

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held in the Jubilee Social & Community Centre, Highcliffe, Spittal, Berwick-Upon-Tweed, TD15 2JL on Thursday, 23 November 2017 at 3.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Castle
(Chair, in the Chair, items 71 - 73, 79 - 86)

Councillor T. Thorne
(Planning Vice-chair, in the Chair, items 74 - 78)

MEMBERS

G. Hill
G. Lawrie
G. Roughead

C. Seymour
J.G. Watson

ALSO PRESENT

H.G.H Sanderson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

N. Armstrong
M. Bird
P. Bracken
N. Easton
J. Hitching
P. Jones

M.King
D. Lally
T. Lowe
R. McKenzie

E. Sinnamon
P. Soderquest
W. Stephenson
C. Thompson

Principal Planning Officer
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Solicitor
Senior Policy Officer
Senior Sustainable Drainage Officer
Director of Local Services and
Housing Delivery
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Chief Executive
Senior Planning Officer
Senior Programme Officer
(Highways Improvements)
Senior Planning Manager
Head of Housing Services
Senior Environmental Health Officer
Principal Highways Development
Management Officer

S. Holmes - Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust, C. Lark - Border Buses, S. Morrison - West Coast Motors, M. Podevyn - Sustrans

Ch.'s Initials.....

Around 30 members of the public were in attendance at the 3pm start, and around 90 members of the public were in attendance at the 6pm section of the meeting.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Members were welcomed to the meeting by Councillor Castle, who provided an explanation of the format for the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Bridgett, Clark, Moore, Murray, Pattinson and Renner-Thompson.

72. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday 19 October 2017, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to being amended to read 'North Northumberland Local Area Council', not 'Cabinet, on page 1, minute 61, and reference to Councillor Robert Bruce on page 6 as being the Chair of Berwick Town Council be redacted, as Councillor Roughead was the Mayor.

(Councillor Thorne then in the Chair.)

73. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report explained how the Local Area Council was asked to decide the planning applications attached to the agenda using the powers delegated to it. (Report enclosed with official minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

74. 17/00194/FUL

Reconfiguration of existing golf course, change of use of land to accommodate up to 216 holiday caravans, erection of leisure 'hub' building and separate golf building, and associated access and landscaping works

Land South West Of Chalets, Percy Wood Golf Club And Country Retreat, Coast View, Swarland, Northumberland, NE65 9JW

Members were advised that the application had been withdrawn at the request of the applicant, and it was anticipated to be presented instead to January's meeting.

75. 17/00195/OUT

Outline application for the demolition of existing golf clubhouse and associated buildings and development of up to 16 dwellings with all matters reserved apart from access

Golf Club House, Percy Wood Golf Club And Country Retreat, Coast

View, Swarland, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 9JW

Members were advised that the application had been withdrawn at the request of the applicant, and it was anticipated to be presented instead to January's meeting.

76. 17/03194/VARYCO

Variation of condition 3 (usage) and condition 4 (noise) pursuant to planning permission 99/B/0620 in order to vary the wording of the conditions

Bedmax Ltd, Greymare Farm, Detchant, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7PG

Principal Planning Officer Neil Armstrong introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

A letter had been received from R & K Wood Planning on behalf of Residents of Detchant Association (RODA), which had also been sent directly to members. This was a lengthy submission that raised a number of concerns on this application and also application 16/02192/FUL. The letter made comments in respect of the:

- procedures for consultation on additional noise assessment information submitted with the application;
- basis for conclusions on noise impact arising from the two applications are not substantiated by submitted information;
- submitted noise assessment demonstrates there has been a breach of the original 1999 application noise condition that has not been addressed or enforced by the LPA;
- current application is a retrospective one that seeks to regularise a breach as a basis for the proposed bagging plant extension;
- production of Hotmax and Stockmax have also been a breach of condition not enforced by the LPA which the current variation applications are now seeking to regularise;
- current applications represent an established pattern of retrospective applications proposals which have been allowed to be brought forward by an ongoing lack of monitoring and enforcement on the part of the LPA.

Officers have considered the additional representations and discussed with Legal and Public Protection officers and consider that these would not affect the recommendation within the report or prevent the determination of the application.

The application sought to vary the wording of conditions in respect of use and noise levels attached to a permission granted for an application submitted in 1999 for the change of use of an agricultural building at Greymare Farm, Detchant to a commercial building for the production of shavings for horse bedding.

The report set out the main issues that have been considered by officers as part of the application, which include the impacts arising from the proposed variation of the conditions on the site and surrounding area. Particular consideration has been given to historic and ongoing concerns and matters related to associated traffic movements to and from the site through Detchant, and also in respect of the information submitted in respect of noise assessment. Detailed comments had been submitted by RODA that are summarised in the report, and two letters supporting these concerns had also been submitted. Letters of support for the proposal had also been received.

There were clearly significant concerns from residents and businesses in Detchant that were related to the planning history of the site, significant expansion in the use over time and these were ongoing with concerns and complaints being regularly raised in respect of traffic movements to and from the site. Officers fully acknowledged these and have given consideration to them as part of the assessment of this application.

