



# Northumberland

## County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Rebecca Greally

Email:

Rebecca.Greally@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622616

Date: Tuesday, 2 November 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL** to be held in **MEETING SPACE, BLOCK 1, FLOOR 2, COUNTY HALL, MORPETH, NE61 2EF** on **WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2021** at **5.30 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Daljit Lally  
Chief Executive

To Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council members as follows:-

J Lang, E Cartie, B Gallacher (Vice-Chair (Planning)), L Grimshaw (Chair), K Nisbet, K Parry, M Purvis, J Reid, E Simpson, C Ball, D Carr (Vice-Chair), C Humphrey, W Ploszaj, M Richardson, A Wallace and A Watson

Any member of the press or public may view the proceedings of this meeting live on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV>. Members of the press and public may tweet, blog etc during the live broadcast as they would be able to during a regular Committee meeting.

***Members are referred to the risk assessment, previously circulated, for meetings held in County Hall. Masks should be worn when moving round but can be removed when seated, social distancing should be maintained, hand sanitiser regularly used and members requested to self-test twice a week at home, in line with government guidelines.***



Daljit Lally, Chief Executive  
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## **AGENDA**

### **PART I**

It is expected that the matters included in this part of the agenda will be dealt with in public.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

#### **2. MINUTES**

(Pages 1  
- 24)

Minutes of the meetings of Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September and Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### **3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required to disclose any personal interest (which includes any disclosable pecuniary interest) they may have in any of the items included on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 4 July 2012, and are reminded that if they have any personal interests of a prejudicial nature (as defined under paragraph 17 of the Code Conduct) they must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room. NB Any member needing clarification must contact Legal Services by email at [monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk) Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

#### **4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

To reply to any questions received from members of the public which have been submitted in writing in advance of the meeting. Questions can be asked about issues for which the Council has a responsibility. (Public question times take place on a bimonthly basis at Local Area Council meetings: in January, March, May, July, September and November each year.)

As agreed by the County Council in February 2012, the management of local public question times is at the discretion of the chair of the committee.

Please note however that a question may possibly be rejected if it requires the disclosure of any categories of confidential or exempt information, namely information:

1. relating to any individual;
2. which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual;
3. relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person
4. relating to any labour relations matters/negotiations;
5. restricted to legal proceedings
6. about enforcement/enacting legal orders

7. relating to the prevention, investigation of prosecution of crime.

And/or:

- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- it is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of this or another County Council committee in the past six months;
- the request repeats an identical or very similar question from the same person;
- the cost of providing an answer is disproportionate;
- it is being separately addressed through the Council's complaints process;
- it is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects the county;
- it relates to planning, licensing and/or other regulatory applications
- it is a question that town/parish councils would normally be expected to raise through other channels.

If the Chair is of the opinion that a question is one which for whatever reason, cannot properly be asked in an area meeting, he/she will disallow it and inform the resident of his/her decision.

Copies of any written answers (without individuals' personal contact details) will be provided for members after the meeting and also be publicly available.

Democratic Services will confirm the status of the progress on any previously requested written answers and follow up any related actions requested by the Local Area Council.

## 5. PETITIONS

This item is to:

**(a) Receive any new petitions:** to receive any new petitions. The lead petitioner is entitled to briefly introduce their petition by providing a statement in writing, and a response to any petitions received will then be organised for a future meeting;

**(b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:** no reports are due to be considered at this meeting;

**(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered:** any updates will be verbally reported at the meeting.

## 6. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

To receive 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 of the Local Area Council, who will also then have the opportunity to raise issues with the Area Managers.

The Area Managers have 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.

**7. YOUTH SERVICES PROVISION**

To receive a presentation giving an overview of the Youth Services Provision within Ashington and Blyth.

**8. NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**

To receive a presentation on the work of Northumberland Communities Together.

**9. WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE**

(Pages  
25 - 32)

The report provides an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season.

**10. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

(Pages  
33 - 38)

To note the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings (any suggestions for new agenda items will require confirmation by the Business Chair after the meeting)

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 15 December 2021  
(Planning only)

**12. URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider such other business, as in the opinion of the Chair, should, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

**IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:**

- Declare it and give details of its nature before the matter is discussion or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- Complete this sheet and pass it to the Democratic Services Officer.

<b>Name (please print):</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>
<b>Date:</b>
<b>Item to which your interest relates:</b>
<b>Nature of Registerable Personal Interest i.e either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Annex 2 to Code of Conduct or other interest (as defined by Annex 3 to Code of Conduct) (please give details):</b>
<b>Nature of Non-registerable Personal Interest (please give details):</b>
<b>Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?</b>

**1. Registerable Personal Interests** – You may have a Registerable Personal Interest if the issue being discussed in the meeting:

a) relates to any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as defined by Annex 1 to the Code of Conduct); or

b) any other interest (as defined by Annex 2 to the Code of Conduct)

The following interests are Disclosable Pecuniary Interests if they are an interest of either you or your spouse or civil partner:

(1) Employment, Office, Companies, Profession or vocation; (2) Sponsorship; (3) Contracts with the Council; (4) Land in the County; (5) Licences in the County; (6) Corporate Tenancies with the Council; or (7) Securities - interests in Companies trading with the Council.

The following are other Registerable Personal Interests:

(1) any body of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management) to which you are appointed or nominated by the Council; (2) any body which (i) exercises functions of a public nature or (ii) has charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purpose includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management ); or (3) any person from whom you have received within the previous three years a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of more than £50 which is attributable to your position as an elected or co-opted member of the Council.

**2. Non-registerable personal interests** - You may have a non-registerable personal interest when you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are, or ought reasonably to be, aware that a decision in relation to an item of business which is to be transacted might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well being or financial position, or the well being or financial position of a person described below to a greater extent than most inhabitants of the area affected by the decision.

