NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held at St. James's Church Centre (upstairs hall), Pottergate, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1JW on Thursday, 23 January 2020 at 5.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Castle, G
(Chair, in the chair, items 107 - 108 and 112 - 123)

Councillor Thorne, T
(Vice-chair (Planning), in the chair, items 109 - 111)

MEMBERS

Clark, T	Pattison, W
Hill, G	Roughhead, G
Murray, A	Seymour, C

ALSO PRESENT

Armstrong, E	Jackson, P
Daley, W	Oliver, N
Dodd, R	Sanderson, G
Homer, C	Wearmouth, R

OFFICERS

Bird, M	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Bucknall, G	Highways Delivery Area Manager
Cartmell, V	Principal Planning Officer
Hadden, D	Lawyer
Hodgson, B	Neighbourhood Services Area Manager (North)
Kingham, A	Director - Business Development
Lally, D	Chief Executive
Lowe, T	Senior Planning Officer
Thompson, C	Highways Development Manager

Also in attendance:

D Nugent - Healthwatch
Press: 1, public: 8

(Councillor Castle in the chair.)

107. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridgett, Lawrie, Renner-Thompson and Watson.

108. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday, 19 December 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

(Councillor Thorne in the chair.)

109. 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.

110. 19/00730/FUL
Development of high-quality and inherently sustainable development of 7no. dwellings. The existing building on site will be demolished
Artique At The Marina, Marina Arms, The Wynd, Amble, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 0HH

Senior Planning Officer Tony Lowe introduced the application by first providing a number of updates. A site visit had taken place on 20 January 2020, at which issues of concern were raised about traffic exiting onto the A1068 and drainage issues.

The Vice-chair (Planning) read out a statement from Councillor Jeff Watson regarding this application:

"Unfortunately I cannot attend the next planning meeting. As the local member I would however like to support the above application. The applicant has listened to local concerns and developed a plan that I am happy with. I would like this to be read out at the planning committee if possible".

A representative from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) could not attend this meeting but had provided the following statement, which Mr Lowe read out:

"Although we are not a statutory consultee we have provided comments on The Wynd at Amble. New development has to demonstrate that it will not make flooding offsite worse,

new applications have no responsibility to resolve existing flooding (paragraphs 163 & 165 of the NPPF). The applicant's design is compliant with this.

The proposal is using sustainable drainage - porous paving and underground attenuation tanks - to store water on site before realising it is greenfield runoff rates into an Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) surface water sewer.

Drawing 4990-C-D9-01C outline drainage strategy shows that runoff is being drained away from the site to the east into an NWL sewer, away from The Wynd highway. This sewer outfalls into the Gut watercourse.

NWL have no objection to a five litres per second flow into their system.

Mr Lowe then continued introducing the application with the aid of a slides presentation.

Jacqueline Wood then spoke in objection to the application, of which her key points were:

- she was speaking on behalf of businesses based at Artique. The 44 businesses had 56 employees in total. It was a social hub, meeting place and local tourist attraction
- the development did not fit with either the character of the Northumberland coastal area or Amble. It would bring no substantive cultural or social benefits to the local area or the county. The application would not assist any regional distinctiveness for Amble. Northumberland had oversubscribed its housing development requirements by 28%
- it would produce no carbon capture; what eco-friendly materials would be used to offset this, plus what did the applicant mean by 'inherently sustainable'? It did not meet any of the three elements of sustainability - economic, environmental or social. A covenant also restricted the size of development on the site to the current footprint
- what wildlife surveys had been undertaken?; bats' breeding sites were protected by law. Had DEFRA and Natural England commented?
- the applicant was maximising the amount of housing on site without having to provide any affordable housing.

Craig Van Bedass then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:

- the existing business at the site was not viable, the building had been for sale for over a year and was suffering financial losses
- any replacement building needed imagination, creativity and consideration; this proposal presented superior design and quality and meshed with the surroundings producing a crisp, contemporary solution. The use of large glazing panels prevented it from looking monolithic. The development had followed more than two years of design, community engagement and work with statutory consultees
- privacy considerations were key to the design. Gable to gable distances were 9.3 metres. The mature trees on the boundaries would be maintained
- the highways authority had supported the proposal for one access point to the rear of the site's highway safety would be improved by replacing the current three access points. Visibility levels at the proposed junction meant all requirements. The proposal also met all parking requirements
- a flood risk assessment had been undertaken and approved by the LLFA.

