

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, 13 January 2020.

PRESENT

Councillor J.A. Beynon
(Vice-Chair, in the Chair for items 111-118)

(Planning Vice-chair Councillor L. Dunn in the chair for items 104-110)

COUNCILLORS

Bawn, D.L	Ledger, D.
Dickinson, S.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Dodd, R.R.	Towns, D.J
Foster, J.D.	Wearmouth, R. (from item 111)
Jones, V.	

CABINET MEMBERS

Daley, W.	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Oliver, N.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bennett, Mrs L.M.	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Gerard, J.	Employability & Programme Manager
Hadden, D.	Solicitor
King, M.	Area Highways Manager
Kingham, A.	Director - Business Development
Murphy, J.	Principal Planning Officer
Soulsby, R.	Planning Officer
Wardle, S.	Neighbourhood Services Area Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Nugent, D.	Healthwatch
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104. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E. Armstrong and P.A. Jackson.

105. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday, 9 December 2019 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

106. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor D. Bawn declared a prejudicial interest in Planning Application 19/04195/FUL however, this item was withdrawn from the agenda.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

107. 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

108. 19/03853/FUL

Development of an extension to the existing customer car park and associated works

Land North Of Dobbies Garden Centre, Street Houses, Ponteland,

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

Councillor S. Johnson (Ponteland Town Council) addressed the meeting. Her key points included the following:-

- The Town Council objected to the application as this land was in the Green Belt.
- It disagreed with the view that the land could be developed due to it having been previously developed.
- The land was in the open countryside and the roundabout at the entrance to the site was an important entrance to Ponteland.
- It disagreed with the officer comment that the use of grasscrete would result in less impact and harm to the area.

- Neighbouring fields were used for grazing farm animals and there was an adjacent wildlife corridor. There was also evidence of earlier use of ridge and furrow.
- The need for the additional car parking spaces was queried as there always seemed to be spaces in the car park.
- The Green Belt must be protected because once it was gone it was gone forever.

Mr. A. Horrix (Applicant) addressed the meeting speaking in support of the application. His key points included the following:-

- Dobbies was one of the largest and most successful garden centre businesses across the UK.
- It was important that the company continued to invest in its centres.
- Dobbies was seen as a retail and leisure development by many and was very popular within the community.
- It had become evident that the Ponteland site needed further investment as its car park was too small. This was in comparison with other similar Dobbies sites in the country.
- Customers had expressed frustrations at peak times with the amount of parking. Parking surveys had confirmed the need for additional car park spaces.
- The area of land in question was sometimes used as overflow parking at peaks times but was not suitable for use by wheelchairs.
- The design of the proposal was sensitive, in a good location, and visually attractive. SUDS drainage was being provided.
- Highways and Ecology had no objections .
- The existing car wash site would be moved.
- The development was appropriate and not too visible from the road. There would be no harm to the Green Belt.

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

- The definition of previously developed land in the NPPF was '*Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure*'. Therefore, this was the reason the Local Planning Authority considered the principle of development acceptable in the Green Belt.
- If the land in question had belonged to a neighbouring farmer and not within the curtilage of the Dobbies' site, then it would be designated as agricultural land.
- Some of the land in question was already used by the car wash facility.
- The whole site was washed over by Green Belt.

Councillor D. Towns then proposed the officer recommendation to grant the application as set out in the officer report. This was seconded by Councillor D. Ledger.

Debate then followed and key points included:

- There was concern at the effect of the extension of the Dobbies' site on the shops in Ponteland. Although Dobbies would create jobs there could be a detrimental effect elsewhere.
- It was noted that no sequential test was required as part of the assessment of the proposal and so the impact on Ponteland's shops had not been assessed.
- The application was not for a new centre, it was already there but with parking problems. The proposal may help ease problems with parking.
- The additional parking was only needed at peak times and most people had no problems parking there.
- Dobbies offered something different to the high street, enabling people to get their car washed, whilst having a coffee and doing some shopping. It brought people out of Newcastle and the suburbs and into Ponteland.
- A condition was being recommended to ensure that all the tree planting and landscaping must be carried out.
- The existing car park operated on a one way system and it was important to consider safety issues about a larger number of cars passing in front of the entrance. It was noted that this could be discussed with the applicant, although Highways had raised no objections to the proposals.
- The reasons for supporting the development in the Green Belt had been clearly explained and the land could be legally considered as previously developed land. There would not be a huge visual impact from the site.

On being put to the vote, it was agreed by 8 votes for to 2 against with 0 abstentions, that it be

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

109. 19/04195/FUL

**Change of use from bowling pavilion to cafeteria, conversion and refurbishment, new terrace to the front of the building and extension to the rear. Addition of modular building for storage as supplemented by revised Design and Access Statement received 12/11/19
West Tennis Courts, Carlisle Park, Castle Bank, Morpeth**

This item was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

110. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

Members received a report updating them on the progress of planning appeals. (Report attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix B**)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

Ch.'s Initials.....

Castle Morpeth Local Area Council, 13 January 2020

On the conclusion of the development control business at 5.15 pm, the meeting adjourned as the remainder of the agenda consisted of other Local Area Council business scheduled to begin at 6pm.

111. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair explained that this item provided an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions either at the meeting or submit them in advance.

There were no public questions.

112. PETITIONS

Members were informed that, since the previous meeting, no new petitions had been received, there were no reports due on petitions previously received, nor any updates due on petitions previously considered.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

113. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

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

Neighbourhood Services

- Waste collections over the Christmas/New Year period had gone very well, despite an increase of 40 tonnes.
- Ground maintenance work was going better than planned and members were asked to make any requests as soon as possible.
- Leaf clearance was under way and there were a number of problem areas.
- Recruitment for summer staff would soon be underway.
- Members should let the Area Manager know if they were aware of any reactive work that was required.