There was an established use on the site that had the benefit of planning permission, and as set out in the report, the Council had sought to address and mitigate impacts in respect of traffic movements when considering a previous retrospective application for a storage building at the site. This resulted in conditions covering the Bedmax operations in relation to a Traffic Management Plan, as well as restrictions on times and numbers of HGV vehicle movements. The proposed variation of the condition to include reference to additional products already being produced at the site was not considered to result in additional traffic movements over and above those already consented, and the report recommended that the same restrictive conditions were attached to any further grant of permission on the site.

With regard to noise there had been ongoing consultation with Public Protection officers, who were now satisfied that the proposed variation to the noise levels and timing would not result in harm to residential properties. The proposal was therefore considered to be acceptable having regard to the development plan, the NPPF and other material considerations.

Andrew Hamilton then spoke in objection to the application, of which his key points were:

- his clients farmed 400 acres of land bisected by the U34
- Bedmax had to be commended as a successful local business that provided employment but the continuation of its development had been detrimental to local residents and businesses. There had been a catalogue of errors concerning the history of the site including the traffic management plan, code of conduct and Liaison Group. Bedmax had created a number of jobs and considerable profits from undertaking operations on the site outwith of their existing consents
- production of Hotmax and Stockmax could not be deemed to be a byproduct of wood shavings for horse bedding; it was a separate product with different raw materials, so the variation of condition should not be consented

- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlighted that the Government was committed to economic growth, but not to the detriment of local residents and businesses. There were a number of tourist related businesses within the locality, and his client's bed and breakfast (B&B) service would be seriously affected by a 10pm operation time, which would have a negative impact on such businesses due to noise pollution and traffic movements
- more detailed and up to date information was required on the noise survey, not 2013. It would appear that at no point had a check on Bedmax's compliance with the evening noise conditions been undertaken, so the Local Planning Authority was not in a position to take a decision
- there were further breaches on site and allowing this application would allow future intensification of the site and this would see applications in the future asking for amendments to the traffic management plan on the basis of safeguarding or creating more jobs. It was concerning that repeated retrospective applications were made for the site and there should be measures to prevent this continuing
- if members were minded to approve the application, a community fund should be set up as profits made were outwith of the existing agreed planning conditions.

John Lovett, agent for the application then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:

- regarding the proposed variation of Condition 3, the ambient noise level currently stood at around 41 - 44 decibels at most local residences. Up to 35 decibels was allowed under the 1999 permission, and it needed to also be changed for 7am - 10pm. An upper limit of 45 decibels was accepted by Public Protection officers, and the World Health Organisation accepted a level of 50 decibels
- regarding Condition 4, Hotmax had been produced since 2008, and Stockmax since 2016. Stockmax was produced from 100% pine, with no spruce. If Hotmax was not produced, the dust would have to be removed from the site anyway, and this would require more heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements than currently resulted from the Hotmax production
- in the year up to 31 March 201, 8,700 bags of Stopmax had been produced, representing 0.002% of total sales, which had no material impact on Bedmax
- the restriction of HGV vehicles would remain as per the approved 2013 conditions, and the conditions required accordance with the agreed traffic management plan
- the changes to conditions 3 & 4 would have no material effect on the operation of the business, so the officer recommendation should be agreed.

Members then asked questions to officers of which the key points from the responses were:

- consultation with residents had included the usual neighbour notification letters for properties adjacent to the site, and site notices had been put up along the length of the U34. The Residents of Detchant Association

(RODA) had been consulted directly. Objections had been received about noise and inadequate information from the 2013 report. All details had been published on the Council's website but there had not been formal consultation; there was no statutory requirement to do so. The opportunity had been provided for comments to be made in a 14 day period, but this related more to the next application on the agenda for the extension of the building on the site to be considered

- regarding any robust enforcement of the maximum HGV movement of 550 movements within any four week period, enforcement officers had requested the information, and it had been discussed at Liaison Group meetings. The honesty of the applicant was relied upon, but any enormous volume of vehicle movements was likely to result in objections
- regarding the impact on other businesses affected other than the B&B, although aware of the impact of traffic on residential amenity, comments had been raised about disruption during the construction of passing places, which had been raised with the Liaison Group
- HGV movements were expected to stay as per the traffic plan; this application was to amend conditions including hours and production
- people could keep a register of HGV movements if they wished, planning enforcement officers could investigate concerns raised
- Public Protection had not received any complaints about noise during the last two years. 10 had been received between 2013-15. All had been investigated over at least seven monitoring visits, and none had been substantiated
- noise levels had been carried out at the nearest residential properties at Greymere to ensure Condition 4 was being adhered to
- the applicant had drawn a tighter red line boundary on the map than originally submitted; members could only deal with what was presented today rather than the possibility of any additional buildings in the future
- HGV movements in recent months up to August 2017 included 288, 416, 386 and 286. The highest figure during 2016 was 544; conditions had not been breached
- some issues had been raised by residents about the noise generated from the bagging plant.

Councillor Castle then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Watson.

In moving the recommendation, Councillor Castle stressed that it was important that the business did not breach its conditions. The hours were not changing and the only change was the noise limit, which Public Protection considered acceptable.

Councillor Hill indicated that she would have moved to defer the application, as she did not consider there had been a proper assessment of noise impact, no proper agreement or robust way to enforce traffic requirements, there was a mission creep of several retrospective applications, plus there was currently a vacancy for the chair of the Liaison Group, which she suggested could be filled either by Councillor Castle or Thorne.