Members then asked questions; the key details of responses from officers were:

- highways considerations had been assessed against the previous uses of a restaurant and cafe/antiques shop. Concentrating access to one point at the southern entrance was supported and visibility requirements would be within the required standards. There would be less traffic generated from seven dwellings compared with the previous uses; the proposed use was estimated to equate to six or seven car movements in peak hours. The objector had referred to 56 people currently working at 44 businesses based there, so there would be a significant reduction in traffic to the site. The proposed parking provision conformed to required standards. The application was thus acceptable on highways safety grounds
- the covenant referred to by the objector was a private legal matter and thus not within the scope of this application
- bat emergence season was between May to November each year. The application had been fully assessed by the ecologist, and no issues had been raised about any protected species on the site
- the description of 'inherently sustainable' was what the applicant had put on their application form. It was not up to Planning Services to amend their wording
- the application had been submitted as proposing dwelling houses, but this did not stop any holiday use
- there was not a cap on how many houses could be developed above the target for the county; the figure was instead a minimum number to support the aims of the Local Plan
- the height of the dwellings was 10.6m to the ridge
- the local area included a mix of housing types, but they were generally contemporary and of various sizes. The nearby single storey buildings were new developments. The nearby Rivergreen development was similar in style to this application
- there were no windows in the gable of the northernmost building of the development to avoid any overlooking of the existing property to the north. A condition was also included to remove any permitted development rights. There would however be some impact on light to the property to the north
- a new application had been submitted on a site on the opposite side of the road for six dwellings on a green field site

Councillor Clark then moved that the application be granted as set out in the officer recommendation and subject to the s106 Agreement and conditions in the report. He said it was a shame that the building would be demolished but would be replaced with sustainable buildings that would fit in well and complement existing nearby buildings and be appropriate to the location. This motion was seconded by Councillor Castle, who added that he had sympathies with the objector about the loss of businesses but could not see any planning reasons to refuse the application as there were no issues with either traffic or design.

Debate then followed of which the key points raised by members were:

- it was up to members to consider and debate whether they agreed with a developer stating their application was 'inherently sustainable'. It was however also suggested that applications should be listed more neutrally, for example this application as 'development of seven dwellings'
- design was a subjective view; this application proposed a futuristic design but there were other local precedents

- the site visit had been very useful; it was a large site with much parking available which was necessary to support the proposal. There was also tree lining along The Wynd
- all traffic and drainage issues had been addressed by officers
- the application would be a good gateway feature to Amble, and also replicated the style of River Green a little.

On being put the the vote, the motion was supported by seven votes in support to one abstention, so it was:

RESOLVED that the the Director of Planning be authorised to GRANT permission subject to the recommended conditions and a Legal Agreement pursuant to s106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to secure a financial contribution to the Coastal Mitigation Service of £600 per unit, a total of £4,200.

111. Planning Appeals

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(5.43pm: the meeting then briefly adjourned and Councillor Thorne left the chair. Councillor Castle returned to chairing the meeting when the meeting restarted at 6.00pm.)

OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

112. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were asked by any members of the public.

113. PETITIONS

No new petitions were received nor any updates available on petitions previously considered.

114. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received a verbal update from the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services in attendance about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work for the attention of members.

Technical Services update:

- resurfacing schemes had been completed at a number of locations including Tweedmouth, Alnmouth, Littlehoughton, Longhoughton and Denwick
- structural patching work at Berwick, Longhoughton
- upcoming work at Norham and Milfield

- winter services were ongoing.

A member then thanked officers for traffic safety work in Longframlington which had also involved the local parish council, plus work to Shilbottle bus shelter.

