

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at Hexham House, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NH on Tuesday, 9 January 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor G Stewart
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

T Cessford
A Dale
R Gibson
C Homer
CW Horncastle
I Hutchinson

D Kennedy
N Oliver
KR Quinn
JR Riddle
A Sharp
KG Stow

OFFICERS

D Hunt

D Lally
J Rose

L Sawyer
N Turnbull
K Westerby

Area Manager (West),
Neighbourhood Services
Chief Executive
Economic and Inclusion Policy
Manager
Business Support Officer
Democratic Services Officer
Highways Delivery Area Manager

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Peter Jackson, Leader of the Council
Lauren Langton, Chief Officer, Northumberland Community Bank
Dawn Tweddell, Galliford Try

8 members of the public
1 member of the press

83. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair explained that this item provided an opportunity for members of the public to have their say.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Councillor Hull, Hexham Town Council enquired about the benefits that would be devolved to local parish and town councils from the North of Tyne devolution exercise.

It was agreed that the point would be addressed in the presentation later in the meeting.

84. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

i) Objection to the continued temporary closure of public footpath no.22, Park Lane to Stanley Burn, Prudhoe

An electronic petition had closed on 31 December 2017.

The Local Area Council would receive a report at the meeting on 13 March 2018.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

i) Street Lighting in Moor Road, Prudhoe

Laura Rusby, lead petitioner, spoke on behalf of the residents of Humbles Wood who had created the petition in order for the installation of street lights to be discussed. The issue of additional street lights had initially been raised in a Transport Assessment carried out in 2008 which had suggested they were necessary for to create a safe pedestrian route to access shops and bus routes.

The route was the only access to the centre of the town and due to the overgrown wooded area and poor footpath it was necessary for residents, staff and visitors at the Ferndene Children and Young People In Patient Service to use taxis and cars outside daylight hours. The nearest bus stop was over 900m away, uphill and overhung by trees. The road was extremely narrow and it was difficult for cars and other vehicles to pass without mounting the pavement. She explained that it was new development as previously there had not been housing in the area and a shuttle bus used to serve the former hospital on the site.

The lighting was required to safeguard minors and vulnerable persons. There would soon be additional footfall from the Cottier Grange development and more children would be walking to school. Ms Rusby urged that action be taken before an accident occurred. The cost of street lights was less than £40,000 and a small percentage of the street lighting budget.

Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Area Manager, stated that the cost was

estimated at £37,500 for 15 new columns and underground cabling given that it did not exist in the area. He explained that the Street Lighting Modernisation Programme, referred to in the petition, was for the conversion of street lighting to LED lighting in areas currently lit, rather than the provision of new lights.

Councillor Stewart spoke in his position as local Councillor and had recently visited the location with the Leader of the Council. He explained that the area had been the site of a former hospital and that street lighting had been promised many years ago, but had not been installed. He supported the installation of street lights in the area for a number of reasons, including: the safety of children walking to school, closure of the footpath for a considerable period and use of the road by many agricultural and construction vehicles. He and Councillor Stow had agreed to consider making a contribution from their Members Local Improvement Scheme.

Members discussed the petition and the developments in the area and were surprised that funds had not been set aside from Section 106 monies for the installation of street lights. It was noted that there were in excess of 50 requests for the installation of street lights in areas across the county and it was suggested that these should be prioritised in terms of risk.

The Leader of the Council referred to a number of infrastructure problems arising from large developments including a shortage of school places in some towns. Whilst there were a significant number of requests for additional lighting, a number of these were for 1 or 2 street lights. He also commented that the issue of new lights could be controversial as they were not always wanted by all residents. The Members Local Improvement Schemes enabled Councillors to support local priorities. He confirmed that given the number of extra houses that the scheme had merit.

It was confirmed that Section 106 money had been received and had been allocated towards the improvement of football pitches in the area.

RESOLVED that the scheme for new street lighting in Moor Road, Prudhoe be put forward for scoring and inclusion in the Local Transport Programme.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

i) Request for Traffic Restrictions on Hallstile Bank, Hexham

Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Area Manager, provided a brief update of a speed survey undertaken on Hallstile Bank between 4 - 11 December 2017.