The Solicitor advised that a substantial motion was already in place, so Councillor Castle's motion needed to be debated first.

Debate then followed of which the key details were:

- it would not be possible to record every vehicle passing through. Local people could report on any huge surge in volume, as often was the case with quarries; it would be clear if the conditions were being abused
- 550 HGV movements per four week period would equate to around two trips on average for each operational hour
- it was a narrow access road; it was not a huge amount of HGVs per hour but a high amount for Detchant. Improvements had been made including interactive road signs
- a procedure was in place to stop inconvenience being caused for residents
- faith was expressed in officers' assessments, and members were in a better place to judge the application than in 2013, as four years of experience were available to judge from. The figures related to 10 movements a day on several months, so how could they object?
- concerns regarding the independence of the noise assessment
- businesses did create noise, and officers would monitor traffic movement and noise.

Following the debate it was further clarified by officers that a robust noise assessment had been carried out; officers were satisfied that the existing conditions were adhered to and there would be no increased detriment. The applicant paid for the assessment, not the Council, and officers scrutinised the report. If concerns were expressed about the experience of the assessors, their noise report would not be accepted.

It was then put to the vote, and with five votes in favour and two against the motion, it was:

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

77. 16/02192/FUL

Extension to existing shavings production plant and relocation of landscaping

Bedmax Ltd, Greymare Farm, Detchant, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7PG

Principal Planning Officer Neil Armstrong introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation, before which he provided updates for members.

Mr Armstrong referred further to the letter submitted from R & K Wood Planning on behalf of Residents of Detchant Association (RODA), as it applied to both this and application 17/03194/VARYCO. Officers had considered the additional

representations and discussed with Legal and Public Protection officers and considered that they would not affect the recommendation within the report or prevent the determination of the application.

The application sought permission to extend a building at Greymare Farm, Detchant which had permission for the production of shavings for horse bedding. The report sets out the main issues that had been considered by officers as part of the application, which included the principle of development, transport matters, landscape and visual impact and noise. As with the previous application, particular consideration had been given to historic and ongoing concerns and matters related to associated traffic movements to and from the site through Detchant, and also in respect of the information submitted in respect of noise assessment. Detailed comments had been submitted by RODA that were summarised in the report, whilst letters of support had also been received.

As with the previous application it should be noted there was an established use on the site that had the benefit of planning permission, and the Bedmax operations were subject to conditions in respect of traffic movements and noise. The proposed extension to accommodate bagging plant machinery was not considered to result in additional traffic movements over and above those already consented, and the report recommended that the same restrictive conditions were attached to any further grant of permission on the site. The layout, scale and appearance of the extension were considered to be acceptable and would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the site and wider area. Again, with regard to noise there had been ongoing consultation with Public Protection officers, who were now satisfied that the proposed extension to the existing building would be acceptable and would not result in harm to residential properties.

The proposal was therefore considered to be acceptable having regard to the development plan, the NPPF and other material considerations.

Andrew Hamilton then spoke in objection to the application, of which his key points were:

- there were serious questions over procedural matters with the application, which had been submitted in June 2016, using a mission creep and piecemeal approach to planning by the applicants. At no time had the Local Planning Authority's representative nor Bedmax's planning representative made the Liaison Group aware that a new report had been submitted in September 2016
- Mr Wood's letter had explained it was not acceptable to determine the application given the receipt of significant additional information, and the limited time for further comments was unacceptable; the application should have been deferred from this meeting as requested
- no public records existed of further discussions between the applicant and Public Protection officers. Allowing the production to continue until 10pm would have a negative impact on local businesses due to the noise pollution and traffic movements

- Mr Wood and RODA were not represented at this meeting as they felt aggrieved and despondent about how the application had been handled, the committee had to consider the procedural matters raised
- the noise data was based on out of date information from 2013 for the noise assessments and pre 2001 plans. Even if factoring in an error of 5%, the noise readings at the nearest residential properties would be in excess of the consented levels. Public Protection had made three objections to the application but following the site meeting raised no objection to the same report without explanation
- there were limitations on the site - no mains electric, water or gas; it needed a generator to run during operational hours. There were access difficulties along the U34, especially in winter. Any further expansion would only lead to further problems and the opportunity should be taken to preclude any further expansion on a site not designated as such
- there had been no discussions with residents about the effect of the applications upon the traffic management plan.

Agent for the application John Lovett then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:

- Bedmax was a leading UK company in the production of wood shavings, created in 1999 for agricultural diversification. 16 people were employed on site and a further 48 in the local supply chain. It provided supply chain economy particularly to the rural economy, as per paragraphs 18, 19 and 28 of the NPPF
- the new machinery would press goods into tighter bags and was quieter and produce more noise attenuation
- noise issues had been addressed
- the County Council's highways team did not object
- it would create a more efficient system with less HGV movements and be subject to the same planning permission as previously, to the benefits of residents and Bedmax.

