

AGENDA 11a, Enc xiv) DRAFT Report of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board, held on Tuesday 18th June 2024, commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington

Members Present:

Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Stephen Wardle – NCC Divisional Manager Neighbourhood Services, Peter Bowman – Area Manager Neighbourhood Services, Robin Wallace – NCC Senior Team Leader Neighbourhood Services

Also, in Attendance

Sarah Eden – ATC Executive Officer/RFO, Stephen Humphrey – ATC Assets and Development Manager

1. UPDATE ON MEMBERS AND ELECTION OF CHAIR

In accordance with point 9.1 and 11.8 of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Agreement 2019-2025, changes in members were advised.

Sarah updated the meeting following agreement at the Annual Meeting of the Council. Cllr Matthew Cuthbert having left, and Cllrs Marjorie Chambers and Louis Brown added. Cllrs John Tully and Glyn Davies remained, and one further member may be agreed so representation from the Council would grow from three to five.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The appointment of a Chair was deferred, and **it was AGREED** that Cllr Marjorie Chambers would Chair this meeting.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr John Tully, Cllr Louis Brown.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None received.

5. DISPENSATIONS

None required.

6. PREVIOUS MEETING – 19th March 2024

a) Report of Meeting

It was AGREED to receive the report of the last meeting, held on 19th March 2024, as a true record.

b) Play Area Update

It was reported that those play areas owned by NCC were progressing with a long-term lease, having now agreed the draft lease. **It was AGREED** the report should reflect thanks to NCC Local Services for their support with the Town Council's objection to costs expected to be passed on by NCC Legal Services to Ashington Town Council for the advertising costs associated with the lease being offered. It was agreed that common-sense had prevailed.

7. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET 2023/24

The balancing payment of £957.46 on top of expected forecasted budget of £236,700 has been paid. Sarah advised that the Partnership Budget had committed and carried forward

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£3,588 which was the cumulative total of underspend and overspend from previous years. Previously, the Partnership Board had agreed to use the cumulative balance to pay towards the external contractor costs to clear the back lanes. At the previous meeting NCC advised that these costs were absorbed by Local Services, therefore a balancing budget of £2,630 over the £236,700 budget for 24/25 is noted.

8. PARTNERSHIP BUDGET 2024/25

a) 24/25 Budget

It was **AGREED** Peter would send the operational budget for 2024/25 that was capped at £238k, and the resourcing implications as a result.

b) Surplus Allocation

The note on computed surplus was received. Members understood that the initial operating budget request for 6 staff members and associated machinery and oncosts, forecast as a budget requirement of £258,110 was not supported by Ashington Town Council, and the Partnership Budget was capped at the 23/24 figure of £238k. As a result, the Partnership resource input was reduced to 5 full-time operatives.

NCC advised that the operating budget with 5 operatives and associated oncosts shows a budgetary surplus of £12k-£13k, that they propose would be best used to recruit an additional seasonal worker, at the earliest opportunity and to work, most likely August, and to work for 6 months. This would help cover during the late summer months and with leaf fall which has been difficult to keep on top of in previous years.

It was **AGREED** to support the proposal to use surplus funds to recruit a seasonal worker for 6 months. Sarah advised that this would be taken to the FGS Committee to endorse.

9. ENHANCED SERVICES PERFORMANCE

It was **AGREED** to receive a report and analysis of information from the monitoring tool provided by Northumberland County Council. *Further discussion on report is given in italics.*

Cleansing

It was noted that there were no exceptions to the cleansing schedule during the reported period.

The average cleansing litter collected increased slightly compared to the previous period but was lower than the same period last year.

Sweeping

During the 9-week period, there were significant disruptions due to mechanical issues, with one sweeper out of service the entire period and two others for 5 out of 9 weeks. In response to questions about the failed sweepers, NCC advised that they were looking to trial alternatives, and the issue was with replacement parts which were proving an issue UK-wide. Local Services were taking up any trial offered and were impressed with the Karcher. Stephen Wardle advised that NCC Fleet were looking at the machines, and the options available.

It was discussed that Station Road was in desperate need of an intense clean, especially in advance of regeneration. Whilst it may be thought that the chosen paving is not best sited, it

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has come up well in the past. Wet and forget as a paving cleaner was mentioned and would be looked into. **It was AGREED** NCC would investigate the costs associated with cleaning Station Road, which had been done before, but would likely be more expensive.