The results showed that the average speed of vehicles was 16.8 mph and that traffic speed was not an issue. However, over the 7 days of the survey the average number of vehicles was 2,326 per day and on some days there had been over 3,000 vehicles. 114 HGVs had also been recorded during the survey period.

It was reported that a trial closure of Hallstile Bank was proposed in the next few weeks and this would help inform the work that was being undertaken by Hexham Town Council on the market place and surrounding area. Residents and businesses were divided in their opinion about the closure.

Members discussed the problems with traffic flow in the town centre and the problems of vehicles overhanging the pavement were highlighted as the historic street had not been designed for use by modern vehicles.

It was noted that if a weight restriction was implemented it could impact on the types of vehicles able to use the street including bin wagons and grit vehicles. Alternative routes would be available but the impact of the closure of Hallstile Bank elsewhere would need to be assessed. Reference was made to the impact of the closure of the rail bridge in 2016 and whilst there had been initial disruption and confusion, the traffic flow around the town had settled. Whilst it was reported that the road closure could be removed with a few hours notice if it proved to be too problematic on other parts of the town, a local Councillor urged that the closure be given an appropriate amount of time to allow the traffic to adjust.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

85. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

The agenda item provided an opportunity for members 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 area committee.

(a) Local Services Issues Raised by Members

Key points raised by members during the discussion were:

- Potholes - Concerns were raised regarding the significant increase in the number of potholes following the recent extremes of weather and deterioration of the road surface. The Highways Delivery Area Manager reported that they anticipated an increase in the number of potholes reported immediately following the Christmas period and that inspections of A and B class roads and precautionary routes were being prioritised. He also advised that the material they used to fill potholes was able to be used when water was present.
- Local Pothole Fund Update - Requests for work were being priced this week and an update would be circulated to Councillors in due course.
- Blocked drains - A number of examples were provided where drains had been blocked for a significant period of time. The Highways Delivery Area Manager informed the committee about new software which was to be

implemented in the near future which would enable better monitoring and improved reporting. He commented on the problems they experienced where they were unable to access all drains as they were covered by vehicles. Normally 24 hours notice was given for vehicles to be moved via letter drops in affected areas. Members discussed the use of A-boards and notices on lamp posts.

- LTP Programme - Officers would be meeting on 23 January 2018 to discuss the programme and work to be carried out in the next 12 months.
- Severe weather - Reference was made to the heavy snow which had resulted in the closure of the A68. It was confirmed that social media was monitored by the Communications Team who worked with officers regarding Alerts issued. The website would also be updated in the next few weeks which meant that residents would be able to obtain information tailored to their local area including updates about reported potholes. Members discussed the performance of the new method of repairs and whether they were more likely to fail.
- Corbridge - It was reported that residents were satisfied with the work undertaken which included drainage and resurfacing work which meant they had not suffered a repeat of the flooding problems experienced the previous year.
- Prudhoe - Employees were thanked for the cleanup of a car park.

Members recognised Kevin Thompson a NEAT Specialist who had helped save a member of public after they had fallen in the river at Tynedale Golf Club.

RESOLVED that the items identified be followed up by Local Services.

(b) Street Lighting Update

Lynsey Sawyer, Business Support Officer, and Dawn Twedell from Galliford Try were in attendance to answer questions from Members regarding the street lighting modernisation program.

Lynsey Sawyer provided a brief update regarding the change in subcontractor due to Power One going into administration. The remainder of the programme would be delivered by AA Lighting and was scheduled to be complete by June 2018. Additional staff had been employed in order that improvements could be made to service delivery, communication and customer care.

