

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 14th January 2025

EV Van

We have managed to hire a van from NCC following significant delay with our insurers, partly down to the Christmas period. Liaison is ongoing for a settlement from the insurers and the finance company.

There were some tools and equipment inside the van but a claim for these would be separate, if supported, with a value of just over £500 an excess of £250 this is not worthwhile.

Enquiries were made about the damage to property. We have now been advised that any claim would need to be made via the individuals own insurance, and then a claim made against the Council by them. I will bring a separate confidential report to the next meeting about this, as the update was only received today.

Regeneration Updates

You have been invited to online meetings on 27th January and 17th February. Please check emails.

Allotments (General)

Our first glass recycling day is planned for January 27th at Nursery Park with assistance from NCC.

After the success of our first plastic recycling day at North Seaton we are rolling this out at Seaton Hirst along with a second day at North Seaton. We recycled over 400kg of plastic at North Seaton on our first collection. Several frames have already been identified at both sites. 17th February has been allocated for both sites.

Road repairs will be conducted at North Seaton later in the month. Road planings have been ordered and the work will be conducted by in-house, by Alan, Mark, and Ryan.

North Seaton Colliery rents for 2025 were issued from 1st January 2025 – 60% have now paid. One reminder will be issued - all tenants have been advised that non-payment within 40 days results in termination of tenancy. Some tenants have vacated and two new tenants have been signed up, the remaining vacant plots will be rented out ASAP.

Following recent on-the-job training, Alan has repaired several taps across the sites after the latest cold snap. An issue has been identified with the fixings, which will be swapped out when time allows. Repairs at Woodhorn, North Seaton and High Market will be carried out over the next couple of days.

We are developing new and improved signage for those sites we manage.

There was a fire at HEE Allotments on 12th January. This was confined to an allotment plot with significant buildings. Luckily, there was no livestock, but this is another upsetting incident for the allotment holder, and the site. The plot has been made safe by our officers, and repairs have been made to those fences damaged during access by the fire service.

The police, Asset Watch and our Allotment Officer have spent significant time reviewing CCTV footage on the day of the fire. We await updates from Northumbria Police.

We are aware that individuals may wish to make assertions about wrongdoing. While the incident has understandably raised concerns, the importance of maintaining professionalism and ensuring that the Council is not drawn into gossip or allegations of wrongdoing must be emphasised. Speculation will likely continue for some time, and it is crucial that the Council remains impartial and refrains from engaging in or endorsing any such discussions. The opposite puts the Council at risk of reputational harm, potential legal implications arising from accusations made without evidence, and undermining of public trust.

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 14th January 2025

With regards to the plot, it has been made safe. A full assessment of the damage and options will be reported in due course.

ATC Neighbourhood Services

We have had a very productive session on how we want to see Neighbourhood Services delivered and Managing Assets going forward.

- Focusing on self-sufficiency and doing things in-house where this is the most efficient way of doing things.
- Specific outcomes and clear goals.
- Routine inspections.
- Continuous improvement.
- Improved technology and training.
- Recognising effort and achievement.

Slides are available if members would be interested in the approach and further information.

Play Areas

New signage is being developed for the play areas we manage.

NCC and Bernicia are engaging on Bywell Road Play Area. This is with a view to a survey to establish whether residents value the play area. Following any result, we would only seek to take on the lease for this play area if it were brought up to an appropriate standard.

There could be an opportunity for Suez Funding for North Seaton Colliery Play Area, which is the next identified as requiring update. With this in mind we will bring a preferred supplier tender to Council asap, with the expectation that the Council and the chosen supplier will consult in the local community.

Litter Bins

In the next financial year, the focus will be on replacing those high street/ public realm litter bins with grey, and also looking at capacity where this needs to be increased.

Christmas Lighting

Lights have been removed and will be tested in the next couple of weeks. The February FGS will receive the tender for a preferred supplier.

Bus Shelter Cleansing

Gary is mapping all shelters using what3words///, and Arriva specific name. This is with a view to moving towards asset mapping and a mobile system. The EO is looking at outsourcing costs for the routine quarterly cleansing of shelters.

Projects

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

Trees are being delivered on 11th February, with planting scheduled for Saturday 15th February.

Ashington Community Woods

We are waiting for a project spec from Groundwork, this has been requested for the January Full Council meeting. The intention is that the project will be outlined, with a fees schedule to consult on it and get the project bid-ready for Heritage Lottery Funding.

