

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 March 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor G Stewart
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

T Cessford
R Gibson
CW Horncastle
D Kennedy

N Oliver
A Sharp
KG Stow

OFFICERS

G Harrison

D Hunt

D Lally
N Turnbull

Highways Maintenance Senior
Team Leader
Area Manager (West),
Neighbourhood Services
Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

2 members of the public

136. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dale, Homer, Hutchinson, Quinn and Riddle.

137. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Tynedale Local Area Council held on 11 February 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

138. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received the following updates from the Area Managers from Neighbourhood Services and Technical Services:

Technical Services:

- Storms Ciara and Dennis had affected the Tynedale area of the county quite severely with snow also falling heavily. Currently there was a backlog of street cleaning and road repairs and staff were working hard to catch up.
- Highways inspections had been prioritised on main routes followed by other roads.
- Additional resources had been brought in after the bad weather events including road sweepers, hotbox, gully wagon and extra staff.
- Problems continued to be rectified by the drainage gang as well as a JCB carrying out ditching works.
- A programme of works for the new financial year included safety schemes, LTP works and structural patching.
- Additional funding of £10 million was to be spent across the county's network following requests from area teams on asset needs, complaints and issues raised by councillors.
- A surface dressing programme of 500,000 m² was being planned for principal and non principal roads; pre-patching had started with the main work due to commence in May 2020.
- Over 85,000 m² of micro surfacing work was programmed across the network.
- During the 2019/20 winter season, over 80 planned gritting operations had been undertaken to date. Salt bins had been replenished three times and grit heaps in rural areas, twice.

The following information was provided in response to issues raised by Councillors:

- Grit bins would continue to be replenished, if required.
- Serious potholes had been repaired quickly.
- Work was required in a number of areas including:
 - Wylam
 - Alemouth Road, Shaftoe Crescent, Allendale Road and Leazes Park, Hexham.
- Gulleys had become blocked within a short time of being cleared. A programme was in place to replace older cast iron gulleys with modern alternatives which had larger underground catchment areas and did not fill as quickly with sediment.

Neighbourhood Services:

- Strong winds and heavy rain had required allocation of resources to clean up operations.
- Grounds and cleansing staff from Tyne Mills and Low Prudhoe depots continued to participate in the Highways winter services rota.
- In accordance with contingency plans drawn up after the floods in 2015, precautionary evacuation of vehicles and equipment from Tyne Mills and Low Prudhoe depots had been carried out on 9th and 14th February, based on flood warnings from the Environment Agency. Fortunately neither depot suffered flooding on either of these occasions. The Environment Agency hoped to carry out flood defence work to mitigate the risk of further flooding in the next financial year following confirmation of funding.
- Grounds maintenance - cutting back of hedges and shrubs was now finished. Recruitment of seasonal staff for the summer period was nearly complete. Permanent grounds staff would be moving to extended summer hours on 1st April.
- Refuse collection had been affected by heavy snow on 24 February, particularly in Allendale and the North Tyne Valley. There had been no incidents or injuries during the adverse weather. Missed bins had been collected very quickly.
- The garden waste collection service, which cost £43 for 2020, had recommenced on 2 March.

Issues raised by Councillors included:

- A spring clean was being held in Prudhoe on 20 March.
- Local Services risk management plans for coronavirus pandemic. Business contingency plans were being reviewed. Staff had been issued with advice about hand washing, use of tissues and to refrain from touching their face unless hands had just been washed. Whilst there were currently no cases of coronavirus in Northumberland, only essential services relating to refuse and cemeteries would be undertaken if faced with staff being quarantined.
- Debris required removal near the Corbridge mill.

Members of the Local Area Council expressed their appreciation to Local Services staff for their work during and following the recent storms and adverse weather.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

139. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

140. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

There were none to consider.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

There were none to consider.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none to consider.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

141. Northumberland College - Update

The Local Area Council received a presentation about the changes made to Northumberland College following their merger with Sunderland College. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the minutes of the meeting.)