Members then asked questions to officers of which the key points from officers responses were:

- regarding any concerns about procedural problems in relation to concerns about the 2013 data being out of date, Public Protection arranged their own new assessment. There was no statutory need for the consultation, and the 14 day period had already finished. No breach of procedure had taken place
- legally there was no problem with the 14 day period, and RODA were not a statutory consultee. Public Protection were the statutory consultee, and they were satisfied with the correct procedure being carried out. The Solicitor had not been asked and therefore was not in the position to comment on all procedural matters within the application
- the case officer had checked that all the required notification letters had been sent out as requested
- the possibility of the provision of a community benefit as part of the application had been raised by the Liaison Group at the approval of the storage building, but such additional funds would usually only be

considered for larger scale forms of development. They would require a Section 106 agreement, directly related to the development, which was not considered to be appropriate in this case for this scale of development.

Councillor Castle then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Watson. In moving the motion, Councillor Castle considered that reasons provided were not valid reasons to refuse the application; statutory consultees had responded, there was no change in vehicle restrictions and sufficient safeguards were in place. Councillor Watson added that members had been reassured that there would be a reduction in the number of vehicles and the plant would produce less noise in future.

The Vice-chair (Planning) added that work would take place with RODA to arrange for a new chair of the Liaison Group, so all the needs regarding transportation, noise and odour issues would be met to the benefit of Bedmax and its neighbours.

On there being no further debate, it was then put to the vote, and the motion was agreed by five votes in support to two against, and it was thus:

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

**78. 16/03510/FUL
Erection of 13 dwellings
Land North Of Horsley Place, Christon Bank, Northumberland, NE66 3FB**

Senior Planning Officer Tony Lowe introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

Mr Lowe firstly provided a number of updates, as follows in addition to objections received, with the main issues highlighted in the report, since publishing the committee agenda additional correspondence has been received from neighbours and uploaded to the website, raising concerns including:

- procedures for the notification of the application and the committee meeting were not followed
- distance to travel to speak at committee
- speed at which the application has been determined
- the use of the education contribution
- the use of the dwellings as second/ holiday homes
- development is outside the village boundary
- impact on flood/ drainage, including the proposed access to manholes
- the impact on highways, and ecology.

Members were advised that in response to the additional issues raised, following discussion with officers within our Registry Team, the relevant notifications for both the planning application and committee meeting had been issued; separate

consultations were not sent to residents who moved in to a local property after the submission of an application.

In this instance officers' advice was that the level of education contribution sought would meet the needs arising from the development and that it should be directed to the Duchesses School. As a C3 land use the potential for new dwellings had to be used as a second home remained, but it was not considered that in this instance, it would be reasonable to control this by condition.

An amendment was proposed to condition 5; following further assessment from the Highway Authority it had been requested that this condition should be amended to read:

Development shall not commence until details of the proposed highway works, "including but not restricted to footway works, highway realignment where necessary, together with associated works," have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The building(s) shall not be occupied until the highway works have been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

Members were also referred to paragraph 7.24 of the report line 4 at the end of the line from "with visitor parking within 2m off", which was to be deleted as visitor parking was no longer intended there.

The recommendation is that consent be granted subject to a legal agreement to secure the provision of two on-site affordable homes and a financial contribution of £17,600 towards education and subject to the conditions set out in the report as revised.

Mr Higginbottom and Mr Chillingsworth then shared the five minute public speaking slot for objectors. Mr Higginbottom spoke first, of which his key points were:

- there was still no proven evidence of the need for expensive housing locally
- were they to be permanent residences or second/holiday homes?
- it was a greenfield site
- where would sewage be directed? To currently drain it had to cross either his land or 4 Horsley Place
- he had suggested trees/bushes to be planted by the western boundary to screen existing properties, but none were included on the revised plans.

Mr Chillingworth's key points were:

- why was the meeting location in Spittal and not nearer the application site? Had it moved away so residents could not attend?
- there had been a lack of notification; it had been sent on 11 November
- traffic on the B1340 was horrendous in summer and winter, although a 30mph limit was in place. There was a problem with speeding and a risk of accidents and death

- building 13 houses might result in up to 26 additional cars making up to two trips a day each, adding to accident risk
- there were few village amenities locally; there was no need for new homes.

Agent for the application Craig Ross then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:

- much work had taken place with officers over 14 months on the application following the receipt of pre-application advice in 2016. Originally 30 houses had been proposed for the site, but this reduced on the planning officer's advice, and it now also included two affordable units
- a financial contribution towards education had been included, as had an amendment on condition 5 regarding highways
- no objections had been received from any statutory consultees
- objections received about local need and permanent residency were not material planning considerations
- it was a greenfield site but was not of high agricultural value, and work had taken place with the Sustainable Drainage Officer on sewage requirements
- tree planting would be considered as part of the landscaping condition included
- the development would support surrounding settlements also.

Members then asked questions to officers of which the key points from responses were:

- there had been drainage issues locally; Northumbrian Water had been consulted and a new scheme had been proposed with them to reduce flood risk in Christon Bank, which was currently at the feasibility stage
- if the application was considered to make any drainage problems worse, it could be addressed through a condition or S106 agreement, but this would be separate to the planning process
- the junction to the site was in accordance with adaptable statutory visibility requirements. The geometry of access adapted to national and local policy. If vehicles did not adhere to the 30mph speed limit, it was a police enforcement issue. The County Council were putting in mitigatory measures to reduce the speed of traffic coming in to the village
- it was on greenfield, not Green Belt land, and at the edge of the settlement
- the drainage scheme proposed for the site would direct water through the field into a pond which would attenuate at a rate of five litres per second, and be directed into a sewer northwards, which Northumbrian Water had confirmed was acceptable. Northumbrian Water also accepted the level of additional flows of foul water due to be generated.

