

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held in the Council Chamber on Monday, 16 September 2019.

**PRESENT**

Councillor J.A. Beynon  
(Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

(Planning Vice-chair Councillor L. Dunn in the chair for items 4 -8)

**COUNCILLORS**

Bawn, D.L  
Dickinson, S.  
Dodd, R.R.  
Foster, J.D  
Jackson, P.A.

Jones, V.  
Ledger, D.  
Sanderson, H.G.H. (2nd part)  
Towns, D.J.  
Wearmouth, R.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Bennett, Mrs L.M.  
Bulman, M.  
Howley, L.

King, M.  
Murphy, J.  
Sinnamon, E.  
Snowdon, N.

Soderquest, P.

Soulsby, R  
Wardle, S.

Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Solicitor  
Community and Environmental  
Health Manager  
Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Principal Planning Officer  
Senior Planning Manager  
Principal Programme Officer  
(Highways Improvement)  
Head of Housing and Public  
Protection  
Planning Officer  
Neighbourhood Services Area  
Manager

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Watson, D.  
Winter, L.

Active Northumberland  
Pegasus Riding Centre

**48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E. Armstrong.

Ch.'s Initials.....

#### 49. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday, 12 August 2019 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 50. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor D. Bawn declared a personal and prejudicial interest in planning application 19/01632/COU. He left the Chamber and took no part in the discussion or decision.

#### DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

#### 51. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The attached report explained how the Local Area Council was asked to decide the planning applications attached to this agenda using the powers delegated to it. and included details of the public speaking arrangements. (Report attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix A**)

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted

#### 52. 19/01632/COU

**Retrospective: Change of use from A1 (Shop) to A3 (Cafe) (amended description 29.08.2019)**

**Harry's Coffee Bar, 20 Newgate Street, Morpeth, NE61 1BA**

Judith Murphy, Principal Planning Officer, introduced the application and provided a brief overview.

There were no public speakers.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:-

- The premises was a coffee bar but sold alcohol in the evening with food.

Councillor P.A. Jackson then proposed the officer recommendation to grant the application. This was seconded by Councillor D. Towns.

There was no debate.

On being put to the vote, it was agreed unanimously that it be

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

**53. 19/01952/FUL**

**Change of use of land from public open space to residential curtilage and erection of timber fence.**

**Land South Of Grey Arms Court, Main Street, Red Row, Northumberland**

Ryan Soulsby, Planning Officer, introduced the application and provided a brief overview.

There were no public speakers.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:-

- The land in question was owned by Northumberland County Council and managed by the Strategic Estates Team. The residents of the properties in question were aware that they would need to buy the land, and the Strategic Estates Team was willing to sell should the planning application be granted.

Councillor J. Beynon then proposed the officer recommendation to grant the application. This was seconded by Councillor R. Wearmouth.

Debate then followed and key points from members included:

- Disappointment was that this situation had been allowed to arise and had exposed Northumberland County Council to potential legal problems.
- The situation had to be regularised but should not have happened.

On being put to the vote, it was unanimously agreed that it be

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

**54. 19/01406/FUL**

**Change of use from Farmland to "D2 Assembly & Leisure" for the purposes of providing Junior Football facilities and associated access and parking.**

**Land South Of Selmon Park Sports Field, Heddon-On-The-Wall, Northumberland,**

Members were informed that this item had been withdrawn as information regarding land ownership had just come to light and so the applicant must be given the opportunity to correct this error. It was hoped to re-submit the application to Committee as soon as practicable.

**OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS**

***On the conclusion of the development control business the meeting adjourned as the remainder of the agenda consisted of other Local Area Council business scheduled to begin at 6 pm.***

## 55. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

## 56. PETITIONS

Members received the following reports:-

- (a) **Receive any new petitions:** to receive any new petitions. There were no new petitions.
- (b) **Consider reports on petitions previously received:**
- **School Transport in Guide Post** (Attached as **Appendix C**)

The Chair invited the lead petitioner, Mr. S. Armstrong, to address Members. Mr. Armstrong's key issues included the following:

- He represented Bedlingtonshire Neighbourhood Watch who had been contacted by concerned residents regarding concerns about school traffic to and from Cleaswell Hill School in Guide Post.
- Residents were very concerned at the attitude of school taxi drivers, parking on pavements, restricting access to residents, blocking driveways etc.
- A meeting had been held between residents and the local Parish Clerk but nothing had happened as a result of the meeting.
- Councillor D. Ledger, the local County Councillor, had been contacted but unable to help.
- Residents had nothing against the school but felt that, as the school expanded, there was not enough room for parking.

Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement), raised the following points.

- Since receiving the petition the Transport Team had been monitoring the situation and would continue to do so.
- Large school vehicles would be asked to attend the school earlier to allow easier access for smaller vehicles.
- The completion of the hydro pool would provide parking and so relieve pressure on School Avenue and surrounding streets.
- Complaints regarding a particular taxi and abusive language generally would be passed on.

Councillor D. Ledger made the following points:-

- He stressed that he had worked closely with Neil Snowdon and the Transport Team over the years to try and find a solution.
- Over the last two years he had had no telephone calls regarding parking at the

- school.
- On occasion, Council officers had spoken to taxi drivers and although the situation did settle down for a while there would eventually be a return to the previous situation.
- Foul and abusive language was an offence and should always be reported to the police
- Many Council departments, the police and the school had been involved and the situation was a failure of all of them. He stressed that the school itself also had to take some responsibility.

Councillor H.G.H. Sanderson welcomed the report and commented that if evidence of inappropriate behaviour was provided it would be dealt with. He proposed, seconded by Councillor D. Ledger and

**IT WAS RESOLVED**, unanimously, that an update be provided to the March 2020 Castle Morpeth meeting and if there had been no improvement that further action would be considered.

**(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered:**

- **Riversdale House Flats, Stakeford, Choppington - verbal update**

Phillip Soderquest, Head of Housing and Public Protection, referred to his earlier report at the July meeting at which it was reported that the position was improving. Local residents had attended that meeting and raised further concerns.

In addressing those concerns, he commented as follows:-

- Vetting of tenants - Residents had commented that the new procedure was not being followed and some new tenants were not adhering to their tenancy agreement. Work had been carried out with the main agent for the flats and new standards were in place.
- Wheelie Bins - The provision of bins had been increased as requested, however, it seemed that residents from elsewhere were using the bins. Some apparent episodes of fly tipping alongside the bins may have actually been by agreement.
- Fighting and foul language - There had been a recent incident which was being dealt with by the police.
- Flats still an eyesore - This was still a work in progress. The main agent was reluctant to make an investment as they did not have total ownership of the flats.
- Future plans - Unfortunately, this was not a unique problem but efforts were being made to improve the position at the flats.

Councillor J.D. Foster made the following comments:-

- The position at the flats had improved a great deal and she thanked Members and Officers for their support.

- There had always been fly tipping but recent incidents may not have actually been flytipping. It was hard to judge.
- More wheelie bins had been provided but the siting was not always ideal.
- New tenants had moved in and were being properly vetted.
- Multi agency meetings were continuing and she attended them.
- She had not been receiving any complaints herself and the police had reported a reduction in complaints.

Councillor J.D. Foster proposed, seconded by Councillor R.R. Dodd, and

**IT WAS RESOLVED**, unanimously, that a further update report be submitted in six months and, thereafter, only if there was a problem raised by the Multi agency meeting.

## 57. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received a verbal update from the Area Managers with the opportunity for members to ask questions afterwards.

### Neighbourhood Services

- Waste, recycling and garden waste collection services were all working well
- New collection vehicles were very good.
- Income was all on target.
- Grass cutting was up to date, however, the recent wet weather had been challenging.
- Weed killing was proving challenging, again, due to the wet weather. A second application had been made. Ponteland, Darras Hall and Longhorsley were still to be done.
- A new small sweeper for street cleaning had been delivered and was much more versatile and able to travel longer distances.
- Verge cutting was complete and there should be no further visibility issues as the growing season was over.

