

CABINET 9 JUNE 2020

FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL AREA COUNCIL MEETINGS 9 - 11 MARCH 2020 EXTRACTS FROM MINUTES

(Details of planning and rights of way applications are not included.)

CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE 9 MARCH 2020

146. PETITIONS

Members were informed that, since the previous meeting, no new petitions had been received and there were no reports due on petitions previously received

There were however two updates due on petitions previously considered, as follows:

(a) Riversdale House Flats, Stakeford

The Head of Housing and Public Protection updated members, of which his key points were:-

- tenant vetting was ongoing
- new wheeled bins with better storage had been placed on site, but this had resulted in more fly tipping at the site by people suspected to be from outside of the area
- there had been a marked improvement recently in the general condition and appearance of the flats and a reduction in the number of complaints. More cooperation was taking place with agents
- members were asked to agree that no further periodical updates were required to the Local Area Council

Councillor Foster as local member replied, acknowledging the reduction in complaints and improvements made, but also expressed concern about other people using the new bin storage to dispose of their own rubbish. She asked if the bins could be moved out of sight. She agreed that the six monthly updates to this meeting could cease on the proviso that the issue could still return to the agenda in future if the situation subsequently deteriorated. Other quarterly monitoring meetings included various involved parties would continue.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection agreed that the issue could return to the Local Area Council if issues were to escalate again, but other meetings would continue to take place to address the issue and work would continue with residents.

(b) School Transport in Guide Post

The Principal Programme Officer updated members by explaining that since the petition had been considered in September 2020, the school transport team had worked with the school and operatives. The lead petitioner had written to all residents and only two responses had been sent to the school transport team in response. The last contact with the lead petitioner had been in January 2020.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the updates be noted; and
- (2) no further regular updates be presented to the Local Area Council about Riversdale House flats unless the situation deteriorates in future.

147. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received a verbal update from the Area Managers with the opportunity for members to ask questions afterwards. Key points included were:

Neighbourhood Services update:

- winter operatives had been working a 28 hour week
- staff would shortly begin the grass cutting season. All equipment had been serviced except for the wide motors
- the blue dye for weed control would be used again. Acetic acid treatment would be trialled
- the garden waste service had recently started; the fee per bin was £43 for 2020. It provided an income to the Council of £300,000
- there had been some impact due to recent snowfall but few bins had been missed.

In response to a question, members were advised that any extension of garden waste service routes were considered on a case by case individual basis; the service still needed to be efficient.

Technical Services update:

- work on the new car park opposite Morpeth train station was on target and within budget
- the additional signage at Longhirst had been started
- a hotbox would be used to address the current backlog in road repairs]
- the footpath to the rear of County Hall underneath the railway line would received drainage works by April 2020
- a small patching programme, for fixing small potholes, would begin from April
- work was beginning for signage at Catchburn Farm and the crossing at Broadway, Ponteland
- the Environment Agency would be involved in work to address the Mitford River collapse

- sites were currently being prepared for resurfacing work over summer
- three recent storm events leading to surface water flooding had been successfully reacted to.

Members raised issues of which the key points of them and responses from officers were:

- regarding any possible improvement to the gulleys at North Road in Ponteland, perhaps with Section 106 funding, this was being addressed including extra cleansing, plus rather than just an issue of capacity, the lie of the pipes might also need addressing
- the resurfacing of land by shops at De Walden Terrace in Pegswood had carried over the year and any issues were being addressed. Coalas were being asked for a price for work to the whole area
- in response to concerns about part of the the hybrid plastic/tarmac road between Pegswood to Longhirst being dug up to implement a planning application and the wish for the surface to be reinstated, this would be followed up with the streetworks team; there was no stipulation in place unless such roads were still within warranty
- concerns about mine water rising up on the footpath along the bypass between Whorral Bank to Pegswood would be followed up
- in response to a request for an update about new parking spaces at All Saints First School, as this work might be longer than the eight days available over the Easter holidays, it might need to be deferred to summer; a firm date would be confirmed in the diary for the work and local residents advised.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted and officers follow up the issues raised by members.

At this point, as the meeting was approaching three hours in length it was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue beyond three hours in duration.

DISCUSSION ITEMS - CORPORATE

148. Northumberland College - Update

The Local Area Council received a presentation about the changes made to Northumberland College following their merger with Sunderland College. (Copy of the presentation enclosed with the minutes of the meeting.)

