

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held in the Community Room, Concordia Leisure Centre, Forum Way, Cramlington, NE23 6YB on Wednesday, 22 November 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor M Robinson (Vice Chair in the Chair)

**MEMBERS**

B Crosby  
W Daley  
S Dungworth  
B M Flux

B Pidcock  
I C F Swithenbank  
R Wallace

**OFFICERS**

M Carle  
G Gavin  
D Lally  
S McNaughton  
K Norris  
N Snowdon

Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Head of Neighbourhood Services  
Chief Executive  
Strategic Transport Policy Manager  
Democratic Services Officer  
Principal Programme Officer  
(Highways Improvement)

**ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor H G H Sanderson, Cabinet Member, Environment and Local Services

Councillor R R Dodd, Business Chair

Press: 0

Public: 7

**50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dunbar, Hepple, Richards and Swinburn.

## 51. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 18 October 2017, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair informed members that the agenda would be reordered to discuss petitions first.

## 52. PETITIONS

(a) **Receive any new petitions:** No new petitions were received.

(b) **Consider reports on petitions previously received:**

Request for Speed Cameras and Traffic Calming Measures in Rothesay Terrace and Victoria Terrace, Bedlington.

Mr Mal Hemsted was lead petitioner for the online petition but was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments. Ms Isabel Easson was lead petitioner for the paper petition.

Ms Easson stated that her daughter Bethany had lost her life due to a speeding motorist who had lost control on the stretch of road just passed Ian Bell's Motorcycle shop. She spoke about the horrific events that night when she and her son had witnessed paramedics trying to save Bethany's life. She said she would be haunted by those images for the rest of her life and was now on sick leave from work and suffered from panic attacks.

Ms Easson was very concerned that other serious incidents would take place in that area and referred to a recent incident when a car travelling in the other direction had overturned, gone through a house wall and narrowly missed a baby. The Police and journalists had also witnessed speeding cars and there had been 4 incidents that month. She referred to the officer report and stated that the speed surveys had been carried out at the wrong end of the road and should have been done on the stretch of road from Ian Bell's Motorcycles to the Spar.

There were still flowers outside of her house in tribute to Bethany but that had made no difference to speeding cars and overtaking. Residents were attempting to park their own cars in such a way to prevent speeding but it was an open area from Ian Bell's to the Spar. It was not only young drivers who were guilty of speeding, people of all ages did so and something had to be done before someone else was killed. She suggested that 30 mph signs should be erected in the area.

Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement), stated that he had written the report in response to the petition which recommended that further discussions take place between the Ward Member, the Parish Council, County Council road officers and the Police to consider appropriate measures. A

meeting had been arranged the following week with the local Police then a meeting with the Parish Council was scheduled for 7 December. All issues would be discussed and would be reported back to Ms Easson and Mr Hemsted. He also offered to meet with Ms Easson outside of the meeting that night to discuss the matter further.

Mr Snowdon pointed out that, where there were street lights, it was assumed that people recognised it to be a 30 mph area but he would look at that further.

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services stated that Mr Snowdon had carried out a lot of work on the matter and assured Ms Easson that it would get full attention. He added that a verbal update would be provided at January's meeting of the Local Area Council.

Discussion ensued about the possibility of inviting the Police to January's meeting to explain the criteria for speed cameras and the need to put pressure on them about changing that criteria if necessary. The Chair advised that it was more appropriate to receive details of the criteria first and members could then make a collective decision as to whether the Police should be invited to attend. Mr Snowdon agreed to request the required information from the Police and forward it to Democratic Services who would circulate it to members of the committee.

The Cabinet Member said progress would be made by January and reiterated that an update would be provided for the Local Area Council.

Discussion then took place about the leniency of the sentence given to the person who had caused Bethany's death and frustrations with the legal system.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) An update be provided at the January meeting regarding progress made.

**(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered:** No updates were received.

### **53. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Keith Dalton, Bedlington

Mr Dalton said he had read in the local press that Arch was to be disbanded and asked if that would affect work on the former Tesco site in Bedlington. He also asked if the review into Active Northumberland would go ahead.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that Arch would be dissolved and a new company formed. Further consultation had taken place regarding the former Tesco site and

the scheme would go ahead, running concurrently with formation of the new company.

The Chief Executive stated that Active Northumberland was a charitable body with its own board. The review was almost complete but there was some additional work to be done. The board would consider the review and, in due course, decide what actions it wished to take.

