

AGENDA 10, Enc x) DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 17th September 2024, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

Members Present:

Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr John Tully, Peter Bowman – Area Manager Neighbourhood Services, and Robin Wallace – NCC Senior Team Leader Neighbourhood Services

Also, in Attendance:

Sarah Eden – ATC Executive Officer/RFO, Gary Holmes – ATC Administration Assistant

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Following the item being deferred at the last meeting, to agree to appoint a Chair.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers was proposed and seconded. It was **AGREED** that Cllr Marjorie Chambers would become chair of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Board.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Stephen Wardle – NCC Divisional Manager Neighbourhood Services, and Richard Halliday – NCC Team Leader, Neighbourhood Services

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None received.

4. DISPENSATIONS

None required.

5. PREVIOUS MEETING

The report of the last meeting, held on 18th June 2024 was **RECEIVED**, and **AGREED** as a true record.

The committee discussed the status of various ongoing projects and maintenance issues. It was noted that no agreements have been made regarding new sweepers while the search for different equipment is with NCC Fleet.

An update was provided on cleansing North Seaton Roundabout, which is scheduled for completion this weekend during other works in the area.

The weed control program, which ran for three weeks in July, has concluded as planned. The committee was informed that the final phase of this initiative will be completed this week. While weeds were removed and herbicides applied in many areas, it was acknowledged that not all locations received treatment. Despite some additional reports, the overall weed removal and spraying efforts were deemed successful. It was acknowledged that the weather was far more conducive to weed control in July than it was at the start of the season.

In response to inquiries about future weed control measures, it was explained that while the recent exercise was costly, the possibility of future rounds would depend on the perceived success of this effort and decisions higher up. NCC Neighbourhood Services has planned another round in early February, considering weather conditions.

The use of wet and forget street cleaning for Station Road was discussed at the last meeting and touched upon again. Peter confirmed that they would be speaking with the regeneration team as it made sense to have some clean-up operations to tie in with regeneration works.

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Concerns were raised about the street sweeper used on the main street, particularly whether it is suitable for the surface it cleans. It was clarified that the current sweeper weighs 3.5 tonnes, which is at the upper limit for the surface it maintains. There are issues with the sweeper loosening flagstones and removing sand from beneath them as it operates, potentially causing damage to the high street paving. Peter advised that NCC Highways warned against use so street cleansing was done by hand. Sarah commented that tying in with the work carried out by ATC NSO's on Station Road beds had worked well.

Market vans driving onto the pavement was discussed. The meeting was reminded it was an NCC service, under the Markets Manager, and although Neighbourhood Services supported a great deal, they were not responsible. Ashington Market is due to be placed on the Local Area Council meeting.

6. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET 2023/24

It was **CONFIRMED** that the balancing invoice for 2023/24 of £957.46 was paid.

7. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET 2024/25

a) 24/25 Budget

The operational budget for 2024/25 was **RECEIVED**, along with an update of spending against it.

Sarah reminded the meeting that unlike other years where fluctuations in costs and spending were reflected in the Partnership budget, in 2024/25 the contribution by Ashington Town Council was capped at £238k resulting in 5 operatives delivering the services therein. The meeting was reminded that there was agreement to spend the surplus remaining following costs for 5 operatives and on-costs, on a seasonal worker. There has been a delay on recruitment but this is currently underway, with the aim of having the operative in place from October 2024 to March 2025. This position is intended to aid with cleansing operations during this period.

Sarah asked for confirmation that a realistic pay deal allocation was included in the £238k figures. Whilst there was no impact with the cap on the Town Council budget, there would be on NCC Partnership budget. Additionally, there would be implications next year.

A question was raised regarding the continuity of this seasonal position in future years. It was clarified that the continuation of this role would be dependent on the yearly budget allocations. While the position is designed to offer additional support during peak periods, its implementation in subsequent years will be subject to annual financial review and approval.

b) Budget Update

It was **AGREED** that it is a priority that the Town Council receive the following information in order to aid budget discussion for 25/26 which will commence in the middle of October:

- The 25/26 anticipated cost of providing the same service as 24/25 under the partnership agreement with 5 operatives.
- As above but also with an additional seasonal operative.
- The resulting capacity that would be delivered with a further cap of £238k for the Partnership Agreement.

8. FLY-TIPPING ACTION PLAN

An update following the NCC Cabinet report received in July was **RECEIVED**.

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The committee was informed that the action plan would shortly be implemented in the coming weeks to address the issue of fly-tipping. Various strategies were being put in place which would be in the public domain in the coming weeks.

The meeting received the information very positively and agreed that this was these were the first proactive steps forward in terms of fly-tipping and they were very well received.

9. ENHANCED SERVICES PERFORMANCE

a) Clerk's Summary

A summary of information from the monitoring tool and rapid response reports provided by Northumberland County Council was **RECEIVED**.

The committee reviewed recent data on fly-tipping, which revealed a shift in dumping patterns. It was noted that incidents have moved from streets to bin store cupboards, and also less weighty but not fewer fly-tips.

An explanation was provided regarding days when no fly-tipping collections occur. These instances typically coincide with scheduled van maintenance. When the collection vehicle is unavailable, the crew is reassigned to assist the cleansing team as needed. There may still be collections, but these are included as part of cleansing schedules.

The committee was informed that while cleansing operations continue in certain areas, there has been some disruption due to staff annual leave. It was reported that sweeper route maps are currently under review to better integrate the sweeper's activities with the cleansing team's efforts. Additionally, a power brush has been acquired as a multi-purpose tool to address areas inaccessible to sweepers. If this proves effective, more such tools may be purchased in the future.

In response to an inquiry about the use of steel brushes on sweepers for weed and moss removal, it was confirmed that these are used. However, the committee was advised that replacement brushes are both in short supply and expensive, presenting an ongoing challenge for maintenance.

b) Rapid Response

An update on Rapid Response was **RECEIVED**. There were few changes, and the same areas remained hot spots.

c) Street cleansing and sweeping

An update on the fulfillment of enhanced cleansing activities was **RECEIVED**.

10. INSPECTIONS

An update on Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) and Quality Assurance (QA) inspections carried out by NCC Leaders was **RECEIVED**.

11. FUTURE CHANGES

An update on changes currently being trialled and how they are making an impact was **RECEIVED** endorse their continuation was **ENDORSED**.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that changes to the frequencies in certain areas were positive. There were no reports of areas feeling neglected, which was confirmed by Cllrs, and the images shared at the meeting included the works carried out instead. Everyone agreed that

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the work on traffic islands had a very positive visual impact. **It was AGREED** sharing the enhanced works was a good idea, and feedback was largely good.

NCC reported positive feedback from the team who were pleased to have the time and resource to carry out additional enhancements, over and above cleansing and bin emptying.

It was emphasised that if NCC needs to reallocate resources from one area to another, they should come forward with suggestions. This open approach aims to encourage flexible and responsive resource management to address changing needs across different areas. It was discussed that if further changes to frequencies and visit could be tolerated, this should be brought back to the board.

DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17th December 2024 Town Hall, Ashington, NE63 8RX, but noting that budget information was required in advance of this meeting to fit in with the timeline of ATC's budget discussions.

The meeting ended at 14:53pm.