The persons referred to above are: (a) a member of your family; (b) any person with whom you have a close association; or (c) in relation to persons described in (a) and (b), their employer, any firm in which they are a partner, or company of which they are a director or shareholder.

### **3. Non-participation in Council Business**

When you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are aware that the criteria set out below are satisfied in relation to any matter to be considered, or being considered at that meeting, you must : (a) Declare that fact to the meeting; (b) Not participate (or further participate) in any discussion of the matter at the meeting; (c) Not participate in any vote (or further vote) taken on the matter at the meeting; and (d) Leave the room whilst the matter is being discussed.

The criteria for the purposes of the above paragraph are that: (a) You have a registerable or non-registerable personal interest in the matter which is such that a member of the public knowing the relevant facts would reasonably think it so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest; **and either** (b) the matter will affect the financial position of yourself or one of the persons or bodies referred to above or in any of your register entries; **or** (c) the matter concerns a request for any permission, licence, consent or registration sought by yourself or any of the persons referred to above or in any of your register entries.

**This guidance is not a complete statement of the rules on declaration of interests which are contained in the Members' Code of Conduct. If in any doubt, please consult the Monitoring Officer or relevant Democratic Services Officer before the meeting.**

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 15 September 2021 at 4:30 pm** in County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland

#### PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

#### MEMBERS

C Ball  
D Carr  
E Cartie  
B Gallacher  
C Humphrey  
J Lang  
K Nisbet  
K Parry

W Ploszaj  
M Purvis  
J Reid  
M Richardson  
E Simpson  
A Wallace  
A Watson

#### OFFICERS

M Bulman  
M Carle  
R Greally  
  
P Jones  
S McNaughton  
J Murphy  
R Soulsby  
S Wardle

Lawyer  
Lead Highways Delivery Manager  
Assistant Democratic Services  
Officer  
Director – Local Services  
Head of Economy and Regeneration  
Planning Area Manager  
Planning Officer  
Neighbourhood Services Divisional  
Manager

#### 03. MINUTES 14 JULY 2021

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 14 July 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 04 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS

Councillor L Simpson disclosed an interest in the planning application as she had already expressed her opinion on the application and agreed that she would leave the room during the item.

## **05 DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Councillor Cartie raised concerns that letters of objection/support were no longer printed and circulated with the agenda but found on the Council's website. She requested know who made the decision and when the decision was made to no longer circulate paper copies with the agenda.

Councillor Cartie wished to move a motion that opposed this decision as she felt paper copies should be circulated. She expressed that the online portal was difficult to navigate through and paper copies gave a better indication of the local opinion to the applications

M Bulman advised that although a motion couldn't be put in place concerns could be raised with the Director of Planning.

Councillor Cartie requested that it be raised with Officers as she felt it should have been a decision made by Council and not just made by Officers. Other members agreed and felt that hard copies should be distributed instead of relying on the online portal. Cllr Gallacher stated that he had raised the concerns with planning.

**RESOLVED** that:

- a) the concerns would be raised with the Director of Planning.
- b) the information be noted

## **06 PLANNING APPLICATION: 21/01624/COU**

R Soulsby, planning officer introduced the planning application to the committee with the aid of a power point presentation. He gave the following updates:

- The application site was within a designated Town Centre by the Wansbeck Local District Plan where the provision of Town Centre facilities were permitted if they were well located within the community. This was outlined in policy RTC1 which wasn't clearly referenced in the officer report.

D Brassell addressed the committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments were as follows:

- The proximity to residential flats was a concern. There were two residential flats joined to the business. The back bedroom window of the upper flat was approximately 2 metres from where the proposed extraction unit was to be placed where smells and noise would be emitted from.



- Due to the change of use, there were concerns raised regarding noise from the kitchen and late-night customers, vibrations from the extraction equipment, bins and pest control.
- The bins were located close to the residential flats and would be filled with waste food which could have encouraged vermin. Mr Brassell stated there had always been a vermin problem in the area but this application would exacerbate the situation.
- The premises had always been a business, and the residents do not oppose another business but the late-night food license brings a host of concerns.
- The nearby residents were opposed to the application and feared that it would adversely affect their lives. There was potential that customers would have to queue outside resident's bedroom window which would make them feel unsafe especially when young children come to stay. The business has applied for a late-night food license until 12am which could have meant people congregating outside the residential flats at this time.
- There was a possibility that groups of people would congregate outside the business and could encourage anti-social behaviour.
- Newbiggin was already saturated with takeaways and another one would only be a deficit to other business in the town and could have created unemployment.

T Carter addressed the committee in support of the application on behalf of the applicant, his comments were as follows:

- He thanked the Chair, committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the applicant. He gave thanks to R Soulsby for giving a professional and balanced appraisal on the application.
- He highlighted that there were a number of comments opposing the application. Comments were encouraged during the planning application however the objections and comments received were from a small group of people and it was felt that canvassing had taken place. The majority of comments made were regarding perceived competition and not a true reflection of the public's opinion.
- Equally a significant number of the public supported the application. The Town Council were in support of the application and stated "Newbiggin Town Council support the application for the change of use and find it encouraging that a business is willing to invest in the local economy and bring employment opportunities when so many businesses have closed their doors in surrounding towns as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic." It was urged that planning committee not to give too much credence to the number of objections but instead their content.
- The building was vacant and by bringing it back into use in such a prominent location could benefit the area.
- Newbiggin had become a tourist attraction where people came to visit and a vacant shop would be an eye sore.
- The comments and objections received had been actively addressed in terms of noise and odour with professional assessments sought. These assessments found no negative impact on neighbouring residents or the site.
- Assessments carried out had been given to the Environmental Health Officers and they had agreed with the findings.