The following issues were raised by Members:

- Concerns regarding the response time for repairs. It was confirmed that faults were inspected within the standard response time which was 2 hours for exposed wires, damage following road traffic collisions etc and 4 working days for other repairs. Faults involving problems with cables could take up to 35 days for Northern Power Grid to attend and resolve. She acknowledged that they needed to improve communication and provide feedback to residents if there was going to be a delay. They also

- hoped to start using wraparound notices on lighting columns to inform members of the public that the column had been inspected following the reporting of a fault so that the same fault was not reported multiple times.
- The design phase of the project had determined the most appropriate style of lights to be used at each location; there was a limited facility to tilt lights to give the optimum spread. Some areas had been overlit with the sodium lights and Members received assurance that the new lights met current British standards. Public opinion was divided regarding preference regarding the new or old style lighting. Extra columns could be provided outside the project at additional cost.
 - The website was to be updated to provide more information about the project, the programme of work and a frequently asked questions form. They were now given a very detailed rolling 2 week programme which could be shared with Members.
 - They had not anticipated the level of enquiries that would arise from the project and additional staff had now been employed to respond to enquiries and complaints.
 - Residents of Algernon Terrace in Wylam were unhappy with the proposals for additional lighting columns and it was agreed that an officer would make an appointment to visit to provide an explanation regarding the technical specifications and spacing required between columns.
 - The new lighting was welcomed by some members given the reduction in carbon emissions and costs for the Council. However, concerns were expressed regarding the previous contractor and their method of working which had resulted in few areas being completely finished. Progress was now being seen to be made and more areas were now being completed and signed off.
 - It was reported that the scheme for heritage lighting in Hexham was almost finalised.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

DISCUSSION ITEMS - CORPORATE

86. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - PARTNERSHIPS AND DEVOLUTION

Northumberland Community Bank

Members received a presentation from Lauren Langton, Chief Officer of Northumberland Community Bank to explain the range of financial products and advice available to residents of Northumberland. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix C).

The presentation covered the following:

- The bank had an ambitious business plan to be financially self sustaining. In order to do this they needed to increase membership.

- A locally based ethical lender was required in Northumberland.
- The bank would be formally launched in April 2018 to raise awareness and encourage residents to join and build on the success of the Tynedale Community Bank.
- They hoped to expand their range of savings and loans to include a bank account which would help customers budget to ensure that priority commitments, such as rent, mortgage and utilities, were met.
- Improvements were required to their IT and processes to increase automation and efficiency and keep costs down so that resources were utilised where they were needed most.
- Whilst a personal approach was very important they needed to balance this with ensuring they were accessible to all residents across the county.
- Good governance and compliance with regulations were a high priority.
- They had grown significantly in 2017 and had ambitious targets to increase the value of loans to £600,000 and savings to £700,000 in 2018.
- The maximum deposit and loan permitted each year by the regulator were both £7,500.
- They were expanding their payroll deduction service and the facility had been made available to employees of Northumberland County Council in December 2017 with the provision of loans. They also promoted the benefits of regular saving.
- The Lifesavers Scheme at a number of schools had been supported by the Tynedale Community Bank had encouraged school children to save regularly and learn about the benefits of financial management.

The Chair and Leader of the Council congratulated the Ms Langton on the bank's success to date and welcomed the provision of financial services in places where commercial banks were withdrawing local facilities and / or were reluctant to provide basic accounts to ensure that no resident was excluded from obtaining financial services. The Council would be working with Northumberland Community Bank to enable advice on financial services to be obtained at the local contact centres. This was particularly important with the introduction of Universal Credit in Northumberland as they would assist recipients in the management of their accounts.

Several members commented on the successes of the Tynedale Community Bank which had been established by a number of partners including Guy Opperman MP. This had been of benefit to school children and farmers alike and provided a better alternative to payday lenders.

RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received.

87. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - FINANCE

Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and the Budget 2018-19

The Local Area Council received a report and presentation to inform them of the content of the draft Corporate Plan, the proposed budget strategy for the

Medium Term Financial Plan and implications for setting the Council's budget for 2018-19. (A copy of the report and presentation are enclosed with the minutes as Appendix B).

Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council and Councillor Oliver, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services gave a presentation which covered:

- The context and direction of the Council for the next 3.5 years.
- The approach and operating principles (financial prudence, resourcefulness, listening and considering, empowering, collaborative)
- Key themes of the new administration (living, enjoying, connecting, learning, thriving)
- The inherited position
- Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement
- 2.99% proposed Council Tax increase
- Funding analysis 2014-2022
- Gross expenditure by service 2018-2019
- Summary of identified savings by category 2018-2020
- MTPF cumulative savings
- Capital Programme 2018-2021
- Capital investment
- Capital spend comparison
- Debt servicing costs by 2019-2020
- Next steps:
 - Views were invited from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Local Areas Councils
 - Consideration of the final version by full Council in February 2018 alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan
 - Preparation of Service Planning Frameworks

Members discussed the following issues:

- Rural and urban deprivation - the administration aimed to make improvements across the whole of the county.
- Information was requested on economic development as more jobs and housing were needed in Tynedale. Reference was made to the Borderlands Growth Deal which would benefit the Tynedale area.
- Changes to Business Rates in 2020 had been recognised within the 'Thriving' element. Jobs needed to be created across the county and particularly in sectors which grew the fastest eg south east Northumberland or tourism in rural areas.
- Copies of the budget would be circulated to all members of the Council and published on the Council's website.
- The statement of accounts for 2016/17.

The Chair encouraged members of the public to contact their elected members with any queries.

RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received.

88. REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - PARTNERSHIPS AND DEVOLUTION

North of Tyne Devolution

Janice Rose, Economic and Inclusion Policy Manager, gave a presentation to outline the content of the North of Tyne devolution deal recently announced by Government and detail the processes for the subsequent creation of a North of Tyne Combined Authority and the election of a Mayor in May 2019. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the minutes).

The presentation included:

- The historic context and discussions with Government since the collapse of negotiations with the 7 North East Councils in September 2016.
- The announcement and launch of the North of Tyne Combined Authority in November 2017 which included Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland Councils. This would require these Councils to exit from the North East Combined Authority.
- Governance - Mayoral elections would take place in 2019 with an interim appointment in the intervening period.
- Investment Fund of £20 million revenue per annum over a 30 year period with flexibility for long term planning. It was anticipated this would be the first deal of many given the successful negotiation of subsequent deals by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.
- Themes - focus on education and skills, employment, health, housing and digital connectivity.
- Transport - continuation of the existing arrangements with Tyne and Wear and Nexus.
- Governance Review - a consultation was underway with the public and key stakeholders. The consultation document could be obtained from libraries and customer service centres. A series of public meetings was also being held with an event in Alnwick on 23 January 2018. The matter would also be discussed at the next meetings of the VCS Liaison Group and the Town and Parish Council Liaison Group. There needed to be sufficient economic benefits to justify the creation of the combined authority.
- An assurance that the engagement of community-based organisations and businesses would continue through the delivery of this deal and in shaping any future deal. Town and parish councils, in particular, would have a role to play in helping driving forward the rural growth and stewardship element of the Deal.
- A provisional timetable identified key dates between the announcement in November 2017 and election of Mayor in May 2019 including the consultation period and Orders to Parliament.

The following issues were raised by Members:

- The impact on Town and Parish Councils. It was confirmed that the creation of a North of Tyne Combined Authority would not result in an increase in costs to the Town and Parish Councils. There would be a mayoral fund and shared services would be provided by the 3 Local Councils who could be required to make a further financial contribution.
- Appointment of the Interim Mayor. In other places the post has tended to be filled by one of the Leaders of the constituent Councils. However, this would be subject to an open and democratic process as detailed in the governance scheme for the new Combined Authority.
- Opportunities for involvement with the the remaining 4 members of the North East Combined Authority. Mechanisms would be in place to involve neighbouring authorities on particular issues, Newcastle Airport and the Tyne Tunnel were given as existing examples. However, if the new Combined Authority is established in law this summer, no other Councils can statutorily join it until the next Mayoral election.
- Whilst there was some disappointment regarding the size of the investment fund of £20 million per annum, it was noted that the proposals for the North East Combined Authority had been for an annual fund of £30 million. This was also considered to be a starting point and additional funding would be provided for specific projects such as broadband (£26 million) and education (£25 million).
- The LTP Programme and funding of highways improvements would continue through the existing arrangements.
- The process for the distribution of funds would be set out within the constitution of the combined authority.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

89. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. (A copy is attached to the minutes as Appendix D).

Councillor Dale suggested inclusion of an item on the Ambulance Service.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

90. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 13 February 2018 at Hexham House, Gilesgate, Hexham at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____