Councillor Watson then moved the recommendation to approve, which was seconded by Councillor Castle. In supporting the recommendation, Councillor Castle added that he knew the area well, but speeding occurred in villages everywhere, and that was not reason to refuse an application for which there was already a 30mph speed limit in place locally. The houses would be quite spread out, and building could not be restricted just to certain centres; Christon Bank

could not be exempted from a small development of this nature; there were no valid planning reasons to refuse it. Councillor Watson sympathised with concerns about local housing need and holiday homes, but there were no planning reasons to refuse the application.

The Planning Vice-chair responded to the concern about the location of the meeting by explaining that previously both planning committees met in Morpeth, whereas now they took place in local areas so more people could attend, which would include more rather than less people.

On there being no further debate, the application was put to the vote, and the motion was agreed by four votes in support, one against, and two abstentions, and it was thus:

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED, subject to a legal agreement to secure the provision of two on-site affordable homes and a financial contribution of £17,600 towards education, and subject to the conditions set out in the report as revised.

At this point in the meeting, a member wished for her disappointment to be recorded that six apologies for absence had been received for this meeting, as councillors received allowances and the public might question why half could not be in attendance. This would be followed up after the meeting.

The meeting then adjourned at 4.54pm and Councillor Thorne vacated the Chair. The meeting restarted for the remainder of the agenda at 6pm, with Councillor Castle in the Chair.

OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

79. BORDER BUSES - BERWICK BUS SERVICES

The Chair explained that the order of the agenda would be amended to consider this item first. He explained that the presenters were attending to give an overview and then take questions, firstly from members then the public.

The Commercial Manager of West Coast Motors, and Operational Manager from Border Buses, which previously operated as Perryman's and was now owned by West Coast Motors attended to explain changes to their bus services in the Berwick area and answer questions.

Sharon Morrison, West Coast Motors then provided a detailed overview, of which the key details were:

- West Coast Motors were based on the west coast of Scotland
- they had recently purchased and invested £500,000 in new vehicles and £100,000 on ticket machines

- they had looked at a total of 253 changes, including Berwick town service. There had been very little bus usage, little reliability nor a customer friendly frequency
- they simplified the network down from the previous six or seven services
- services B1 and B2 were wholly commercially funded, and B3 was partly funded
- they had introduced a multi journey ticketing scheme, which had received a lot of criticism
- it was questioned how people defined their bus usage as 'regular' locally, with this meaning once a week for some
- Service B3 was served with the hopper. The changes would take effect on 27 November; they were not set in stone, but bus usage was currently running at around eight passengers per evening. They wished to remain running the service but it was difficult if capacity ran at a third
- Border Buses had made sensible changes; B1 was increasing its day trips, but B2 was just covering its costs, and B3 was not working
- investment had been made in an app for people to track the buses
- people needed to use the bus services and also more frequently to ensure their commercial viability

Councillor Glen Sanderson, County Council Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services then provided a further update. He had attended a recent meeting and discussed concerns about the situation with Councillor Hill. He had then written to Border Buses asking them to reconsider their changes, but they replied to say that they would not. As a result, consideration had been given to putting in place a pilot scheme to try and fill a gap in service, possibly through a taxi-bus service. This was being pursued but would take a few weeks to go through the tendering and approvals processes, with the intention that it would run for a period of three to four months. During the pilot period the operator would need to develop the service so it was commercially sustainable and didn't need on-going financial support from the Council to enable it to continue operating after the pilot came to an end.

Senior Policy Officer Neil Easton added that an approach had been received from a local taxi firm who were interested, and Border Buses' position was awaited. The operator was keen to pilot the service and run it to a timetable. The overheads would be lower than a large commercial bus operator. Seed funding had been requested to cover the costs. If few people used it, it would be unlikely to continue. It could serve other parts of Berwick. This would be pursued and discussed further.

Key points of questions from members/answers were as follows:

- regarding whether the changes 'not being set in stone' meant the possibility of further cuts, members were advised that changes were being made and if there was an increase in usage, the situation would be looked at. The company wished to make more journeys
- in response to whether the required 56 day notice had been given, Ms Morrison advised that this had been for the Traffic Commissioner, it would

have to be checked about the notifications to staff, and notification had been issued to the public at the end of October.

