

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held at Hirst Welfare Centre, Alexandra Road, Ashington, NE63 9HN on Wednesday, 11 March 2020 at 6:00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor G Webb (Chair)

MEMBERS

E Cartie
G Davey
S Davey
J J Gobin
L Grimshaw

J A Lang
K Parry
J Reid
E Simpson

OFFICERS

M Carle
R O'Farrell
D Lally
K Norris
N Snowdon

R Wealleans

Highways Delivery Area Manager
Interim Executive Director
Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer
Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Programme Team)
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager

Also in attendance:

I Nixon - Vice Principal, Northumberland College

Public: 5
Press: 0

86. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Campbell, Gallacher, Nisbet, Purvis, Rickerby and Wilson.

87. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 12 February 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair referred to an item he had requested on Active Northumberland (Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre) and said he had been advised that it would need to be discussed at the LAC Chair's briefing before coming to this committee.

In response to a question regarding the allocation of extra funding for which members had applied, the Interim Executive Director said members should receive written notification in 2 weeks regarding which schemes would be supported.

88. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair read out two questions which had been submitted to Democratic Services that morning by Mr J Gebhard.

- Why is job number H0196560 on hold as outlined in agenda item 8? This relates to £3,500 contribution towards micro surfacing for Pennine Drive and Sidlaw Court.
- How are proposals for Members' Local Improvement Schemes assessed if there is a direct benefit to the elected Member that is funding the work such as living in the street identified?

The Interim Executive Director advised members that a written response would be provided to these questions.

Mr R Spedding, Newbiggin

Mr Spedding referred to recent road works and repairs carried out in Newbiggin which had caused major inconvenience to residents, many of whom had been unable to get to work on time, and asked why the works had been programmed in that way. In response the Highways Delivery Area Manager said he would raise the issue with the Street Works Section. The Ward Member pointed out that some of the work had not been planned but had to be carried out without delay in order to rectify a dangerous situation.

89. PETITIONS

(a) Receive any new petitions: Request to erect a fence/barrier between Crofton Grange Estate and Land Opposite Stardale Avenue, Blyth.

The Chair advised members that a petition containing 56 signatures had been received requesting the above. A report had been requested from officers for May's meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

(b) Consider reports on petitions previously received: Request for Public Footpath from Seaton Vale to NCEA School, Ashington.

Mrs Leanne Wright, Lead Petitioner, introduced the above petition stating that, at present, children had to walk 2 miles to school which took approximately 40 minutes for what should be less than a 5 minutes walk if a pathway was installed to the back entrance of the school.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Programme Team) referred to his report (a copy of which is attached to the official Minutes of the meeting as Appendix A). He said that officers intended to carry out a feasibility study of the proposed route, as well as other potential alternative routes, which would need to be considered in conjunction with the school and take account of safeguarding issues and effects on the school grounds/playing fields.

Members agreed to support the recommendations set out in the report and it was

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and a further detailed report be provided to the Local Area Council in due course once the feasibility study was complete.

(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered: No reports to consider.

90. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

The Neighbourhood Services Area Manager and Highways Delivery Area Manager were in attendance to provide verbal updates about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work and to respond to issues raised by members.

Neighbourhood Services

R Wealleans, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager, provided the following information:

- Winter works continued at the expected rate, it had been a potentially challenging time but the team had coped well completing all core works on time and within the programme. All requests from Councillors had been accommodated.
- Grass cutting equipment had been undergoing annual servicing and would be ready for the start of the season. Grass cutting may start next week, depending on ground conditions.
- Seasonal grounds maintenance staff had been secured for this year.
- Weed control activities would be undertaken in-house again this year; weed spraying of obstacles in the area had started; blue dye would be used again and there was a planned trial of a non-glyphosate based product (acetic acid), the results of which would be shared.
- Cleansing of the Spine Road would again be carried out over 4 weekends on night shift with road closures in place beginning 18 and 25 April. There would be a break on 2 May to ensure minimal disruption for the Bank Holiday then the last one would be carried out on 16 May.
- Waste collection rounds were being adjusted to accommodate the growth in the area and it was expected to see around 1600 properties having day changes. All affected residents would be notified by letter and all Councillors within the areas affected would receive notification and details of the properties included. It was hoped that the adjustments to the collection rounds would come into effect early April 2020.
- Garden waste collections had started. Increasing housing/customer numbers meant additional tweaking of rounds had been required to accommodate the increase.
- This year the cost of the garden waste bin was £43.

- New numbers would be calculated later in the season but it was expected income could be over £300k for the South East area.