Members also asked for a number of issues to be followed up, of which the key points, including any responses from officers, were as follows:

- a request about Denwick Road
- work at Berwick was due in the second phase the next year. Members would be advised when this was due
- work to Felton Bridge was due by the end of March 2020
- the work to Golden Square in Berwick was good but the roundabout had not yet been painted. This would have benefitted from coordination with resurfacing work at Sandgate by the Premier Inn, but members were advised that the Premier Inn contractors were not required to do so.
- there had been a delay with gully cleaning, but it was hoped that the tanker would be back fully operational shortly

The Cabinet member for Local Services and Environment expressed his thanks to all Local Services staff for their work to address the impact of inclement weather.

Neighbourhood Services update:

- there had been a great effort by the refuse collection staff picking up extra waste over the Christamas period. They had little time off having to work overtime shifts to catch up for the bank holidays
- the capacity at some glass recycling sites had been surpassed and additional capacity in certain areas was being considered for Christmas 2020
- extra visits had been organised for grounds maintenance and leaf clearance work, due to high winds with hotspot areas addressed
- preparatory work for summer services had begun
- road sweeping work continued, and the obstacle weed spraying programme would begin in February
- mechanical road sweeping and footpath sweeping continued
- there was still a lot of reactive work for the sweeper as a result of the high winds and heavy rain
- Neighbourhood Services staff continued to provide grounds and cleansing staff from Alnwick and Berwick depots to work on the Highways operated winter services rota.

Members then raised a number of issues of which the key points were:

- thanks for staff for the maintenance work undertaken to much improve the condition of Longframlington Cemetery
- seasonal staff were employed for a six month period over spring/summer.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and issues raised by members needing resolution be followed up after the meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

115. 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 (copy of the presentation filed with the signed minutes).

The Leader of the Council's presentation covered the following:

- the Administration's core beliefs to guide how they believed the Council should serve the community
- delivery of manifesto pledges, completion of projects and other key achievements since 2017
- The Council's corporate values, and achievements undertaken for each:
  (1) Living - residents to feel safe, valued and part of their community.
  Commitment to deliver 1,000 Council owned houses, improve 2,000 Council owned properties, develop a Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the next 10 years, training in health, social care and voluntary sectors, supporting vulnerable residents, achieving high levels of satisfaction (91% of people surveyed said they were very satisfied with the care and support they received, 90% of residents said the services they used made them feel safe and secure), excellent services for young people.
  (2) Enjoying - residents to live in distinctive, vibrant places, which they valued and in which they felt proud.
  Campaign to promote county positively, winning gold in 2018 and silver in the 2019 British Travel Awards UK, achieving a tourism spend of over
  £1 billion for the first time ever, tourism one of the most important industries for creating employment, integrating services such as libraries and creating community hubs, cultural programme, investing in parks and green spaces, green flag awards, Hirst Park refurbishment in Ashington, valuing partnership agreements with Town and Parish Councils.
  (3) Connecting - residents to get to work easily, learn and have access to various facilities and services they want to use.
  Scrapped travel fares for post 16 travel and providing free transport for students, nearer to securing the Northumberland to Newcastle rail line, significant road improvements, additional £7.7m for highway maintenance, identified preferred route for Blyth Relief Road, improved digital connectivity and improved that in rural areas.
  (4) **Learning** - residents regardless of their age, to have the right qualifications and skills to ensure a good job that paid well, and the prospect of a rewarding career.
  Invested £130m in schools development across the County, school performance improving, 90% of primary schools good or outstanding, 66% secondary schools, good or outstanding, ambition for 100% on both. High emphasis on special educational needs, developed a North of England Education Challenge fund to ensure people have better jobs to build their careers and a thriving local economy.
  (5) Thriving - businesses booming with the Council doing everything in its power to create the right connections for economic growth.
  Securing significant funding for the regeneration of town centres, huge investments in the Portland Park area of Ashington, investment in Bedlington and town centre funding for Blyth, investment in leisure services. Through partnership with Advance Northumberland, significant progress with Northumberland Energy Park, 660 new jobs created on former Blyth Power Station site, working actively with businesses for expansion plans based around renewable energy, new training centre at Port of Blyth. The purchase of Ashwood Business Park and plans to develop jobs there.

- future priorities - aim for people to stay in Northumberland and work in Northumberland. Put customers at the heart of everything, deliver on commitments.

