

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, 10 April 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor G Stewart
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

T Cessford
A Dale
R Gibson
C Homer
I Hutchinson
D Kennedy

N Oliver
K Quinn
JR Riddle
A Sharp
KG Stow

OFFICERS

D Brookes
N Masson
J Sanderson

N Turnbull

Infrastructure Records Manager
Principal Solicitor
Senior Planning Manager -
Planning Policy
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

2 members of the public
1 member of the press

101. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Horncastle.

102. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Tynedale Local Area Council held on Tuesday, 13 February 2018 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

103. Planning Appeals Update

A report was received which provided an update on the progress of planning appeals received. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

104. Northumberland Local Plan - Update and Spring Consultation

The Local Area Council received a report which provided an update of the Northumberland Local Plan and details of the Spring 2018 Local Plan Consultation. (A copy of the report and presentation are enclosed with the minutes as Appendix B).

The Senior Planning Manager - Planning Policy explained that following the withdrawal of the Northumberland Core Strategy in July 2017, the Council had been working on the preparation of a new plan which would be in place until 2036. She outlined the work that had been undertaken which included updates to existing evidence base studies, a 'call for sites' consultation, review and development of draft policies by the LDF Working Group, engagement with Neighbourhood Plan Groups to ensure compliance with Neighbourhood Plans and the Local Plan.

The Council had been requested to accelerate its plan preparation programme by up to 3 months following the exchange of correspondence with the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding concerns about the Council's failure to adopt a 2004 Act Local Plan.

Members were informed that a spatial survey consultation had commenced on 28 March 2018 and views were sought on preferred locations for housing and employment as well as key issues that the Local Plan should address. The survey page had received 1700 hits and 314 responses completed to date.

The Senior Planning Manager - Planning Policy gave a demonstration of the online survey and how residents could interact with it to identify specific layers, such as areas of green belt, and where comments could be added. Although the survey could be completed anonymously, provision of contact details would enable details to be added to the Local Plan database for notification of future consultations and updates about the plan.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that:

- Officers were liaising with the Northumberland Youth Parliament to encourage participation and completion of the survey by younger residents.

- Analysis of survey respondents would be undertaken at the end of the process to determine the percentage of residents against other interested parties.

Members discussed:

- The best method to engage with residents. The online survey was easy to use although hard copies were also available from the Council's Customer Information Centres and libraries and sent to members of the public if requested.
- Engagement with younger residents was welcomed.
- Economic growth was required in the Tynedale area, particularly with an aging population. Housing was also needed to enable younger residents to live in the areas where they were employed.
- Improvements to infrastructure, such as dualling the A69, would enable the provision of jobs and growth in places such as Haltwhistle and allow residents to move to those locations.
- Publicity and awareness of the survey had been raised through press releases which had resulted in articles in local newspapers and items on tv and radio. An article had also been included in the recent Northumberland News publication and more publicity would be carried out before the end of the 6 week consultation period.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and presentation be noted.

105. Response to petition Objecting to the Closure of Public Footpath No. 22

Phillip Hindmarsh, the lead petitioner circulated information and photographs at the meeting. He highlighted the following:

- Residents objected to the closure of public footpath no. 22 which had commenced in January 2017 and would now run until 30 April 2019.
- The petition title did not include 'to prevent danger to the public arising from construction activity'.
- It had been stated that the path would be re-opened periodically but no dates had been provided by Gentoo.
- The footpath was well used by the local community. The closure was denying residents safe access to a wider network of paths for recreational use.
- Alternative access via Moor Road (highlighted red on the circulated photograph) was used by heavy construction traffic servicing the development. It was within a 60 mph national speed limit and did not have a footpath which posed a risk to pedestrians.
- The process for closure was not thought to be onerous or expensive and the costs could be recharged back to the developer.
- The closure due to health and safety issues was queried.

In response to questions from Members, reference was made to a site in Crawcrook where photos demonstrated safe access through the site which had been negotiated between Gateshead Council, the developer and residents. Gentoo Homes had declined a request to provide this on health and safety grounds.

The Infrastructure Records Manager gave a brief outline of the petition and the process for closure of public footpaths under the provisions of Section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix C).

He acknowledged that the footpath was a popular public right of way as it gave access to the Stanley Burn and connection to other public footpaths. However, it was considered that the closure was necessary as the footpath crossed the site previously occupied by Prudhoe Hospital for which planning permission had been granted for the construction of 392 houses and associated works.

New steps had been constructed at the eastern end of the site and a second phase of improvements works was in the process of being carried out on another section of the footpath within the site. Discussions were ongoing with the developer to ensure that the path was open when it was safe to do so. It was anticipated that this would be in Spring 2018. The decision regarding the safety of the site rested with the construction company who carried the responsibility if an accident were to happen.

In response to questions from Members it was confirmed that:

- The footpath had not been able to be opened to members of the public since the closure had commenced. However, a relaxed attitude had been adopted regarding use of fields by dog walkers at the western end of the path where no construction activity was taking place.
- Other than Moor Road, there was no diversion that could be implemented due to the footpath crossing through the middle of the site with construction taking place on either side.
- Due to the recent adverse weather and ground conditions, construction on the site was not running to timetable.
- Gentoo Homes intended to include news of the opening of the footpath in its next newsletter. Details would also be communicated to the Council, local County Councillors and Prudhoe Town Council.

A Member enquired whether the closure could be restricted to certain times of the day when construction activity was taking place on the site e.g. between the hours of 8.00 and 5.00 pm on weekdays. A number of Members felt this would be an acceptable compromise. The Infrastructure Records Manager stated that he was in regular discussion with a representative from Gentoo Homes and would remind them of residents concerns and agreed to ask about a partial closure during construction hours, when work permitted.

The Chair reported that he had recently met with a representative of Gentoo Homes and understood that some tarmacing work which should have been carried out the previous week had been delayed due to the wet weather. It was possible that this could impact on the opening date. He offered to arrange a meeting on site with the lead petitioner. He welcomed the newsletter which would keep residents informed and queried whether it would be possible for the footpath to be marshalled by a construction employee. The Infrastructure Records Manager agreed to make enquiries regarding the use of a banksman / traffic marshal but stated that this could not be insisted upon.

A number of Members accepted the need for the closure on health and safety grounds and considered that the fencing in the photographs could potentially be a tempting climbing target. Support was expressed for the suggestions put forward regarding partial closure during construction hours and the use of escorts / marshalls.

RESOLVED that:

1. The issues raised in the petition, be noted.
2. The suggestions regarding partial closure during construction hours and the use of escorts / marshalls be discussed with the developer.

106. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 15 May 2018 at Hexham House, Gilesgate, Hexham at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____