Highways Services

- There were a large number of potholes and the numbers were likely to increase due to the high level of rain recently.
- Potholes would be repaired as quickly as possible.
- Resurfacing was due to commence on Middle Drive, Darras Hall shortly along with work at Morpeth Railway Station car park.
- A message would be sent to members soon regarding the patching programme due to start in April.
- Work at Cottingwood Lane had been delayed to allow utility works to take place.

- Timber kerbing had been installed at Pegswood school to prevent damage to the grass by vehicles. Cllr Towns praised these works for the design and value for money
- A local resident had been informed that posts that had been placed on land at the Shilivington/Kirkley road end, should be removed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

114. BUDGET 2020-21 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Local Area Council received a presentation as part of the State of the Area Debate, which outlined the Council's strategy for the 2020-21 Budget, within the context of the Corporate Plan. A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed minutes. A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed minutes.

The presentation covered a number of areas including:-

- Reviewing the achievements of the current administration since 2017.
- Investment in local authority housing and provision of additional affordable housing.
- Most residents were satisfied with support received in health and social care.
- All of Northumberland County Council's services were rated good or outstanding.
- Northumberland was being promoted in a positive way and £1 billion had come into the county via tourism spend.
- Funding for improvements to rural broadband.
- Road improvements including the Blyth relief road and car parking in towns.
- Improvements to cycling and walking network.
- Investment in schools in Ponteland, Hexham, Amble and Seaton Delaval.
- Increase and develop the SEN capacity in Northumberland.
- Availability of apprenticeships.
- Significant investment in infrastructure in local towns
- Transforming and upgrading sport and leisure facilities
- Grasping all opportunities to bring funding into Northumberland
- There was confidence that £21.7 million savings could be achieved over a two year period whilst protecting front line services.
- A transition team had been set up.
- An increase in Council Tax of 1.99% was proposed. Further details would be considered in February 2020.

Discussion followed and points raised included:-

- There needed to be more public participation in the Local Area Council meetings and ideas on how to achieve this were welcome.
- Choppington Parish Council had a People's Panel which provided feedback on local issues. The Panel's views were taken into account before decisions such as on the budget were made.
- Local organisations could use the Local Area Council meetings as a vehicle to showcase their work and services.

- Forums in towns such as Hexham, Morpeth, Alnwick, Blyth and Berwick could also be used as a way of engaging with the community.
- Groups of towns and villages could be formed for discussions with Councillors and to show that the community was being listened to.
- It was suggested that the venue for the Castle Morpeth LAC should move around the area. It was noted that this would be necessary from July 2020 to January 2021 whilst refurbishment work took place in the Council Chamber.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

115. SOCIAL CARE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME 'CARE FOR LIFE'

Members received a presentation about the Social Care Leaders Apprenticeship programme and opportunities for offering existing social care staff and/or new talented individuals to enter social care as potential future managers and leaders. A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed minutes.

A number of points were made during the presentation, including:-

- The programme aimed to raise the profile of adult social care and to allow succession planning by nurturing a younger workforce in 16-25 age group.
- A website had been developed along with TV and radio adverts, a leaflet and posters.
- Much of the development was in-house to reduce costs.
- The campaign reached over 150,000 people and the website had over 7,000 hits.
- Engagement events were held and achieved varying levels of attendance and recruitment.
- Interest was generated from outside Northumberland but all the recruitment had taken place from local residents.
- Interviewees had mainly fallen in the 18-25 year old bracket with a number of Looked After Children and school leavers being involved.
- A new recruitment campaign would commence in spring 2020 and current apprentices would be used as case studies for the next cohort.

Members welcomed the presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

116. HEALTHWATCH NORTHUMBERLAND

Members received a presentation from Derry Nugent, Co-ordinator of Healthwatch, covering current work and feedback received by Healthwatch from health and social care service users. Members' feedback and insights into current health and social care issues in their communities was welcomed. (A copy of Healthwatch Northumberland's Quarterly Report for July – September 2019/20 is attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix C.**)

The following points were raised during the presentation:-

- The quarterly report was sensitive to local issues and could produce spikes in the data at certain times.
- The report could be refined to cover any issues of particular interest to the Local Area Council.
- Most feedback received was health related but it was acknowledged that the care provider referred to in comments was not necessarily the County Council.
- Healthwatch had the power to 'Enter and View' care facilities although it was not an inspection. This power had not previously been used but would be from February 2020.
- Meetings of Healthwatch moved around the county and meetings always had a drop in session beforehand. Healthwatch would be happy to come along to any Local Area Council meetings.
- Upcoming work for Healthwatch included:-
 - The annual survey - to receive comments about people's experiences of health and social care over the last 12 months. A number of meetings were set up during February and March. The last annual survey had about 800 responses.
 - Patient participation group report.
 - Audiology services report.

Members made the following comments:-

- Audiology services had been available locally in the Choppington area but had now moved to Cramlington. This caused transport difficulties both for parking or for those relying on public transport.
- Eye screening had now moved from being available at local opticians to different locations and, again, could cause problems for those with transport difficulties.
- Hospital to Home care - this was a valuable service but it had been difficult to find out about it and to co-ordinate everyone who needed to be involved. This could be particularly problematic at a difficult time for a family.
- Healthwatch should consider attending forum events which were held occasionally in the major towns in Northumberland.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

117. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

118. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Ch.'s Initials.....

Castle Morpeth Local Area Council, 13 January 2020

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**)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

119. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 10 February 2020, at 4.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth.

CHAIRMAN

DATE