- Highways officers had found that there would not be a significant change with adequate parking provided to the front & rear of the premises.
- There were to be no external changes to the building so there was no harm to the conservation area and conservation officers had assessed this.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following information was provided:

- In terms of the application individual comments and objections some were received from residents within Newbiggin and there were objections and comments from residents in neighbouring towns and villages. Comments could be accepted from any member of the public in terms of an application. Neighbouring areas are usually consulted and as this application was within a conservation site it would have been advertised in the newspaper.
- It was clarified that noise assessments were conducted by a consultant in April 2021 and then assessed appropriately by an Environmental Health Officer and no concerns were raised. A noise assessment looked at plant and machinery needed and the noise the equipment would produce not noise level due to voices etc. It was already a commercial property and the business was not going to be a noise generating business to where it would give significant disturbance to the neighbouring residents. Custom at this kind of business was usually a steady stream of people where customers would go in and out of the premises.
- The refuse bins would be securely stored to the rear of the shop. There was information on where the bins would be stored which was all that was required for the application. A condition could be added to include a refuse strategy where the applicant would have to provide more information to see if there were any facilities to securely store the bins and collection days.
- The highways team would have been able to enforce if refuse bins were left out at the front of the building not on bin collection days.
- There was no planning policy or restriction that limited the amount of hot food takeaways that were situated in an area. There were no grounds in terms of planning that could have refused the application on that basis.
- Highways had looked at the delivery strategies proposed by the applicant and felt that they were in-keeping with the neighbouring and adjacent commercial businesses. It was noted that there were restrictions in place in designated parking bays for loading and no concerns were raised by Highways regarding deliveries to and from the application site.
- Conservation Officers raised no objections in regards to the application and there was no harm to the heritage asset. They stated that it would bring a vacant unit in a prominent area of the Town back into use. Building conservation did not raise any objection to the application.
- An odour assessment was provided as part of the application which was appropriately assessed by the Public Protection team. Condition 6 within the officer report stated that the kitchen extraction system would provide a high level of odour control which would protect the immediate neighbours.
- The application would have the opening hours from 12p.m – 12 a.m 7 days a week. The public protection team had assessed the opening hours and had raised no objections.

- The application was only for the change of use not for any external changes therefore the look of the building could not be dictated.
- There was no indication in the application regarding the applicant undertaking food deliveries from the site however there was not anything in the use class order that would prevent them from doing this in the future.
- There was no jurisdiction to make the applicant responsible for litter produced by customers. They could be asked to provide bins as a goodwill gesture but this condition could not be imposed.
- Changes in the conservation area would have had to be implemented through the local plan and changes cannot be put in place through planning. The legislation did not legislate for competition between businesses or number of certain businesses within an area. If an application came forward the officers were duty bound to consider it against the planning law as it was known.
- Although 24 people were notified any number of people could respond to the application. The application was advertised in the press and published on lampposts in the local area. 20 people supported the application and it was stated that 9 of those supporters lived outside of Newbiggin.
- As officers from Highways, Public Protection and Conservation had raised no objections and had given details of the assessment on the public forum it was deemed that the planning officers were able to discuss the information with members. However, if it was deemed necessary the application could be deferred to invite officers from Highways, Public Protection and Conservation to discuss.
- Closing times of adjacent business varied from 9 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The general consensus was that they were closing between 11 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. If members felt it was necessary a planning condition could be imposed to reduce the business hours so it closed at 11p.m. The business hours would have also been subject to a license from the licensing team so if they had any concerns they could have raised it.

Councillor Grimshaw proposed to defer the application until officers from Highways, Public Protection and Conservation were present on the next occasion which was seconded by Councillor Nisbet.

Some members felt that they could not support the proposal as they felt the information Councillors were seeking was already in the report and felt it would be a waste of officer's time to reiterate what was already indicated in the report.

A vote was taken on the recommendation to defer the application until officers from Highways, Public Protection and Conservation were present as follows: FOR 7; AGAINST 8; ABSTENTIONS 0. The motion failed.

Councillor Wallace proposed to grant permission with the conditions in the Officer's report with the additional condition regarding submission and approval of a refuse strategy scheme, with exact wording of that condition delegated to the Director of Planning and in conjunction with the Chair. Also, an amendment to condition 7 that the premises should only operate between the hours 12:00 – 24:00 Monday – Saturday, Sunday 12:00 – 23:00. This was seconded by Councillor Reid.

Members raised concerns that the high standards that were held along the street front had to be maintained and felt there was a responsibility with the public and business owners to maintain this.

Members felt that Newbiggin had become a town they had become proud of and it was a beautiful part of Northumberland that was now becoming a tourist destination. Therefore, it was important that the right decisions were made in relation to planning applications. It was a tourist destination and members needed to be mindful of how the highstreets were changing and what members were allowing to go into the highstreets.

A vote was taken to on the recommendation to grant permission with the conditions in the Officer's report with the additional condition regarding submission and approval of a refuse strategy scheme, with exact wording of that condition delegated to the Director of Planning and in conjunction with the Chair. Also, an amendment to condition 7 that the premises should only operate between the hours 12:00 – 24:00 Monday – Saturday, Sunday 12:00 – 23:00 as follows: FOR 10; AGAINST 4; ABSTENTION 1

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** with the conditions in the Officer's report with the additional condition regarding submission and approval of a refuse strategy scheme, with exact wording of that condition delegated to the Director of Planning and in conjunction with the Chair. Also, an amendment to condition 7 that the premises should only operate between the hours 12:00 – 24:00 Monday – Saturday, Sunday 12:00 – 23:00.

## **07 APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

Members questioned what was meant by the split decision on page 28 of the update. It was clarified that some advertisement notices were allowed to remain, and some were not which was the split decision.