- reference was made to a number of matters including recent discussions, notifications sent and the recent demonstration against the proposals. The Chair then questioned the language used in response to a member by Ms Morrison, who then apologised for it
- a member expressed concern about the impact of the changes on access to/from after school clubs and people working after 5pm; people's access to the Pastures had been cut off as the last bus was now at 4.40pm. Councillor Sanderson added that the proposed additional service should fill this gap and help services to continue
- a member considered that the routes had been designed by somebody who didn't know Berwick
- it would have been better to have two routes that took longer as they would at least still get around the area. People on low incomes needed the chance to be able to get around
- a member stressed that the timetable for buses needed to be available; not everybody had access to a smartphone. There should be consultation with people who used the services, rather than relying on electronic data. Ms Morrison added that the app did target the next generation and a detoured route would lead to people migrating to taxis instead
- a member questioned whether an additional service would reduce the numbers on Border Buses and lead to them reducing the service further? Ms Morrison welcomed competition but if customers were lost certain journeys would be taken off if there was insufficient demand, plus they had operating costs. She apologised to regular users but said that this was not the case in Berwick, particularly with the B1 and B2, with even on busier nights the maximum number of passengers being only 15
- a member asked if in future there would be face to face consultations on proposals, to which Ms Morrison confirmed there would.

Key points from members of the public and responses:

- Perrymans had ran the service for 40 years, and the service had been hit in the last 18 months since the change in ownership
- did Border Buses not price the job and look at routes and background? It was not environmentally friendly to keep buses in the yard. Ms Morrison added that it had been properly commercially analysed. Ms Lark added that the last operator knew that difficult decisions were due and this had influenced their decision to sell the company, and few buses were still in the depot at 8am
- a promise had been made at a previous meeting in Prior Park that there would be no cuts, but residents had suffered and not able to access shops and community centres. Other areas of Berwick would suffer the same way next. Ms Morrison replied they had discussed arrangements and discouraged taxi usage at that meeting but that many residents used them rather than buses
- a resident had submitted 17 queries regarding issues about the route around Shieldfield Terrace but they had not been answered. Ms Morrison responded that it had been commercially sensitive. The area was still

served; there was a five minute walk to the 67 bus but it was not a door to door service. Some people would be affected but not enough to make the service viable

- a resident queried why other transport professionals had arranged a taxi-bus service if it was an option, and as West Coast Motors had spent £500,000 on buses, if services were not running, would the vehicles be used elsewhere? Ms Morrison confirmed that a trial vehicle was being used for the hopper taxi service. Ms Lark added that the B3 area served the area with some journeys visiting the Pastures, and Highcliffe was an established part of the route
- a resident questioned how would passenger numbers go up when services moved away from residential areas to industrial areas where people did not work beyond 5pm, and referred to 17 drivers being lost. Ms Morrison replied that recruitment drives were undertaken, they were not losing drivers, but could not discuss individual cases
- a resident referred to work at Galashiels about seeking customer views and was this done for Berwick? Ms Morrison advised that this did not happen as they were then taking over the business
- a resident questioned the notification to customers of changes and the withdrawal of the B3 and to instead serve by the hopper? Ms Morrison responded that some areas would be served and there had been an error in the communications, for which she apologised
- a representative of the Jubilee Centre referred to how the venue supported a wide variety of clubs and support groups including for low income families, and the changes in services would have a detrimental effect on many people who used services at the centre
- a resident was concerned that the new timetable was only made available that day, for which Ms Morrison apologised
- a resident queried if the County Council was made aware of proposals for cuts when service 464 was being tendered for. Ms Morrison replied that she had not been involved with the tenders, but that procedure had been followed. Mr Easton added that the changes made by Border Buses had taken place after the tendering of the 267 and 464 had taken place in June, so it was not possible to inform the Council at that time
- a resident expressed concern about the timings as they didn't allow long enough for shopping at a supermarket, and people often then had to wait two hours for a return journey. Ms Morrison replied that they had assessed the route in question which Perrymans operated, people used it little and it was reduced from 20 to eight times a day but usage remained low, and their business had to be commercially viable
- a resident questioned whether the proposed Council supported service would be accessible for prams, to which it was confirmed that there was no definite promise to, as it would depend upon the vehicles the operator had available, but if they could find an operator and a route, public money would be found to help subsidise it.

To conclude the question and answer section, the Chair acknowledged that feelings were running high about this issue. The minutes of this meeting would be publicly available.

At this point in the meeting a petition about the bus services was presented. Ms Morrison confirmed that it was not the company's policy to accept petitions, but the Chair confirmed that the Council would accept it and a response would be given. The lead petitioner provided her contact details for Democratic Services.

RESOLVED that a response be organised to the petition.

It was then proposed by Councillor Castle, seconded by Councillor Watson and RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue beyond three hours in duration.

80. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

To reply to any questions received from members of the public, which could be received in writing in advance of or asked at the meeting. Questions could be asked about issues for which the Council had a responsibility.

Malcolm Stanton, NE70 7PF referred to the minutes of the Area Committee - North meeting held on 12 September 2016 and asked the Council what progress if any had been made with:

1. the confirmation of a permanent 20mph speed limit on the U34 through Detchant;
2. review of the signage to confirm the temporary/permanent 20mph designation;
3. release of data recorded by the Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS); and
4. maintenance of the VAS signs, especially as the sign at the west side approach to Detchant appears to be working intermittently.

A written response had been organised, a copy of which was provided for Mr Stanton and members of the Local Area Council. The Chair read out the written answer, from the Head of Technical Services, as follows:

(1) Permanent 20mph

Reducing the speed limit was not a planning condition or a recommended action in the Traffic Management Plan, the Temporary 20mph limit was introduced to allay residents concerns while funding was sought via Bedmax for a permanent scheme. Officers extended the temp speed limit twice using LTP funding and the temporary order ceased 1 April 2017. Officers will work with Cllr Renner-Thompson to agree the way forward.