Nigel Harett, Principal of Northumberland College, gave the presentation and highlighted the following:

- the further education sector had seen a number of changes since 1 April 2019 including academy conversions, federations and merger of further and higher education institutions to improve their resilience and viability

- the college had faced a number of challenges including: financial vulnerability which had not allowed for investment in the estate, nor updates of the curriculum to meet the needs of students and employers, a decline in the quality of education as had the college's reputation
- intervention by the Further Education Commissioner, Funding and Skills Funding Agency and OFSTED had led to the merger
- the formation of Education Partnership North East now comprised Northumberland College, Sunderland College and Hartlepool College with campuses in Northumberland in Ashington, Berwick and Kirkley Hall. All of the colleges had been strengthened with economies of scale from centralised functions such as finance and HR. The colleges were working together to better meet the individual needs of the communities they served
- a Transformation Programme had commenced in 2019 across many areas including: staffing, curriculum improvements, student support and estate improvements, the latter also addressing health, safety and safeguarding issues
- engagement was taking place at strategic and local levels and included employers in a range of sectors, the National Farmers Union and schools. They wanted to reach students at an earlier age to help shape and inform their career choices.
- a robust curriculum needed to be provided across all age groups, from 16-19 years old and also adults
- partnerships were being created with schools who were keen to work with the college on technical and apprenticeship provision
- there was a significant level of investment across all campuses including the creation of a new reception and student hub at Ashington, careers hubs in technology and digital and health and life sciences, upgrades and new facilities at the Kirkley Hall Campus included a new Equine and Veterinary Science Centres, new facilities for SEND Students and upgrades to student residential accommodation
- the college wanted to be accessible to all learners across the county including those in the west, and were aware that this needed to be developed with digital technology.

Members made the following key points:

- members here were 100% supportive of Mr Harrett and his leadership team's actions. If members could assist in any way, Mr Harrett could let them know
- the new reception area and the zones used were welcomed
- it was good to speak to local schools to find out what study options they would like at the college and how this would link to their career progression, so options could be tailored so more young people could stay locally.

A member asked what other courses could be added at Kirkley Hall as the agricultural college was smaller than previously, members were advised that Kirkley Hall still offered courses in agriculture, horticulture, equine services,

zoo, animal management and floristry. The college would like to investigate other options for forestry possibly.

Mr Harrett was thanked for his presentation and his work for the college and it was:

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

149. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

(Members received a progress report as of 1 March 2020. (Copy of the report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix C.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

150. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings. (Copy of the report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix D.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Tynedale Local Area Council 10 March 2020

138. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received the following updates from the Area Managers from Neighbourhood Services and Technical Services:

Technical Services:

- Storms Ciara and Dennis had affected the Tynedale area of the county quite severely with snow also falling heavily. Currently there was a backlog of street cleaning and road repairs and staff were working hard to catch up.
- Highways inspections had been prioritised on main routes followed by other roads.
- Additional resources had been brought in after the bad weather events including road sweepers, hotbox, gully wagon and extra staff.
- Problems continued to be rectified by the drainage gang as well as a JCB carrying out ditching works.
- A programme of works for the new financial year included safety schemes, LTP works and structural patching.
- Additional funding of £10 million was to be spent across the county's network following requests from area teams on asset needs, complaints and issues raised by councillors.
- A surface dressing programme of 500,000 m² was being planned for principal and non principal roads; pre-patching had started with the main work due to commence in May 2020.
- Over 85,000 m² of micro surfacing work was programmed across the network.
- During the 2019/20 winter season, over 80 planned gritting operations had been undertaken to date. Salt bins had been replenished three times and grit heaps in rural areas, twice.

The following information was provided in response to issues raised by Councillors:

- Grit bins would continue to be replenished, if required.
- Serious potholes had been repaired quickly.
- Work was required in a number of areas including:
 - Wylam
 - Alemouth Road, Shaftoe Crescent, Allendale Road and Leazes Park, Hexham.
- Gulleys had become blocked within a short time of being cleared. A programme was in place to replace older cast iron gulleys with modern alternatives which had larger underground catchment areas and did not fill as quickly with sediment.

Neighbourhood Services:

- Strong winds and heavy rain had required allocation of resources to clean up operations.
- Grounds and cleansing staff from Tyne Mills and Low Prudhoe depots continued to participate in the Highways winter services rota.
- In accordance with contingency plans drawn up after the floods in 2015, precautionary evacuation of vehicles and equipment from Tyne Mills and Low Prudhoe depots had been carried out on 9th and 14th February, based on flood warnings from the Environment Agency. Fortunately neither depot suffered flooding on either of these occasions. The Environment Agency hoped to carry out flood defence work to mitigate the risk of further flooding in the next financial year following confirmation of funding.
- Grounds maintenance - cutting back of hedges and shrubs was now finished. Recruitment of seasonal staff for the summer period was nearly complete. Permanent grounds staff would be moving to extended summer hours on 1st April.
- Refuse collection had been affected by heavy snow on 24 February, particularly in Allendale and the North Tyne Valley. There had been no incidents or injuries during the adverse weather. Missed bins had been collected very quickly.
- The garden waste collection service, which cost £43 for 2020, had recommenced on 2 March.

Issues raised by Councillors included:

- A spring clean was being held in Prudhoe on 20 March.
- Local Services risk management plans for coronavirus pandemic. Business contingency plans were being reviewed. Staff had been issued with advice about hand washing, use of tissues and to refrain from touching their face unless hands had just been washed. Whilst there were currently no cases of coronavirus in Northumberland, only essential services relating to refuse and cemeteries would be undertaken if faced with staff being quarantined.
- Debris required removal near the Corbridge mill.