The Cabinet member for Corporate Services said the budget would be pre-scrutinised on 10 February, then considered by Cabinet on 11 February before being presented to full Council for final decision in February. He thanked senior officers in all departments for the work they had done on the budget and the contributions they had made. All savings for the next year had been identified and the approach was to drive efficiency where possible with as little impact on front line services as possible. He provided key details from the budget, as follows:

- budget context - the budget was for two years. To date no long term funding plan from the Government had been received due to the December election
- Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement - NCC proposed a council tax increase of 1.99%, £2.6m social care support grant, £1.5m winter pressures grant, £5.8m social care funding
- Capital Programme 2019-2022
- next steps - questions were invited. There would be an opportunity for all to read the published document and the final version would be considered by full Council in February.

Discussion followed and points of questions from Local Area Council members included:-

- Berwick residents were very grateful about the new post 16 transport arrangements, especially as it was easier for many to travel from Berwick to Newcastle rather than Ashington
- it was important for the Administration to reassure members that they continued to seek more support and more investment from the Government specifically for the North East region rather than just the wider northern England area
- were the investments promised affordable?
- the importance of the climate change agenda and local authority measures to help
- could residents be encouraged to give up their car if public transport incentives were promised?
- were there other sources for funding for cycle paths other than through the Local Transport Plan?

Key points from Councillors Jackson, Oliver and Sanderson's responses to questions included:

- more funding continued to be sought; there were now increased transport powers for the North East. The Northumberland Line had been promised £100m of government funding, plus work continued to pursue A1 dualling to the very north of the county
- the Administration was very conscious of affordability; the Council's debt could have been far higher now if they had not been elected in May 2017. Reference was made to the CIPFA guidelines about debt levels and what local authorities could afford; Northumberland was high up amongst the best run councils
- adult social care was the highest area of council budgetary spend, around £240m - 250m per year. Another area of increasing budgetary commitment was children's services - currently many children with special educational needs had to go outside of the county to receive services, but it was planned to develop more provision/capacity within the county

- funding levels depended on a number of factors including population and deprivation levels, but Northumberland also received an extra sum to take into account its rurality
- millions were spent on bus subsidies; a full review was due in the next year. Work was planned to encourage people to use buses more in the county including for journeys up the coast, and whether bus companies could improve their links with Morpeth train station. Northumberland was in the top 5% nationally for its electric car charging provision
- there had been changes to government transport subsidies but this had been to make the spend more effective. It was important to influence bus companies to use more environmentally friendly resources
- it was important to acknowledge that cars were essential for most residents in rural areas. However other initiatives to also encourage more public transport usage were being considered, plus a new company would be providing train services between Edinburgh to London and provide more stops at Morpeth
- the Local Transport Plan now had a dedicated section for cycling and walking, and eight cycling and walking schemes had been submitted. Other partners involved with the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board could also contribute resources.

Councillors Jackson and Oliver were thanked for their presentation and it was:

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

116. SOCIAL CARE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME 'CARE FOR LIFE'

Members received a presentation from the Director - Business Development 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.

In response to questions, members were advised that:

- out of the 13 people recently appointed, 11 were female and two male
- a publicity campaign had been undertaken from July to September 2019

- further information regarding the recruitment phase including interview arrangements would be provided after this meeting
- members could help spread the word about these apprenticeships by passing on information/materials through their networks and on social media; some information booklets had been given out at the meeting and more could be provided.

Ms Kingham was thanked for her attendance and it was:

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

117. HEALTHWATCH NORTHUMBERLAND

Members received a presentation that covered current work and feedback received by Healthwatch from health and social care service users, and to receive from members insights of current health and social care issues in their communities. (Copy of Healthwatch Northumberland's Quarterly Report for July – September 2019/20 attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C.)

Derry Nugent, Co-ordinator of Healthwatch, raised the following points:-

- information in the quarterly report circulated to members with the agenda papers
- everybody would use health services at some point, and Healthwatch wanted to hear views of people's experiences, for example the significance of adult social care budgets as referred to in the earlier budget presentation
- she wished to hear views from members about health and social care issues in their areas
- 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, and hopefully more people would reply to the next survey. Members were asked to pass on copies of the consultation leaflet through their networks
- one local issue was a forthcoming 'look and listen' visit to Castleview Care Home in Alnwick
- another key issue for Healthwatch was transport, as issues had been raised about access to GP and other health care services in Berwick, Rothbury and Wylam recently.