(2) Review of signage to confirm temporary/permanent 20mph limit

We are happy to discuss any issues relating to the temporary signs and some provisional sign locations for a permanent limit were shared with the various interested parties when the scheme estimate was generated. If funding for a permanent speed limit is secured then we will engage in the usual process to finalize the location of the signs and associated works.

(3) Release of the data recorded by the VAS signage

As yet no data has been downloaded from the signs. Arrangements will be made to download data and to provide this.

(4) Maintenance of VAS signs

It is current County Council policy not to purchase VAS signs or maintain them. The usual mechanism that enables their installation is if they are paid for by Parish/Town Councils or County Councillors through their Small Schemes Funding with maintenance taken on by a Parish or Town Council via a Section 50 agreement. In this particular case this has caused difficulty as the Parish Council did not wish to take on the Section 50 Agreement as they had not been involved in the process to install the VAS signs in Detchant. Officers will engage with County Councillor Renner-Thompson and the Parish Council to agree a way forward regarding maintenance going forward

Since a fault has been reported with one of the signs, in this interim period an Officer has contacted Unipart Dorman, the manufacturer of the signs, to report one of the signs is operating intermittently. The Officer attending the Local Area Council meeting is checking the signs. If there is a fault the signs would still be under warranty so they should be repaired without charge. Any further update will be provided at the meeting.

Brenda Stanton, Chair of Belford with Middleton Parish Council then confirmed at a previous meeting that VAS signs usually came with a three year warranty, and it was the responsibility of who paid to report problems with their operation.

Members were then advised that the signs had been checked shortly before the meeting, and both were working.

Michael Stewart, Berwick resident expressed concern that residents of Barley Rise and Ladywell Estate were charged £25 per month by Bernicia for grounds maintenance, yet the shrubs were only 18 inches high and had needed no maintenance over the past three years. Why was this money having to be paid, adding up to a total of £36,000 for the area, when no maintenance took place?

The Chief Executive confirmed that Mr Stewart's details would be taken and he would receive further contact but the Council could not enforce what was Bernicia's responsibility. A member added that a meeting to discuss had taken place, Bernicia had accepted it was their responsibility and would undertake some work, and if value for money had not been provided, a possible rebate or other support for residents should be considered, and was being looked at.

Mr Stewart would provide his contact details for Democratic Services to arrange for him to be contacted after the meeting.

Brian Parkin, Berwick Town Council expressed concern about the sporting facilities available in Berwick and asked when the findings of a report undertaken would be made available?

The Chief Executive responded that the leisure provider, Active Northumberland, was a charity that was funded by the Council as a separate organisation. Proposals were being developed for a new leisure service; new gym equipment had recently been invested in, and work was taking place on an alternative new facility, which would go to a full business case in early 2018.

RESOLVED that the responses be noted and Mr Stewart's query be followed up after the meeting.

81. PETITIONS

This item was to:

(a) Receive any new petitions: reference was made to the receipt of the petition about Border Buses' changes to their Berwick town services, for which a response would be organised.

(b) Consider reports on petitions previously received: to consider a report in response to a petition received requesting to re-route National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1) through Amble and to propose the next steps (report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix B);

Councillor Watson spoke on behalf of the lead petitioners, as a member of Amble Town Council. As a result, he declared an interest and explained that he would not participate in any vote/decision on the item.

Councillor Watson's key points were:

- Amble Town Council and the petitioners preferred the alternative route marked in blue in the report, rather than the current red route
- some people did not see a problem with the current exemption from the one way system for cyclists as part of the NCR1, but many comments had been posted on Facebook expressing concerns about its safety
- it had been made a one way street due to parking problems, but access was tight, especially for wagons, and traffic could easily pull out from parking, not expecting a bicycle to be coming the other way; it was an accident waiting to happen
- he asked the Local Area Council to consider expressing its support for rerouting the NCR1.

Senior Programme Officer (Highways Improvements) Richard McKenzie introduced the report with an explanation of the exemption for cyclists along the street and the available detour, but it was for members whether they wished to recommend either retaining or rerouting the NCR1 route.

Martin Podevyn, representing Sustrans, added that Sustrans' key focus was that the route was safe, direct and attractive. He expressed concern that the alternative route would go along the busy Percy Street including a dangerous right turn across a dangerous roundabout. He added that it was not necessarily

an issue regarding space for cyclists to be passed by traffic with the minimum distance, as in many two way streets only one vehicle could pass through at a time.

Members debated the issue further, of which their key points were:

- it was a dangerous situation to have motorists only going one way but cyclists also able to come the other way
- the alternative route proposed might be more dangerous
- the street was not wide enough to enable drivers to keep sufficient distance from cyclists passing the other way.

Members then voted on whether to retain or amend the route (Councillor Watson abstained) and by a vote of four votes to two members requested that the route be reconsidered. The Chair clarified the recommendations and next steps and it was then:

RESOLVED that the:

- (1) Local Area Council's preferred option is to reconsider the route;
- (2) issue be discussed further with the local ward member and Amble Town Council; and
- (3) outcome of the above be reported to the Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services for decision.