Technical Services

M Carle, Highways Delivery Area Manager, provided a brief update:

- The Highways Delivery department continued to carry out statutory obligations under the Highways Act and current COP and inspected the highways on a risk based hierarchy approach.
- The team would continue to fix all actionable defects and respond to reports of defects, both in and out of hours, in accordance with policy.
- Capital works within the Local Area Council had come to an end but the staff and managers were busy programming works for next year for both LTP 2020/21, integrated transport block, as well as the possible additional funding.
- Winter services continued and would carry on until 30 March. A decision to extend that would be made based upon forecasts nearer the time. The forecasts would be monitored from 30 March until 30 April. At that point winter services would be stood down completely and some gritters would go to do other jobs with tipper bodies on. Others would be serviced by fleet maintenance and prepared for next winter.
- Stocks would be taken back up to operational levels of 43,000 tonnes county wide for the start of Winter Services 2020/21.

A member thanked the teams for doing a fantastic job and commended them for keeping the public safe during the winter period.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

91. NORTHUMBERLAND COLLEGE - UPDATE

Mr Iain Nixon, Vice Principal of Northumberland College, was in attendance to provide a presentation about their work and changes made since the merger with Sunderland College. (A copy of the presentation is filed with the official Minutes of the meeting.)

The presentation included the following information:

- The merger with Sunderland College had taken place in April last year after significant changes in the further education sector. There had been 57 mergers between colleges across the United Kingdom, some having merged with universities.
- Northumberland College had been facing a number of challenges, it was insolvent and could not continue as a single entity. Because of the financial position it could not invest in its estates and the curriculum offer needed to change to meet with the needs of the local area.
- The merger had been driven by the Minister for Further Education with the Education and Skills Foundation Agency being involved in the process.

- The County of Northumberland still needed a regional college with a local agenda and the Education Partnership North East was formed consisting of Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form and Northumberland College.
- An on-going transformation programme was implemented to provide a variable and interesting alternative to that provided by schools and was driven by a vision with a good curriculum at its heart.
- It was about helping individuals to progress into careers and accessible training throughout Northumberland by strengthening Kirkley Hall Campus and reshaping provision at Berwick, Blyth and in the West of the County.
- Engagement had taken place at strategic and local level and would continue throughout the lifetime of the college.
- There needed to be a robust curriculum in place for 16 to 19 year olds, as well as adults.
- It was acknowledged that English and Maths provision was a significant challenge across Northumberland.
- Modes of study should be flexible to include distance learning and on-line provision.
- Work was being carried out on piloting aspects of vocational and technical offers.
- An important aspect was innovation through strong partnerships with employers and to achieve this the college would need to rebuild trust and its reputation through making the right offers and providing high quality courses.
- There was a lot of work to be done but it could be done through engagement with employers, placements, apprenticeships etc.
- Northumberland College was already working with the Port of Blyth to look at what was needed for the offshore industry and with pharmaceutical companies to ensure its students could develop the key skills needed. The college was providing an insight into industry and AxoNobel was carrying out an audit of the workshops in the college to make sure students were being taught to the standards industry would expect.
- Information was provided about investments in safeguarding/services for students and in careers hubs in technology and digital, health and life sciences, the food industry and visitor economy, equine and veterinary science centres and new facilities for SEND students for whom dedicated, high quality integrated facilities were being created.
- All of the investment highlighted was just a starting point and investment would continue for years to come to achieve outstanding quality and an outstanding curriculum.

Questions/comments from members were invited and in response the following information was provided:

- It was a challenge for many people to achieve entry level for Maths and English and, unless the criteria changed, this would continue. Different approaches were needed and the college was working with Northern Rights, a North East Group who offered additional focus and support to help build confidence of disadvantaged people.
- In response to comments that Northumberland College should promote itself more and that they could work with Town/Parish Councils to do this on their webpages, Mr Nixon said he would feed this back and acknowledged that there were some very good things happening that were 'not shouted about'. However, he said it was all about trust and the college was keen for partners/businesses to provide good feedback on their behalf rather than self promotion.
- In terms of engaging with children at an earlier age, prior to the merger, schools had not allowed the college to do this, however, engagement was now taking place. Digital

packages were being taken into schools and work was being carried out in conjunction with the Port of Blyth to provide information about the offshore industry.

- The Chair and members were particularly impressed with the upgrades made to the special needs provision stating the importance of it being part of the main campus for social interaction.

The Chair thanked Mr Nixon for his attendance and it was

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

INFORMATION ITEMS

92. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2017/20 - PROGRESS REPORT

The report provided a progress update on Members' Local Improvement Schemes for 2017/20 as at 1 March 2020 (attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix B**).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

93. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

94. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday, 15 April 2020.

The meeting closed at 6:40 pm

Chair _____

Date _____