Mary Pidcock, Seaton Delaval

Mrs Pidcock referred to a meeting the Deputy Leader had attended in July regarding Holywell First School and requested an update.

In response the Deputy Leader said there were a number of pressures in terms of school build and justification was required. Holywell First School was being considered along with a number of other schools across the County. A business plan had been submitted and clear decisions were required about prioritising schools in Northumberland.

Christine Taylor, Bedlington

Mrs Taylor asked if there would be an emphasis on pushing the Core Strategy forward quickly.

Councillor Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services, stated that the new administration had felt that the proposed Core Strategy could be different. More staff had been allocated to work on it and that was being done in the best interests of the County. A report was being presented at Cabinet the next day which would be discussed. He said that if Mrs Taylor required any further information she could contact him.

Mrs Taylor referred to the former Council offices in Bedlington which had stood empty for some time and said she had enquired if the car park to the rear could be used for additional car parking for the town. She had been informed that the building had been sold, however, she now believed that was not the case. In response to a question, Mrs Taylor confirmed that Traffic Wardens did issue parking tickets if that car park was used. She added that the Police were having their car pound resurfaced and were taking up parking spaces behind the former Tesco site which was having an impact on shoppers.

In response Councillor Wallace confirmed that the sale of the former Bedlington Council offices had fallen through. He agreed that parking in the town was getting worse and that Mrs Taylor's suggestion would benefit the town. The Highways Delivery Area Manager said he would forward the suggestion to Lynne Ryan, Network Manager, copying in Councillor Sanderson.

Brian Oliver, Bedlington

Mr Oliver asked if the revised Core Strategy would go out for public consultation.

Councillor Sanderson confirmed that it would. The Chair added that there was a legal requirement for it to do so.

Adam Hogg, Bedlington

Mr Hogg referred to the ongoing issue of problems at the entrance to St Benet Biscop School, Bedlington and stated that buses were now driving completely over the grass on the exit side. He reiterated his concerns that another fatality would occur and asked what was going to be done. The Chief Executive said the issue would need to be discussed with the headteacher and the Diocese. Mr Hogg provided background information regarding suggestions which had been put forward and which had been rejected by the headmaster. The Chair reiterated that officers had done everything they could but agreed that pedestrians were being put in danger. The Chief Executive said she would speak to the Commissioner for Schools and take the matter further.

Written Question from Alex Wallace, Chairman, East Bedlington Parish Council

The Chair read out a question which had been submitted in advance of the meeting and referred to a recent fire at St Bede's School in Bedlington that had resulted in the loss of 4 classrooms. Following a recent consultation, the Department of Education had decreed that fire sprinklers were not necessary in schools. That was in England, however, they were mandatory in Scotland and Wales. Councillor Wallace asked how many schools within the catchment area of the Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council were fitted with fire sprinklers and, if none at all, would the Area Council do all it could in its power to support the installation of a fire sprinkler system in the schools for which it had responsibility?

The Chair then read out a joint response from the Managing Architect, Property Services and the Chief Fire Officer. The cost and disruption of trying to retrospectively fit sprinkler systems in all existing school buildings made that option unviable given the nature and use of school buildings, which were staffed during opening times, did not have any 'residential' overnight accommodations issues, had smoke detection and fire alarm systems and established evacuation procedures. It had therefore been Council policy since 2006 to only fit sprinklers in all new build schools. Only completely new schools had them installed. Extensions to existing buildings did not have them fitted in order that the same procedures were carried out across all school buildings. Schools in the local area which had sprinkler systems installed were New Delaval Primary School and Newsham Primary School. It was noted there were currently 129 schools within the local authority which did not have sprinklers fitted. Academies or PFI buildings (Blyth Quays Trust, Cramlington Learning Village, Josephine Butler, Bedlington High for example) may have sprinklers, however, the Council did not manage those buildings.

#### **54. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

This item enabled Members to raise issues about services provided by the Local Services group with the area managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services.

The following issues were raised:

When would the pedestrian crossing on the B331 at Bedlington be complete? The Highways Delivery Area Manager said it was still in the design process but he would request that it be implemented as soon as possible.

Could speed surveys be carried out in Nedderton Village and Hartford Road. The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) said he would follow up the requests.

A member said he did not understand why Local Services Issues was a standing item on the agenda as members could raise queries direct with officers. Discussion ensued and the Deputy Business Chair said he would discuss the issue at the next Local Area Chair's meeting.