*A short break was held at this point and the meeting reconvened at 6:02 p.m.*

## **08 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

Kim McGuinness, Police and Crime Commissioner gave an update on policing in the Ashington & Blyth area. She gave the following information: -

- She acknowledged that the pandemic had been challenging for the Police force but highlighted that it had not taken away from the work the force was doing.
- The new police and crime plan was consulted across the entire region and the PCC highlighted that there was a good representation from the South East are of the County. Public engagement was higher than in previous years despite the pandemic which caused a change in plans.

- The main concerns raised were common issues such as anti-social behaviour. It was highlighted that there were different levels of anti-social behaviour that ranged from fly-tipping to low level drug dealing.
- A new system had been introduced to allow a slicker process for Councillors to report grievances. It was hoped that it would help bridge the gap for reporting crimes.
- County lines was still high on the agenda of the PCC plan and there was a two-pronged approach through prevention tactics and more police presence.
- She was pleased with the progress of a number of operations including; momentum which led to five people evicted from the area.
- It was acknowledged that drug crimes lead to other crimes and there was a drug problem in the South East area. It was emphasised that it would not be tolerated.
- There was ground-breaking work being undertaken in response to violence and women and girls (VAWG). The vast majority of reported violent crimes were domestic violence. The work around VAWG included perpetrator work which was to break the perpetrator cycle to prevent reoffending.
- The Police Crime and Commissioner highlighted concerns regarding funding into the police. Funding was annual and often a one-off fund. Policing needed more sustainable funding.
- The communication with residents was highlighted as a success; open surgeries and surveys were done to help those affected by crime.
- Youth services were working closely with Councillors. A great example of this was work with Councillors to create a motorbike club which helped with motorbike disorder in the area.

The following comments were made in response to questions:

- Members echoed the sentiments that the police had worked hard and done a good job throughout the pandemic.
- It was agreed that the engagement bus was a great addition to force. It was requested that the engagement bus visit other areas in South East Northumberland.
- The ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras across the County were used as a covert police tactic.
- The handheld speed cameras that Blyth Councillors had invested in were working well. It was agreed that there would be more updates in relation to crimes reported to Councillors.
- Post pandemic the community speed-watch voluntary programme was to be relaunched. There was going to be a push on recruitment for the volunteers as there was an acknowledgement that there needed to be more.
- There were initiatives put in place with the Council as a long-term deterrence for anti-social behaviour such as congregating in public car parks.
- The new train line plan had possibilities to create other deterrence's but it was important to note that most people used the car parks appropriately and it was important to find the right level of deterrence.

- Long lens cameras were getting results. The speed community had a record of achievements but needed to be shared with Councillors. The information from this intelligence was to be used to identify areas where a speed camera would go.
- It was highlighted the importance of reporting crimes as the force base the way they responded through crimes reported. A new telephone service was introduced which would improve the service. Wait times had decreased since the initial increase when covid restrictions ended.
- Electric bikes that were funded by Councillors were useful and the achievements had not been publicised as much as it should have been.
- Visiting schools had been difficult during the pandemic however moving forward Community Support Officers would be attending colleges to promote speed awareness.
- There was a suggestion about educating parents on the parking safely during school pick up and drop offs.

## **09 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions from the public had been received in advance of the meeting.

## **10 PETITIONS**

- (a) Receive any new petitions** – no new petitions had been received.
- (b) Consider reports on petitions previously received** - no reports to consider.
- (c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered** - no updates to consider.

## **11 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

The Local Services Director and Local Services and Neighbourhood Services Divisional Manager were in attendance to provide verbal updates about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work and to respond to issues raised by members.

### **Neighbourhood Services**

Mr S Wardle, Neighbourhood Services Divisional Manager provided an update as follows:

#### **Grass Cutting**

- Grass cutting remains on target and the required standard of between 10 to 13 grass cuts in all areas should be achieved.
- There were challenging periods with near perfect conditions for grass and weed growth but teams had recovered well.

*Chair's Initials.....*

*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 14 July 2021*

8

- In Blyth they were on cut 10 and cut 9 in Ashington areas.
- Street sweeping was still on the usual schedule but was expected to move over to leaf hot spots in the near future.

### **Winter Works**

- Winter planning was in place which included all routine path edging, shrub bed pruning and hedge/tree work however any suggestions from Councillors were welcomed.

### **Weeds**

- Weeds had proved difficult this year throughout the whole County but particularly within Ashington, Blyth and Newbiggin.
- The third and final round of weed treatment activity to hard surfaces was on-going at the time and details of locations being covered were available if requested.
- Staff had been deployed with some new weed ripping equipment which seemed to be working well, but was very labour intensive to use and was therefore being deployed to tackle particular problem areas.

### **Glyphosate alternative trial**

- The trial was coming to end with one more treatment to be done in the area.
- All results were being recorded and a note of the outcome of the trial would be produced that could be shared with members.

### **Waste Collections**

- There were some staff shortages due to Covid and some minor vehicle breakdowns had also caused difficulties, however residual recycling and garden waste collections had gone well.
- Income from garden waste had exceeded target with many residents buying into the scheme.
- Income from commercial and bulk waste had also exceeded target.
- Teams were continuing to review current rounds and were to evaluate the effect of new houses on the collections. Also, they were to review the rounds in regards to the increased uptake of garden waste to assist with budget and service planning for next year.
- Bottle recycling facilities were in high demand and the collections from bottle banks had to be increased to meet this.
- Bulky waste services were also in high demand and extra time slots had been added in order to reduce waiting times for collections. The service was also being operated for an additional day per week on overtime to meet the demand.