Members of the Local Area Council expressed their appreciation to Local Services staff for their work during and following the recent storms and adverse weather.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

139. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

140. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

There were none to consider.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

There were none to consider.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none to consider.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

141. Northumberland College - Update

The Local Area Council received a presentation about the changes made to Northumberland College following their merger with Sunderland College. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the minutes of the meeting.)

Nigel Harett, Principal of Northumberland College, gave the presentation and highlighted the following:

- The further education sector had seen a number of changes since 1 April 2019 including academy conversions, federations and merger of further and higher education institutions to improve their resilience and viability.
- The college had faced a number of challenges including: financial vulnerability which had not allowed for investment in the estate, few updates to the curriculum to meet the needs of students and employers, a decline in the quality of education as well as the college's reputation.
- Intervention by the Further Education Commissioner, Funding and Skills Funding Agency and OFSTED had led to the merger.
- The formation of Education Partnership North East now comprised Northumberland College, Sunderland College and Hartlepool College with campuses in Northumberland in Ashington, Berwick and Kirkley Hall. All of the colleges had been strengthened with economies of scale from centralised functions such as finance and HR. The colleges were working together to better meet the individual needs of the communities they served.
- A Transformation Programme had commenced in 2019 across many areas including: staffing, curriculum improvements, student support and estate improvements, the latter also addressing health, safety and safeguarding issues.

- Engagement was taking place at strategic and local levels and included employers in a range of sectors, the National Farmers Union and schools. They wanted to reach students at an earlier age to help shape and inform their career choices.
- A robust curriculum needed to be provided across all age groups, from 16-19 years olds and also adults.
- Partnerships were being created with schools who were keen to work with the college on technical and apprenticeship provision.
- There was a significant level of investment across all campuses including the creation of a new reception and student hub at Ashington, careers hubs in technology and digital and health and life sciences, upgrades and new facilities at the Kirkley Hall Campus included a new Equine and Veterinary Science Centres, new facilities for SEND Students and upgrades to student residential accommodation.
- The college wanted to be accessible to all learners across the county including those in the west, and were aware that this needed to be developed with digital technology.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members:

- A 3 year plan had been developed to make improvements to the curriculum. The college was engaging with stakeholders and holding regular meetings with the County Council, North of Tyne Combined Authority and schools. The Principal participated in a national reform group which looked at what employers and other stakeholders required to ensure the curriculum was tailored to meet future demand. New technical qualifications and apprenticeships were being monitored to match skills and needs going forward.
- More generic courses at lower levels would increase class size and provide a better learning experience whilst allowing students to become more specific in their course choice at a higher level.
- A number of campus open days were planned as well as 88 engagement events at schools. 95 prospective students had attended a recent open day at Kirkley Hall compared with 10 students at a similar event the previous year. The college was engaged with school head teachers, career advisers and key contacts; talks covered the range of qualifications including A Levels, apprenticeships, technical qualifications and potential higher education provision to ascertain what would be right for individuals.
- There were 9 ongoing projects designed to improve facilities across the estate.
- The majority of current courses were based across the campuses at Ashington and Kirkley Hall. They expected to expand the curriculum over the next few years, including satellite sites.
- The college recognised that the West of the county was not currently well served by Northumberland College with only one subject available at a site in Hexham. Colleges in Newcastle and Gateshead were easier for students from the West to get to. They were therefore reviewing provision

and alternative methods of delivery to make courses more accessible via digital and technical solutions which would require attendance at a main campus on a more periodic basis.

- The current digital offer included online learning and courses for next generation provision such as augmented reality and games technology. The partnership had strong links with the industry at the Sunderland campus which was being shared with Hartlepool and Northumberland colleges. They also wanted to provide basic IT Literacy courses for adults and courses to keep all users digitally safe.
- They had not yet engaged with Haydon Bridge High School but intended to do so. Members' comments regarding the recent significant investment in the facilities at the school which were currently underutilised, were noted.
- Kirkley Hall used to have an excellent reputation for land based courses and had been well attended by students from rural communities in the past. They hoped to regain its reputation and compete with other nearby land based colleges such as Newton Rigg in Penrith and Houghall in Durham, to attract more students. Many projects were in progress for the Kirkley Hall campus to improve facilities in horticulture, equine, animal and veterinary, and health and safety at the farm and also the residential accommodation. They were in discussions with the community and NFU to ensure changes to the curriculum were right for the future. Once numbers increased they hoped to widen provision and allow further expansion.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his presentation and was pleased to see that progress was being made.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

142. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2017/20

The Local Area Council received a progress update on Members' Local Improvement Schemes as at 1 March 2020. (A copy is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

143. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. (A copy is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix B.)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL 11 MARCH 2020

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 involving the bridge which was a danger to the public.

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.