Members made the following comments:-

A member referring to the increase in social prescribing and how Healthwatch linked with it? Members were advised that social prescribing was now an established service and it would be helpful to hear more about whether people found it useful.

A member referred to concerns about the delay in establishing a new GP surgery in his area. Members were informed that this was an issue for NHS England and the CCG but Healthwatch had been in touch with the local parish council about the issue, and the chair of Healthwatch regularly attended the CCG's Primary Care Commissioning Committee meetings.

A member hoped that progress would follow for redeveloping Rothbury Community Hospital and raised some residents' concerns about how the proposed arrangements would work. Ms Nugent advised that the CCG, Northumbria NHS Trust and the campaign group were all working together on this. The CCG had provided an update to the last meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 January; members of the campaign group had been in attendance and were happy with the progress being made.

A member referred to feedback she has received from Berwick residents, including confusion caused by arrangements for physiotherapy appointments, as the system would benefit from improved IT and coordination. Ms Nugent acknowledged that work had taken place in Berwick and Wooler about such concerns with the appointments system, and encouraged residents to raise their concerns directly with Healthwatch. Less feedback had been received about this issue recently, so hopefully any teething issues with the appointments system had thus been addressed.

In response to a question, Ms Nugent explained that complaints were very rarely about the quality of healthcare provided, but access to it. She added that Healthwatch's feedback form was available online too, and she would also provide copies of the leaflet for councillors to make available at their surgeries and through other channels. Details could be added to a range of outlets, for example including community newspapers, Facebook and Twitter.

A member referred to a pilot joint initiative between the CCG and North East Ambulance Service in Berwick and hoped that it would continue. Such positive feedback was very helpful too.

A member referred to encouraging people to volunteer at care homes. Ms Nugent referred to the look and listen event at Castleview Care Home in Alnwick and hoped that more similar events could be organised.

In response to a question, members were advised that patient participation groups were independent to Healthwatch but were a key network; Healthwatch had contacted all local patient participation groups and were due to publish a report soon. Three of Healthwatch Northumberland's members were also involved with patient participation groups. It was important for Healthwatch to work with patient participation groups so the latter's views could be fed in.

The clerk of Alnmouth Parish Council asked if she could interview both Ms Kingham and Ms Nugent on Lionheart Community Radio about the topics they had presented at this meeting.

Ms Nugent was thanked for her attendance and it was:

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION ITEMS

118. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2017/19 - PROGRESS REPORT

Members received a progress update on Members' Local Improvement Schemes for 2017/19 as at 1 January 2020. (Report attached to the official minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

119. BERWICK REGENERATION COMMISSION

This was a standing item on the agenda; no updates were available.

120. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members received the latest version of the Local Area Council's work programme (attached to the official minutes as Appendix B). The Chair added that the next meeting would also include a report about the Local Transport Plan programme for 2020-21.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

121. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME RESPONSES

A copy of the questions asked at a previous meeting of the Local Area Council and the responses from the Head of Technical Services were circulated (copy attached to the official minutes as Appendix C.)

The Chair also read out a response from the Service Director - Local Services to a question previously asked about the Royal Border Bridge in Berwick:

The present position is that NCC has sought detailed costs for replacement and we are expecting these in the next couple of weeks, at which point there will be some internal discussion over the most appropriate next steps and future funding arrangements. A further update will therefore be provided in due course.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

122. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 20 February 2020 at St. James' Church Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick.

123. URGENT BUSINESS

North Northumberland Local Area Council (Rights of Way) Subcommittee

The Chair had agreed that it was urgent to appoint a councillor to the North Northumberland Local Area Council (Rights of Way) Subcommittee to replace Councillor Moore, who had now resigned since becoming an MP. Demcoratic Services would also email this request to all members of the North Northumberland Local Area Council after the meeting.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____