In response to questions the following information was provided:

- A third weed treatment spray was taking place and it was highlighted that specific problem areas could be targeted with mechanical weed rippers if needed. It was always going to be a challenge as the chemical used required the weather to be calm and dry and the weeds to be visible as it is a contact weedkiller that has to be applied directly to the surface of the weeds and wet or windy weather can cause the chemicals to drift risking damage to other nearby vegetation or be washed off the leaves before it had chance to take effect. Residents paid Council Tax and for enhanced services and expected a better service. Comments were noted.
- Resident's taking pride in their community and undertaking activities like litter picking or clearing weeds from the footways outside their homes was not to replace the Council's work but an addition. Pride in the County was always encouraged and the more people that had an active involvement in improving the area they lived in, the better it was for everyone.
- A walkaround with Local Services was requested by members and this had taken place. Members identified areas that needed to be focused on. Whilst it was noted at the time that Neighbourhood Services staff were still in the process of undertaking weed treatment and removal activity through the area, there had been no updates from officers regarding the work. Ashington Town Council was providing additional funds to deliver enhanced services, but it was not clear to some County Councillors what the funds were being used for .
- It was requested that Officers provide a note on their thoughts from the walkaround with members and what plans they would put in place from it.

Thanks were conveyed to officers for all their hard work throughout the difficult challenges.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted and issues set out in the bullet points above be followed up.

## Highways Services

Mr M Carle, Lead Highways Delivery manager provided an update as follows:

All inspectors were deployed and carrying out inspections and maintenance crews were out continuously fixing potholes, doing repairs and making safe category 1 defects.

The gully emptier was fully deployed and had dealt with all reported issues.

**Larger tarmac patching** had been carried out in the following locations:

- Ashbourne Crescent
- Ashington Woodhorn Road, Newbiggin
- Brierly Road, Blyth
- Thropton Avenue, Blyth



Cycle and footway patching had been identified by the highways inspector and a programme had been put in place to start later that month.

Drainage improvements had also been identified in several areas and a programme was expected to be drawn together in the coming weeks dependent on meetings with street works and traffic management.

Winter maintenance was being planned for the 21/22 season, rock salt was being delivered cross the County after a large delivery to the Port of Blyth. Work was on-going with ICL to ensure there was a constant level of delivery to reach the 36,000 tonne stockpile required for the start of the winter. All routes were being verified for a roll out of Exatrack which was the new in-cab automated gritting IT system. This was going to provide a sat nav function to guide drivers around each route whilst also being connected to the spreading equipment so that the spread rates and patterns were fully automated and correct for the type of road being travelled at that time. This would give a consistent approach to the treatment of the gritting network, increased the resilience of drivers as resources could be moved seamlessly across the County. The Exatrack system was also able to give activity reports which could be used to defend litigation. Nine new gritters were also on order and expected to be delivered in the coming months

In response to questions the following information was provided:

- In new build properties streetlights were only the responsibility of the Council once the road had been adopted. The comments would be passed along to development control regarding the streets highlighted.
- Adoption of roads were dependent on the progress of the development. Most contractors put in place the road network for the new development but leave the final wearing course off to avoid it being damaged by construction traffic until they complete the majority of house building work and only upon completion of this then focus on getting the road to an adoptable state. Up until that point it was the developers responsibility to ensure it was properly maintained. Concerns over adoption status were to be passed onto the highway development management team in planning.
- Station Road – it was acknowledged that the use of pavior block parking bays was creating on-going maintenance issues and an alternative approach was being put in place for a longer lasting replacement.
- Spine Road lights were out due to multiple failures which would lend itself to a power fault which falls under Northern Power Grid. However it would be passed on to be actioned.
- Although it was not in written policy it is communicated with teams that the salt bins should be emptied before filled with new salt.
- There was a request to find out who owned the road from Morpeth Road School, Blyth to Chestnut Avenue as there were concerns about the traffic whilst children walked to school. The adoption records were going to be looked at.

## 12 NORTHUMBERLAND LINE

Mr S. McNaughton, Head of Economy and Regeneration, gave an update of the Northumberland Line project. He gave an overview of the proposed Northumberland line which included; six stations with two trains per hour. It was hoped it would be open by 2024.

Achievements were outlined; public consultation gave a good amount of feedback with 92% of the responses were positive. The final outline had been submitted to Network Rail for approval and planning applications were being submitted for all proposed stations. An application to the secretary of state was submitted and accepted and an enquiry was going to begin in the near future. Funding was received which had accelerated design and negotiations with landowners. They were in the final stages of creating the business case.

Planning and consent was already received for a number of applications; Chase Meadow Footbridge, Ashington Station and Northumberland Park station. Bedlington, Blyth Bebside and Seaton Deleval stations were still awaiting determination. Other applications were going to be submitted in the near future.

In response to questions, the following information was provided:

- Designs of the stations and car parks were based on existing use. The parking strategy would take into consideration the demand predicted up to 2030 so therefore is a long-term strategy. Car parks would be monitored to see when they reached capacity and would inform officers if they needed to implement strategies to control the use of car parks.
- The trains would initially be diesel due to the current availability of rolling stock. However moving forward new stock would be introduced, hopefully from 2026. The council will be working with the Department for Transport to find out what the options were regarding new stock.
- Concerns were acknowledged regarding the hospital underpass however it was assured that it would go through the appropriate planning protocol. If the underpass was to be diverted it would delay the programme.
- It was requested that another survey be done for the level crossing to measure how many people were using it.

Members thanked Mr S. McNaughton for the detailed update.

## 13 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

As the meeting approached the 3 hour limit Members were asked if they wished to suspend standing orders in order to continue the meeting. Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with the Council's constitution, standing orders be suspended and the meeting continue over the 3 hour limit.