(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered: no further updates were due to be reported.

82. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

To raise any issues about services provided by the Local Services Group with the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services present. The Area Managers had principal responsibility for highway services and environmental services, such as refuse collection, street cleansing and grounds maintenance, within the geographic boundaries of the Local Area Council.

Members raised the following issues for the attention of the Highways Delivery Area Manager:

- thanks to officers for clearing of weeds by Weldon Bridge, Felton
- some delays in the street lighting programme and a specific light needing fixing on Highcliffe, Spittal
- whether Beal Bank, Warkworth would continue to be gritted as this was not specified on the leaflet produced about the routes covered
- details of a streetlight on North Street in Berwick which was not still not working after the surrounding bush had been cut back - details would be provided for the Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery
- the responsiveness of Local Services to issues raised was as good as ever

- the handling of a recent situation for disabled parking at Howick Street was praised, for which a letter of praise had been sent to the local MP and newspaper.

In response to the position regarding street lighting, the Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services explained recent difficulties with the street lighting contract but a new subcontractor had been appointed and good progress was being made. An action plan had been developed to ensure that requests were responded to quicker and the service would be much more effective by early in the new year.

RESOLVED that the issues identified be followed up by officers.

83. REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LOCAL SERVICES AND HOUSING DELIVERY

83.1 Winter Services Preparedness and Resilience

Members received an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services period. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix C.)

The Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services referred to how the winter fleet was already operating, the metering of salt supplies to avoid waste, desktop studies undertaken to optimise the use of vehicles, the excellent equipment available, and paid tribute to all the staff involved, who were very motivated.

A member queried any possible damage to historic buildings in areas like Berwick through stone erosion from gritting salt. Members were advised that significant improvements had been made in the accuracy of forecasting so salting was only undertaken when necessary and the technology used on the vehicles enabled the amount of salt used and spreading patterns to be carefully controlled to minimise wastage which also had the benefit of reducing the risk of salt damage to buildings and vegetation. However, the Council had a legal duty to maintain the highway in a safe condition, which included the need to salt roads during periods of cold weather in order to prevent accidents. It was not therefore possible to avoid the use of salt or brine. The fleet also had a three hour window in which to complete their salt spreading rounds so had to be highly mechanised in order to achieve this, so it wasn't practical to treat areas by hand.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

83.2 Local Pothole Fund Update

Members received an overall progress update on the Local Pothole Fund. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix D.)

The Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services explained how the

fund focused on addressing areas of roads that needed attention, of which 57 schemes were currently taking place. Members could continue to submit applications for areas in their wards which they considered needed attention; a further invite to submit requests had been circulated in the previous week

The Chair welcomed the fund and hoped it would continue in future years.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

84. CCTV IN NORTHUMBERLAND

The Head of Housing, Northumberland County Council, was in attendance to verbally explain the responsibility for CCTV provision in Northumberland and the role of town/parish councils. He explained that prior to 2009, district councils had operated their own arrangements for CCTV, mostly funded by the Home Office. After local government reorganisation this merged but the systems were not interlinked. The effectiveness of the arrangements were then reviewed, following which it was agreed to move away from having fixed cameras, and it was questioned why the cameras were in particular areas.

Under the new arrangements, 20 deployable cameras were available: this enabled coverage in towns/areas at specific times, plus could assist with event management arrangements, such as the Tall Ships. They could also be deployed in the event of any civil contingency challenges.

Discussions had also taken place with those town/parish/community councils which had fixed cameras to ask them to review their needs, with a view to them deciding what fixed cameras they needed and to pay for through their precepts. The County Council would then provide deployable cameras also where needed, but it was not a statutory responsibility for the County Council to provide it. The deployable cameras enabled use in rural as well as urban areas, and could provide community safety benefits.

In response to a question it was confirmed that:

- the deployable cameras had been used in local areas that were not covered by fixed cameras, in some cases at the request of the local Town Council, and further work also took place with other appropriate partners
- the County Council's focus was on looking at the lower end of antisocial behaviour, whereas any criminal behaviour was the police's role to monitor
- a problem solving approach was followed in response to issues, often following which a deployable camera would be used for around 3 - 4 weeks, then could be moved on to another location
- the cameras were Wifi enabled and included a two terabyte hard drive. If an incident was reported, the footage could be checked; they held up to 28 days of imagery. However there were very expensive to monitor, so the memory was checked following any issues being reported.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

85. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix E.)

The Chair referred to the Berwick Generation Commission item on the previous agenda and that it would be a standing item from now onwards. In the meantime, at the Chair's invite, Councillor Hill provided an update by explaining that the first meeting of the Berwick Regeneration Commission would take place on 27 November. Key issues due to to considered included:

- transport connectivity, to include a meeting on 16 January about improving Berwick - Edinburgh connectivity
- opportunities arising from Berwick's harbour and links to the sea and river
- the appearance of Berwick High Street
- a transformational project for the Barracks
- the possibility of a conference centre
- a Berwick focused tourism strategy
- improved hotel and leisure facilities
- more, and appropriately placed, housing.

RESOLVED that the update be noted and regular updates be provided.

86. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 21 December 2017 beginning instead at the earlier time of 3pm at Northumberland Hall, Alnwick, to consider planning applications.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....