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS - CORPORATE**

#### **55. WINTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE**

The report provided members with an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services period. (A copy of the report is filed with the signed minutes as Appendix B.)

Councillor Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services said the fleet was ready for the winter period and gritters had already been out on a number of occasions. He expressed his gratitude to all of the staff involved which was echoed by members.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### **56. LOCAL POTHOLE FUND UPDATE**

The report provided an overall progress update on the Local Pothole Fund. (A copy of the report is attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix C.)

The Chair said he was surprised to learn that not all members had submitted requests for funding and that there was a huge underspend. In response a member said he did not agree that it was within a member's remit to go out and look for potholes as there were staff to do that. The Chair pointed out that many of his constituents reported problems directly to him.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services stated that it was a pilot scheme and if it did not work it would be discontinued. However, he said it was a genuine attempt to allow local members to work with officers to address particular problem areas and he was very pleased with take up for the first round. Members would receive application forms to submit requests for the next round shortly and he hoped they would participate.

In response to a questions it was stated that:

- All requests were in hand, had been programmed and a large percentage would be complete by the end of the year;
- problems with utility manholes were picked up by inspectors;
- the scheme was aimed at repeated potholes which required permanent repair.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS - LOCAL**

### **57. UPDATE ON ASHINGTON/BLYTH/TYNE LINE**

Stuart McNaughton, Strategic Transport Policy Manager, was in attendance to provide a slide presentation to update members on the above. (A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed Minutes.)

The presentation covered a brief history of services, explained the scope of the proposed scheme, including options for provisions of half-hourly peak services and hourly off-peak services, 7 new stations, aspiration for a 30 minute journey time and future prospects for freight traffic. The scheme would benefit 180,000 residents, create 10,630 new homes, provide access to the metro and ease highway congestion.

Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) was a process worked through with Network Rail and was divided into 8 stages. GRIP 2 was complete and it had been confirmed that the scheme was technically feasible. However, at a cost of around £195 million it would not be possible. The completion of GRIP 3 was key to attracting potential funders but it would need to be at the right price. A cost challenge exercise with Network Rail would confirm the key drivers of the project, review the scheme of works and identify opportunities for efficiencies and identify key threats. Value engineering opportunities included, level crossings, signalling, electric power and plant and track. High level risks would need to be taken into account such as freight, ground conditions due to it being a previous mining area, path and platform capacity and level crossing.

In terms of the way forward, the target was 4 months to complete value engineering, GRIP 3 would commence in Spring 2018 with the scheme opening in 2022. Reference was made to the recent announcement of the North of Tyne Devolution settlement and some possible funding from there. Franchise Operator

Liaison was a key issue as services could be provided to places such as the Metro Centre and Hexham. It was noted that Branding would need to be pitched right.

Following the presentation, comments were made and information provided:

- When the North of Tyne Devolution settlement was announced, there had been specific reference made to money being available for the Metro, had the Ashington/Blyth/Tyne line been mentioned? The Deputy Leader said it hadn't but further announcements would be made on Friday.
- Network Rail would own the track and stations. The Council would not own any of it but would help to develop it and provide funding for infrastructure.
- Car parking had been considered and was part of the demand and revenue process. Estimated numbers for walkers, cyclists and drivers would be considered. Public transport was vital and Council officers would be liaising with Arriva buses in that regard.
- It was confirmed that a business case would go to Central Government. It was hoped there would be private sector funding which would be supplemented by Central Government.
- With regard to freight operations, they would be kept in scope initially then developed further.
- It was envisaged that there would be an interchange at Newcastle rather than having direct trains to London from local stations.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **58. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to note the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings, any suggestions for new agenda items would require confirmation by the Business Chair after the meeting. (A copy of the work programme is attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix D.)

A member suggested that the layout of the work programme should be amended to be more like a forward plan. She had put a suggestion forward for Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and suggested a similar format for this committee.

Discussion ensued about future agenda items for this committee and the role of the committee. The Deputy Leader pointed out that members needed to take ownership of the agenda and said he would like to see more community groups come along to share information. The Business Chair and Cabinet Member for



Environment and Local Services were present at the meeting and would be listening to the comments put forward. However, this was not a Scrutiny Committee and offered a different layer of communication with the public.

In response to comments about venues for particular agenda items, it was pointed out that venues were booked in advance of the agenda being set and could only be booked where and when suitable rooms were available.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**59. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be for planning applications only and was scheduled for Wednesday, 20 December 2017 at 5:00 pm at Netherton Social Club, Bedlington.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_