*Chair's Initials.....*

*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 14 July 2021*

## 14 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN UPDATE

Mr P. Jones introduced the report of the local transport plan update. The report provided an update on the plan and the process for setting out the next years plan. He outlined the key points as follows:-

- More funding was received from the Department of Transport than expected which allowed for some approved schemes to be extended and some reserve schemes to be added to the plan.
- Countywide work was complex and focused on safety and maintenance. As well as work on structures such as bridges.
- There were some complex and challenging schemes being undertaken, such as a large amount of geotechnical work being carried out on a landslip at Todsteads in the Coquet Valley.
- Looking forward there was a plan to provide a more detailed and tailored feedback report on LTP scheme progress to the area Councils on a regular basis, the work required to achieve this was on-going.
- There were 31 integrated transport projects being undertaken in the financial year; 7 of the projects had been completed, including 2 urgent safety schemes requested by the police;
- A speed reduction scheme was introduced between Lynemouth and Woodhorn; A traffic management scheme in Cottingwood Green was completed; parking signage was improved in Newbiggin.
- There were 3 schemes integrated transport projects where the works order had been issued and 18 schemes were in design.
- Works for the slipway at Newbiggin were almost finalised with costings being confirmed in the near future;
- On carriageway maintenance there were 18 schemes on-going at a range of sites including Bedlington Station, Newsham and Ashington; 10 schemes were completed, including major resurfacing works at a range of sites; 5 microsurfacing works had been completed in Ashington and Blyth. There were 3 schemes in design for resurfacing activity in Swaledale Avenue, Blyth; Simonside Terrace, Newbiggin; Laverock Hall Road, Newsham;
- Areas were being assessed and prioritized for the next financial year, with submissions from Town and Parish Councils, the deadline for submissions was 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021. There was an LTP workshop once the submissions had been ranked and they would be discussed with members. The draft programme was then presented to LACs in February and then signed off in March.

The following comments were made:

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- Members were pleased the LTP workshop was happening again and new members were urged to attend.
- It was felt that the report highlighted how little money was invested in Ashington & Blyth compared to other areas within the County.
- Members approved of the tailored report that would be provided to the Local Areas.
- Local Area Councils were originally set up with the intention of being a decision making body but it was felt that they had been given limited decision making powers..
- It was suggested that there was a need for refreshed road markings throughout the South East of the County with Rotary Way, Blyth being mentioned. Additional funding had been allocated to refresh signs and lines but they were being prioritized on a safety basis.
- Micro-surfacing was a nationally recognized treatment to prolong the asset life of highways. Fundamentally it improved the waterproofness, running surface and skid resistance of the road. It offered very good value for money with an addition of 7-10 years to the lifespan of a road and the treatment before further works were required and this process was capable of being repeated. There was a 12 month warranty with the micro-surfacing in relation to the laying of the material and a 3 year guarantee in terms of material failure.
- Micro-surfacing offered excellent value for money and was often the best option in certain cases for surface repair.

The officers were all thanked for attending the meeting and giving a detailed overview.

## 15 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered a list of appointments to outside bodies for 2021/22.

**RESOLVED** that the following list of appointments be confirmed:

- Blyth Valley Disabled Forum – **K Nisbet**
- Briardale Community & Training Centre Community Association - **Margaret Richardson**
- Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley - **A Watson**
- Northumberland Community Voluntary Action – To be confirmed

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 16 LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings.

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Concerns were raised regarding the amount of business set for the November LAC meeting.

It was acknowledged that certain items must remain on the agenda but was suggested that the work programme be looked at.

It was suggested that it would be better if planning was a separate meeting to avoid long meetings.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted. Suggestions would be taken forward.

## **17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting was for planning items only and, subject to there being any planning business, would take place on Wednesday, 13 October 2021 time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 13 October 2021 at 4:00 pm** in County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

#### **MEMBERS**

C Ball  
D Carr  
E Cartie  
B Gallacher  
J Lang  
K Nisbet  
K Parry

M Purvis  
J Reid  
M Richardson  
E Simpson  
A Wallace  
A Watson

#### **OFFICERS**

M Bulman  
R Greally  
  
W Laing  
J Murphy

Lawyer  
Assistant Democratic Services  
Officer  
Planning Officer  
Planning Area Manager

Around 7 members of the press and public were present.

#### **01 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from C. Humprey and W. Ploszaj.

#### **03. PROCEDURE AT PLANNING MEETINGS**

Councillor Gallacher, Vice-Chair (Planning) (in the Chair) outlined the procedure which would be followed at the meeting.

#### **04 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS**

Councillor B Gallacher disclosed an interest in the planning application on item 6 as he had already expressed his opinion on the application and agreed that he would leave the room during the item.

## 05 PLANNING APPLICATION: 21/03198/CCD

J Murphy, Planning Area Manager, introduced the planning application to the committee with the aid of a power point presentation. It was noted that there were no updates since the report was finalised.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following information was noted: -

- The application was brought to the committee as it was a school and was felt that it was of public interest. It was added to the referral list to bring to member's attention and the Chair felt it was worthy to be brought to the committee.
- The new fence would be the same colour all the way around which was an unpainted steel colour.
- Members agreed the new fence would look better than the mismatch fences that were in situ.
- There was one objection against the application however the officers had spoken to the objector and satisfied their concerns.

Councillor Parry proposed acceptance of the recommendations to approve the application as outlined in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Reid. A vote was taken, and it was unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

## 06 APPEALS UPDATE

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted .

*Councillor Gallacher left the room. Councillor D Carr chaired the next planning item.*

## 07 PLANNING APPLICATION: 20/03203/FUL

W Laing, Planning Officer, introduced the application with the aid of powerpoint presentation.