In response to a question about the previous 'green machine' it was noted that this was previously stored in a container off Station Road, but that it was not easily transportable back and forth and also not easily manoeuvred on Station Road. Local Services were advised not to use sweepers on the pavements on Station Road.

Stephen Humphrey commended joint efforts on Station Road when ATC carried out planting, and that a co-ordinated approach worked well. This was welcomed and would be supported in the future and Station Road days.

Fly tipping

280 fly-tips were removed, a decrease from 369 during the same period last year. The weight of fly-tip collections was 16,380kg, down from 21,400kg the previous year. An additional 4,019kg was collected from bin stores, although not categorised as fly-tips.

There were 10 days out of 47 working days with no recorded collections, requiring further explanation.

An increase in 'white goods' fly-tipping was noted compared to previous evaluations dominated by 'other household waste'.

Central and Hirst wards accounted for 72% of incidents, with consistent hotspots like Sycamore St, Maple St, Chestnut St, and Castle Terrace.

College ward (18%) and Seaton ward (7%) showed increases, particularly Alexandra Road and Longhirst, respectively.

The figures and observations by the team prove that the bin stores have had a positive result on fly-tipping on the streets, but some has moved to the bin stores. In a meeting the previous week with cabinets members, it was acknowledged that a report was due at cabinet in July which would address the issue of fly-tipping.

In response to the question of why dumping in bin compounds, although not permitted, is not classified as fly-tipping, Stephen Wardle explained that the likelihood of a prosecution made the attempt futile, as it the courts would not see this as dumping, as the bin stores are for rubbish.

It was discussed that CCTV has worked well in Blyth reducing fly-tipping by 40%, by way of deterrent. It was acknowledged that education may help with those who see rapid response as a service. Other suggestions included creating a crime scene scenario where there is fly-tipping and changing the perception. By the next meeting the cabinet report will have been received and we should know more, as well as having more data to see the trends following bins stores.

In response to those days where no rapid response collections have been made which is very unusual, Robin updated that this could be due to the team making collections of other smaller

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items and accumulations not recorded as fly-tipping (less than 1m square). Additionally, cover for sick absence and annual leave.

10.INSPECTIONS

35 LEQ inspections were carried out by Senior Officers, mainly resulting in scores of 3 or 4.

Two inspections required actions for weed control and traffic island cleaning.

11.FUTURE CHANGES

Robin shared images of areas that were able to be visited for additional enhancements due to the changes made to frequencies. This showed improvement in before and after photographs.

The work carried out was commended and endorsed. Robin updated that all but one of the Partnership team were now trained in spraying and strimming, and they carried the equipment with them so they could carry out enhanced work on the route. This could be strimming and weed spraying around obstacles, graffiti removal or edging. The photographs shown represent where teams have been redirected from cleansing when complete. The meeting was advised that this was a two-way communication, as well as areas being identified by management, the team also advised where enhancements could be made. Stephen Wardle said the efforts were very impressive.

Robin welcomed suggestions from ATC. Sarah advised that each time the report of the partnership meeting was received, Cllr Glyn Davies reminded members to feedback to the office, or members of the Partnership.

Stephen Humphrey passed on that North Seaton Roundabout would benefit from being scheduled, but he appreciated the road closure required. The dead tree on the same roundabout, which was also raised, would be actioned.

Peter advised that he was seeking support to design out the problem of weeds in traffic islands by replaced the cobbles with tarmac. It was noted that wildflowers are growing in some traffic islands.

Robin acknowledged weed growth which although is not part of the Partnership agreement, is being tackled by both teams as per redirection, as discussed above. Robin hoped that within 4-weeks they would be on top of the weeds. This is not an Ashington issue, it is County-wide as the heat and rain brings optimum growing conditions.

Members thanked the team for the redirected efforts and endorsed that this should continue according to what has most impact.

Finally, Peter formally confirmed that he was the new Area Manager, and he was also pleased to report that Robin was successful in the Senior Team Leader post. The Team Leader post would be advertised internally, and depending on the outcome, an operative role.

Congratulations and well wishes were passed on.

12.DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Due to the holidays, the next meeting will be scheduled for 17th September 2024, at 2pm.