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 14th January 2025

Events and Engagement

Operation Impact Day Wednesday 18th December 2024

Northumbria Police conducted Operation Impact in Ashington, with several key outcomes:

1. Drug-related arrests:
 - An 18-year-old man and 17-year-old female were arrested on suspicion of Class A drug supply
 - Both were released on police bail
2. Vehicle and traffic enforcement:
 - Two motorcycles were seized in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea using drone assistance
 - Over 50 speeding offenses were detected
 - 20 vehicles were inspected with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency
3. Additional enforcement:
 - Three property warrants were executed on Rosalind Street, Sycamore Street, and Woodhorn Villas
 - A 38-year-old man was arrested and charged with shoplifting

The operation focused on tackling anti-social behaviour, retail crime, and drug-related offenses through partnership working between police and local agencies. Inspector Wayne Daniels emphasised their commitment to addressing community concerns and providing outstanding service.

<https://www.northumbria.police.uk/news/northumbria/news/northumberland/operation-impact-rolls-into-northumberland/>

As part of the initiative, Ashington Town Council coordinated a comprehensive cleanup of the Hirst Area. Town Council staff collaborated with Ashington Community Litter Pickers and Councillors Ball, Chambers, and Hemsley to conduct litter collection throughout the colliery rows and adjacent areas. Northumberland County Council provided support by deploying their sweeper service and collecting the accumulated waste.

In conjunction with the cleanup operation, Hirst Master Plan Officers Neil Quinn and Gary McGuire conducted an estate inspection with Hirst Ward Councillors, focusing on the area between Percy Street and Alexandra Road. The walkabout, supported by NCC cleansing and enforcement teams, aimed to identify empty properties and unkempt gardens, with the broader objective of developing improvement strategies for the Hirst area. Following evaluation of this pilot initiative, there are plans to extend this approach to other sections of the Hirst in the coming year.

The day's activities concluded with a social gathering at the Hirst Welfare, where the Town Council provided refreshments for all participants.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-12-20-successful-day-of-action-in-the-hirst-area>

Walk The Plank Event Updates

Light Nights 29th and 30th January – On 29th January, the Spark Drummers will march on Station Road and 8th Row. There will also be a photo opportunity on the newly opened rail station platform.

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 14th January 2025

ATC are to fund a drumming workshop as part of the Finale at the Hirst Welfare, currently waiting for workshop briefing and further details for the event.

Shop Front Wraps – work is under way to contact landlords of properties in town centre for the shop window artworks and a call out for artists to hold design workshops has also gone out.

Toy Parade – link to video of toy parade at the Christmas Light Switch On;
<https://vimeo.com/1040042366/1e33d03295?share=copy>

Torch Lit Procession and Feast of Fire – Invitations going out soon for nominations for community heroes to carry touches in the torch lit processions which will culminate at a fire garden in Hirst Park.

More update to follow soon on other events planned to include One Amazing Day on the one way section of Station Road Day and a Parade on Fair.

Youth Services Gathering Wednesday 8th January 2025

YMCA Northumberland Activities: Currently offering five weekly youth programs, including Creative Mondays, Young Changemakers, Young Pioneers, Girls Only sessions, and Youth Cafe, serving different age groups between 10-18+ years. Rob Cox noted these programs depend on securing future funding in the coming year. The YMCA also has office space available for rent.

Community Safety: The Ashington Community Policing Team reported increased anti-social behaviour during Christmas, including an incident involving 30 young people at Asda car park. A dispersal order has been implemented, and new projects are planned to address issues around Station Road pubs and clubs. Town centre CCTV continues to be effective in identifying offenders.

Community Services:

Central Northumberland Family Hub continues successful after-school club for ages 5-8, and are now referring older children to YMCA

Ashington Town Council announced several upcoming events including swimming sessions, a drumming workshop for Light Night Finale (January 30th), an ECO Fair (April 25th), and shared Walk the Plank's Local Heroes Torch Lit Procession (March 21st-22nd). Small grants up to £500 are available, with applications closing 31st January 2025

Northumberland Communities Together are organising Health and Wellbeing Roadshows at Northumberland College and Kirkley Hall, with additional events planned at Dukes Academy and Ashington Academy

Sports Development:

Work on the Play Zone begins January 20th, 2025, with discussions ongoing about booking arrangements, including potential free access days for young people. Ability to Play sessions are reported to be successful, with new activities in development.

The next meeting will focus on identifying gaps in youth services, and annual meeting dates will be distributed soon.