D Thompson addressed the committee speaking in opposition of the application. Her comments were as follows: -

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- Under planning policies GP1 the application failed to demonstrate sequential testing and the re-use of buildings in the area.
- Policy STP3.E the application failed to minimize the impact on local amenities for new or existing residents.
- Policy ECN11 the application failed to fully address highways, access and amenity for point (b) whilst restricted convenience were not a planning consideration these had been highlighted as part of the objection as the estate was legally protected.
- Under principles of development the applicant states only one customer a day and no customers waiting. Inaccurate responses had been provided throughout this application process for example providing the number of bedrooms the household had. If they were inaccurate on the number of bedrooms they may have been inaccurate on the number of customers.
- A similar application nearby was refused on the grounds that it could have led to other applications of a similar nature being submitted. It was rejected as it was recognized that it was a residential estate. Changing the house from C3 use to C3 + A1/E1 could have resulted in other applications for professional services and retail within the residential area.
- The application had a detrimental effect on the residential area as well as the Town Centre and existing commercial premises as it drew trade and footfall away from the area.
- There was a suggestion that restrictions could have been applied to the application but it was questioned how the Authority would enforce the restrictions.
- Increased traffic, noise and general disturbances were detrimental to the residential area.
- When 60% of the residents in the local area had objected it was questioned how the application could be approved. Of all the public responses that were submitted 90% were objections.
- Fallowfield was a desirable area to live in with a low turnover of residents. Changing the character and amenity of the area could have deterred new people moving into the area.
- The extension was granted with a door and window originally as part of the residential home. If the application was granted the privacy of neighbouring properties would have been lost as customers who entered or left the salon would have looked directly into the rear garden of neighbouring properties. The window and door had not been built in the location that was originally granted.
- Under regulations the property was required to have 3 parking spaces as it was a four-bedroom house. The property would require an additional parking space for the salon if it was granted. Highways had stated that the lack of one parking space would not have substantiated a refusal on highway safety grounds as the salon was only to have one customer at a time.
- Highways suggested parking could have been across the drive however this would have meant parking on the pavement which would have restricted pedestrians. The property was also within 10 metres of the junction for access to the street.
- The applicant had stated that the postman parked opposite the house which would have caused further parking problems. Parking was already tight within the cul-de-sac.

- If the application was granted a precedent would have been set for further commercial or business applications.
- Had a sequential test been undertaken to see if there were any suitable commercial properties?
- The high-street was described as dying with a number of places where hairdresser's could work from.
- The local plan was in place to revitalize the area, yet this application did not match the plan.
- The hairdresser was already operating a mobile business and may have chosen to bring more clients to the property and expand the business.
- The planning report failed to take into account the comments of objections from the neighbouring residents.
- Planning officers were there to advise the committee however the committee were able to make their own decision on the application and did not have to agree with the recommendations.
- It was hoped that the committee would support the 60% of residents that had opposed the application.
- It was reminded that local Councillors were elected to help in the community not just for the benefit of one household.
- By refusing the application it would allow the residents to continue to enjoy the character and privacy of the estate.
- Other Authorities had refused similar planning applications across the country following the national planning policy.

W Scott addressed the committee speaking in support of the application. His comments were as follows: -

- The salon was purely an opportunity for the applicant to work from home part time to help with childcare issues.
- Many of the objections were in relation to parking however as written in the report the salon would have been a single person salon with one customer a day. The room was dual use and contained washing machines etc. to be used as a utility room.
- It would be a one car per customer (if any at all) on a part time basis. Some days there would have been no clients at all. It was hardly an intrusion on anyone's daily life.
- The applicant had hoped that neighbours would have felt that it was a convenient option that they could have walked to.
- The applicants are the only people who had addressed the parking issue by having a drive for three cars. Most objectors felt that they were okay to park anywhere even when their own driveway was clear.
- Parking was not raised as a concern with Highways or Planning. Postal deliveries were more likely to cause issues than a single car pulling off a driveway.
- No concerns from neighbours were brought to the applicants personally, even when the work was being carried out.
- The applicants wanted to do things correctly hence the application, the direct neighbours were always aware of the intent.

- Being called disingenuous upset the applicants greatly. The building and application process were done with professional advice in full view of everyone concerned. If the applicants were disingenuous, they would not have
- Objectors to the salon should look on the Fallowfields social media page where there were open advertisements for services and goods run from home.
- Any objections to the fence had been addressed by the Highways and Planning department.
- The fencing was identical to the houses on the estate that were already granted permission.
- Objectors with civic mindfulness and duty should have looked at all corner properties throughout the estate who had already erected similar fences with or without permission.
- The salon posed no threat to the safety, appearance or value of the estate. Nothing was externally visible and the status quo would not have been changed.
- The small part-time salon was to be regulated, and in view of the necessary bodies.
- The level of abuse and treatment of the applicant was shocking, letters had been distributed containing false claims regarding the application.
- It was mentioned that not all supporters lived on the estate however not all opposers lived on the estate either.
- The applicants had to justify who was visiting their home as it was felt that objectors were constantly watching and making complaints.
- It was highlighted that primarily the property was the applicants home where they wanted to raise their children.
- The business was only to have one customer at a time and there was no intention to submit further applications to increase this.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following information was noted: -

- It was clarified that the part retrospective application was for the fence as although the salon business had been set up it was not yet in operation at the time of the application.
- Highways inspected the site for the additional parking as well as inspecting the impact of the fence on the highway and visibility.
- There was a previous planning application elsewhere in the estate (application number 03/00290/COU) it was for a far larger use with more staff and customers. It was more for a commercial use in comparison.
- Business viability was not a planning consideration.
- Highways had inspected the site and had put their comments on the public access which had clearly stated there was no concerns around the parking given the number of parking spaces the dwelling had and that there would only be one customer per day.
- The applicant had stated they had recently come off maternity leave and were using the salon to build their business back up. It was not fair or realistic to assume that the comments in the application were not true. The application was to be assessed on the comments made in the application which was there would be one customer per day.

