthly support meetings (both on-line and face to face across the NE). A number Civic of dignitaries from across the North East attended the event including representatives from Blyth, North Tyneside, Sunderland and County Durham. An article was developed for the Town Council website promoting the work of the charity.

❖ Wednesday 3rd January – Ashington Veterans & Elders Volunteer Celebration Night
A thoroughly enjoyable evening hosted by the Ashington and Veterans Elders Institute, which was supported by Asda. The evening was arranged as a thank you to all the volunteers and funders who have worked tirelessly all year for the community.

Please take the time to have a look through the newly formatted Civic Head News page that Sharon and Gary have worked to improve and make more reader-friendly and engaging.
<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/civic-head.php?cat=civic-head>

FC23/082 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (CLLR JOHN TULLY)

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a verbal report from the Leader of the Town Council.

Cllr John Tully provided an update on the recent meeting with the Southeast Northumberland Forum, which is a gathering of local councils in the area. It was reported to be a very productive meeting with good discussion on various topics.

The ability to share problems and solutions amongst the member councils was highlighted as a valuable strategy utilised during these forum meetings.

The forum meetings provide an opportunity for councils to collectively discuss issues affecting the region and explore potential solutions through collaboration. Council members are encouraged to share any other notable points from the Southeast Northumberland Forum gathering.

FC23/083 LEAVE OF ABSENCE DUE TO HEALTH

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a leave of absence request from Cllr Vicki Brown and agree in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to agree a dispensation that constitutes approval by the authority to accept non-attendance outside of the expected 6-month period for reason of ill health and recovery.

FC23/084 FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the updated document and to note new/altered risks included by the Executive Officer.

Updates included an extra tick-box on cashbook to ensure purchased assets are added to the Assets Register, and that high value assets are revalued, if appropriate. Also with respect to reserves 'Inadequate reserves and safeguarding reserves for intended purposes' this was

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increased as a risk with the pressure to reduce the reserves in order to keep the precept increase down.

With respect to Health, Safety and Legal the Executive Officer noted swift action in regards adopting Health & Safety Policies for all activities of the Council, including those within the role of NSO's, which include Safe Working Practices and an Asbestos Management Plan. This extended to welfare as included on the plan.

The Executive Officer advised members to pay particular attention to the risks associated with directly managing allotments which were also included on the plan.

FC23/085 BUDGET AND ANNUAL PRECEPT 2024/25

a) Budget 2024/25

It was AGREED to RECEIVE a draft budget, consider the Council's expenditure, commitments, and plans for 2024/25 and formally approve the budget for 2024/25, as detailed below:

MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT	BUDGET
Employment Costs	£292,931
Office Rental	£6,500
Meeting Hire	£800
ATC Vehicle Costs	£6,000
Storage Unit (Green Lane)	£5,000
Tools & Equipment	£5,000
Office, Stationery & Sundries	£5,000
Telecoms & IT	£7,000
Professional Expenses	£1,500
Publicity & Comms	£1,500
Audit Fee	£2,750
Insurance	£7,500
Subscriptions	£6,000
Expenses (Phone, Mileage, Clothing)	£3,000
Civic Head Expenses	£500
Staff Training	£2,500
Member Training	£1,000
RECREATION & LEISURE SERVICES	BUDGET
Events, Community & Engagement	£40,000
Play Areas (Capital)	£0
Play Areas (General)	£7,000
Christmas Lights Displays	£27,500
Allotments (Capital)	£16,600
Allotments (General)	£6,745

AGENDA 6, Enc ii)

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ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	BUDGET
ATC Neighbourhood Partnership Agreement	£238,000
Environmental Contracts	£26,000
Environmental Enhancements	£24,000
Defibrillators	£600
Climate Change Projects & Initiatives	£15,000
Bus Shelters (Capital)	£24,530
Bus Shelters (General)	£4,000
Seats	£1,000
Litter Bins	£8,000
Memorials	£1,000
GRANTS & FUNDING	BUDGET
Annual Grants	£70,000
Small Grant Funding	£10,000
Detached Youth	£20,000
Youth Funding	£0
OTHER SERVICES	BUDGET
Election Expenses (Casual Vacancies)	£8,500
CCTV Provision (Town Centre)	£35,465
CCTV Provision (Play/Other)	£10,712
Interactive Cameras	£500
total	£949,633

b) General Reserves and Contingency

It was AGREED to RECEIVE and AGREE the provision towards 'General Reserves and Contingency' for 2024/25, at **£175,000**.

c) Earmarked Reserves

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the Asset Management Budget and agree the provision to earmarked reserves in 2024/25 to accumulate funds towards longer term asset management and replacement at **£65,000**.

d) 2024/25 Precept Demand

It was AGREED the 2024/25 Precept Demand to be submitted to Northumberland County Council, would be **£899,950**. Based on the current financial position, the resulting Band D (equivalent) would equal £113, an annual increase of £6 on the 2023/24 (5%).

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	2023/24	2024/25
Management and Support	£324,078	£354,481
Recreation & Leisure Services	£208,180	£95,100
Environmental Services	£369,927	£34,130
Grants & Subsidies	£120,000	£10,000
Other Services	£30,900	£55,177
Total Cost (Net)	£1,053,085	£946,888
Less Balances and Grants	-£216,224	-£46,938
Precept	£836,861	£899,950
Earmarked Reserves	£93,000	£65,000
General Reserves & Contingency	£174,900	£175,000

FC23/086 ASHINGTON REGENERATION

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** an update following the Council’s request for information relating to Ashington Town Centre Regeneration Project, sent out with the agenda papers.

Cllr Caroline Ball and Cllr Jim Lang left the meeting at 18:55.

FC23/087 PLANNING APPLICATION

[23/04733/FUL | Full planning application for development of three college blocks including external workshops, energy centre and PV canopies, as well as associated hardstanding, parking and landscape works, including creation of MUGA and football pitch | Site E Wansbeck Business Park Ashington Northumberland NE63 8QW](#)

It was **AGREED to SUPPORT** the above planning application and to seek that the development retains as many trees as possible.

FC23/088 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 26th March 2024, 6pm, Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX. This will include the agreement of the 2024/25 budget and precept.

The meeting ended at 19:02pm