Nigel Harett, Principal of Northumberland College, gave the presentation and highlighted the following:

- The further education sector had seen a number of changes since 1 April 2019 including academy conversions, federations and merger of further and higher education institutions to improve their resilience and viability.
- The college had faced a number of challenges including: financial vulnerability which had not allowed for investment in the estate, few updates to the curriculum to meet the needs of students and employers, a decline in the quality of education as well as the college's reputation.
- Intervention by the Further Education Commissioner, Funding and Skills Funding Agency and OFSTED had led to the merger.
- The formation of Education Partnership North East now comprised Northumberland College, Sunderland College and Hartlepool College with campuses in Northumberland in Ashington, Berwick and Kirkley Hall. All of the colleges had been strengthened with economies of scale from centralised functions such as finance and HR. The colleges were working together to better meet the individual needs of the communities they served.
- A Transformation Programme had commenced in 2019 across many areas including: staffing, curriculum improvements, student support and estate improvements, the latter also addressing health, safety and safeguarding issues.

- Engagement was taking place at strategic and local levels and included employers in a range of sectors, the National Farmers Union and schools. They wanted to reach students at an earlier age to help shape and inform their career choices.
- A robust curriculum needed to be provided across all age groups, from 16-19 years olds and also adults.
- Partnerships were being created with schools who were keen to work with the college on technical and apprenticeship provision.
- There was a significant level of investment across all campuses including the creation of a new reception and student hub at Ashington, careers hubs in technology and digital and health and life sciences, upgrades and new facilities at the Kirkley Hall Campus included a new Equine and Veterinary Science Centres, new facilities for SEND Students and upgrades to student residential accommodation.
- The college wanted to be accessible to all learners across the county including those in the west, and were aware that this needed to be developed with digital technology.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members:

- A 3 year plan had been developed to make improvements to the curriculum. The college was engaging with stakeholders and holding regular meetings with the County Council, North of Tyne Combined Authority and schools. The Principal participated in a national reform group which looked at what employers and other stakeholders required to ensure the curriculum was tailored to meet future demand. New technical qualifications and apprenticeships were being monitored to match skills and needs going forward.
- More generic courses at lower levels would increase class size and provide a better learning experience whilst allowing students to become more specific in their course choice at a higher level.
- A number of campus open days were planned as well as 88 engagement events at schools. 95 prospective students had attended a recent open day at Kirkley Hall compared with 10 students at a similar event the previous year. The college was engaged with school head teachers, career advisers and key contacts; talks covered the range of qualifications including A Levels, apprenticeships, technical qualifications and potential higher education provision to ascertain what would be right for individuals.
- There were 9 ongoing projects designed to improve facilities across the estate.
- The majority of current courses were based across the campuses at Ashington and Kirkley Hall. They expected to expand the curriculum over the next few years, including satellite sites.
- The college recognised that the West of the county was not currently well served by Northumberland College with only one subject available at a site in Hexham. Colleges in Newcastle and Gateshead were easier for students from the West to get to. They were therefore reviewing provision and alternative methods of delivery to make courses more accessible via

digital and technical solutions which would require attendance at a main campus on a more periodic basis.

- The current digital offer included online learning and courses for next generation provision such as augmented reality and games technology. The partnership had strong links with the industry at the Sunderland campus which was being shared with Hartlepool and Northumberland colleges. They also wanted to provide basic IT Literacy courses for adults and courses to keep all users digitally safe.
- They had not yet engaged with Haydon Bridge High School but intended to do so. Members' comments regarding the recent significant investment in the facilities at the school which were currently underutilised, were noted.
- Kirkley Hall used to have an excellent reputation for land based courses and had been well attended by students from rural communities in the past. They hoped to regain its reputation and compete with other nearby land based colleges such as Newton Rigg in Penrith and Houghall in Durham, to attract more students. Many projects were in progress for the Kirkley Hall campus to improve facilities in horticulture, equine, animal and veterinary, and health and safety at the farm and also the residential accommodation. They were in discussions with the community and NFU to ensure changes to the curriculum were right for the future. Once numbers increased they hoped to widen provision and allow further expansion.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his presentation and was pleased to see that progress was being made.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

142. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2017/20

The Local Area Council received a progress update on Members' Local Improvement Schemes as at 1 March 2020. (A copy is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

143. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. (A copy is enclosed with the minutes as Appendix B.)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

144. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 14 April 2020 at 4.00 p.m. The venue was to be confirmed.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____