### Highway Services

- It had been a busy summer with two major schemes; Mitford Road drainage scheme and the changed road layout for the new school opposite County Hall
- Both schemes had been delivered on time and on budget.
- Patching programme had resumed and routine inspections were ongoing.
- LTP schemes were ongoing.
- In October a number of smaller schemes including small drainage schemes, crossings, signs etc. would commence.
- There had been a lot of enquiries over the summer regarding road repairs and drainage issues. These were being prioritised.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS - CORPORATE**

### **58. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE**

#### **Community Safety**

Liam Howley, Community and Environmental Health Manager, updated members on the number of reported incidents of antisocial behaviour and the new reporting system, VOL (Victim Offender Location). 811 incidents had been reported in 2018/19 of which 55 were in the Castle Morpeth LAC area, and from 519 in 2019/20 of which 43 were from Castle Morpeth. 18 months ago there had been a two tier system for reporting anti social behaviour. LMAPS was a multi agency approach to solving the problem. This had been largely taken over by VOL and the system was working very well. Members all had a nominated officer as their SPOC (single point of contact). Feedback on the new system welcomed.

Members were of the opinion that the new system was not working. It was felt that they were often the first point of contact for residents but were not receiving any feedback on anti social behaviour matters. The LMAPS system had been a useful tool for them. One member commented that his experience was a little different and that there were regular updates at his local Parish Council meeting and that these were very valuable.

Phillip Sodequest commented that it was important for officers to be aware if the system was not working as members would wish. It was agreed that contact details for officers acting as a single point of contact for members would be circulated. He stressed that there had been a reduction in the number of antisocial behaviour incidents and that it was important to tackle how the public perceived this, especially with the increasing use of social media.

#### **Policing Update**

Sergeant Steven Knight was in attendance to give an overview and answer questions about policing in the Castle Morpeth area. His key points included:-

- He had moved from working in the Berwick area to the Morpeth area three weeks ago.
- A knife crime initiative was underway week commencing 16 September 2019. The initiative involved going into schools and retailers and targeting young people with workshops focusing on the consequences of knife crime.
- 6 - 13 October 2019 was Rural Crime and Wildlife week. This week would cover areas such as theft of quad bikes, problems for isolated farms and poaching.
- There had been recent problems with antisocial behaviour at Stobhill and Southfields and plain clothes police patrols had been instigated there.
- Operation Nightwing was aimed at dealing with antisocial behaviour now that the darker nights were approaching.
- A new police structure for the Morpeth/Alnwick/Berwick area would come into force in January 2020 and the police in all of those areas would work as one team.

- It was acknowledged that there were communication issues and that the police area command areas did not match up with the County Council structure.
- There was a problem with poaching in that it was very difficult to prove and successfully prosecute. He stressed that poaching was taken very seriously along with other rural crime.

The Chair thanked Sergeant Knight for his attendance. Sergeant Knight would be sent contact details for all of the members of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the policing and community safety updates be noted.

## **59. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES - PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received a progress report. (A copy of the report attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix D**)

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **60. PEGASUS RIDING CENTRE**

Members received a presentation and overview about the work and activities at the Pegasus Riding Centre. (A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed minutes.)

Dawn Watson and Laura Winter presented their report and their key points included:-

- The Pegasus Riding Centre was opened in 2009 and was now managed by Active Northumberland, catering for around 90 riders per week, 80% of whom were disabled.
- It hosted and worked in partnership with the Morpeth Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) Group.
- There were 13 RDA ponies and 17 private liveries.
- Eight schools from Northumberland and Newcastle visited the centre regularly. Adults from Tynedale Centre in Hexham also attended.
- The centre catered for a mixture of abilities and disabled. Some groups had riders, both able bodied and disabled, riding to the same ability.
- The centre depended on its volunteers and welcomed anyone who was willing to help even for only an hour.
- The Centre held a number of fun in-house competitions usually centred around Easter, Halloween and Christmas.
- This year it hosted the Northern Regional Qualifier to enable disabled riders to compete in a national competition. 14 riders qualified. Councillors Jackson and Homer had presented the rosettes.
- The national competition was held in Gloucestershire and the centre's riders and horses were very successful.



Members welcomed the report and the work it did with the RDA. It was noted that the centre could not operate without its volunteers and would welcome more. Members agreed to spread the word locally. There were also funding requirements such as for the provision of a bath and solarium for the horses

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

**61. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings. (A copy of the report is filed with the signed minutes as **Appendix E**)

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**62. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 14 October 2019, at 4.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth.

This meeting would deal with planning matters only.

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**DATE** .....