- The committee was reminded that they should only be looking at the merits of this application and not scrutinise previous, historical applications as there was not enough information regarding them.
- It was clarified that the two chairs shown in the presentation were for one customer. One was positioned at a sink and the other would be where the client's hair was cut.
- Each application would be assessed on their own merits so it could not be said that granting this proposal would set a precedent for other, similar applications.
- It was clarified that the proposal was brought to committee due to the fence application and the hairdressing business did not require planning permission based on the proposal at the time. The business was controlled by conditions so if use intensified such as noise or deliveries it could be reviewed or investigated by the Planning department. However, as it stood the business could run under permitted development rights.
- There were many businesses that were already conducted from homes due to permitted development rights such as; dog grooming. It's not about the change of use as such but the impact of the use and that it remained ancillary to the main purpose of the dwelling.
- It was hoped that if the proposal was accepted that the conditions were monitored appropriately and necessary action would take place if needed.
- If the conditions in the application were not adhered to then enforcement would be looked into. It would be discussed with the applicant in the first instance and would give them the opportunity to correct that, or if the applicant wanted to increase the customer number they would have had to apply again.
- It was clarified that permitted development was not a blanket term that could be used for every application. It was dependent on the level of the use. Only small-scale use could have constituted permitted development. The application was not on the same bar as change of use applications as the impact on the surroundings was minimal. Each situation would have been assessed on its own merit and a judgement made based on the impacts.
- The policies that were considered for the application were included in the report. All written objections were considered during the report. Due to the scale of the business being ancillary some of the policies raised by the objector would not have applied as they are for commercial premises. The officers were confident that every policy relevant to the application had been duly considered.
- The applicant could have sought a certificate of lawfulness for the hairdressing business alone however the application was a joint application which was well within the applicant's rights and still gave the applicant the desired permissions.
- The application was brought to the committee due to the level of public interest. It was referred to the Chair delegation procedure it was felt that it should have been brought to committee. Any application that had a level of public interest would be referred to the Chair delegation scheme, and the Chair would have looked at the application with the Head of Planning and determined if it needed to go to committee. There was not a specific level of public interest that would warrant the application going to the Chair's delegation scheme each application was taking on its own merits.

- The applicant completed the relevant certificates to establish the ownership of the land to the side of the property where the fence was erected and bushes removed. No responses were received and land ownership remains unknown. Notwithstanding this, the applicant followed due process and is entitled to have the retrospective planning application considered, which planning law allows for.
- There was not a set prescription for a fence height next to a highway. Permitted development rights allowed fences to be built to a certain height without planning permission. This fence was above the height of permitted hence there was a planning application. Highways had assessed the application in reference to visibility etc.

Councillor Parry proposed acceptance of the recommendations to approve the application as outlined in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Reid.

Members raised concerns that previous applications of a similar nature had been refused for explicit reasons.

Concerns were raised regarding the application taking custom away from the high-street as highlighted by objectors. The Wansbeck Local Plan looked to invigorate the high-street. It was highlighted that the Council could have provided rate relief if needed and it was felt that it would have been more appropriate to find an appropriate dwelling to operate a salon from.

Members highlighted that the business was allowed regardless of the application due to permitted development. The applicant had removed bushes which were part of the original design and intended to create open space, however from experience these areas tended to become unkempt. In an ideal world the corner plots would not have been enclosed with a fence as the original design was intended to make the estate more friendly. However, the reality was that to make the space look tidy fences were built therefore it was felt that little could be done but to grant the application.

A vote was taken on the recommendation to grant permission with the conditions in the Officer's report, as follows; FOR 8 AGAINST 5

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

## 08. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting was for planning items only and, subject to there being any planning business, would take place on Wednesday, 10 November 2021, time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 5.03 pm

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMITTEE: ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

**DATE: 10 NOVEMBER 2021**

**TITLE OF REPORT: Winter Services Preparedness and Resilience Report**

**Report of Interim Executive Director – Rob Murfin**

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor John Riddle

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season.

**Recommendations**

The Local Area Council is recommended to accept this report as an information item.

**Key Issues**

The County Council undertakes its winter services activities to ensure, 'as far as is reasonably practicable' that the highway is maintained in a safe condition in accordance with our legal obligations under the Highways Act 1980.

There has been no change to the service standards or winter maintenance policy since last winter. The Council is still treating the same lengths of road within the same agreed timeframes and meeting all of the Council's agreed policies and standards for winter services.

Arrangements are still in place to ensure operations are Covid-19 compliant to protect the operational teams delivering the service throughout the winter period.

**Background**

**Staffing and Control of Operations**

Winter Services are carried out by the Technical Services division within Local Services. Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Manager, has countywide responsibility for winter services, with Michael Carle, Lead Highways Delivery Manager, acting as countywide operational lead.

The Council undertakes its winter services activities to ensure, 'as far as is reasonably practicable' that the highway is maintained in a safe condition in accordance with our legal obligations under the Highways Act 1980. All of our primary and secondary routes remain unchanged from the 2020/21 season. Following the completion of previous contracts, the arrangements for additional support from agricultural contractors for dealing with snowfall and prolonged periods of extreme cold weather have been re-procured.

The delivery of the winter service overall requires 105 staff, including managers, supervisors, drivers and operatives. Staffing rotas are in place to ensure sufficient staffing resource is available on the three-shift rota.

The majority of staff involved in winter services come from Technical Services, with a small number of drivers also coming from within Neighbourhood Services.

Highways have 2 Winter Services Delivery Managers (Michael Carle and Andrew Olive) who operate on a two-week rota (24/7) and whose job it is to consider the variable forecasting information and make a decision on the most appropriate course of action and what, if any, treatment is necessary based on the forecast information provided by our forecaster (Meteogroup) and bureau provider (Vaisala). The Winter Services Delivery Managers then pass instructions on to the Winter Services Supervisors who manage the gritting operations. The Winter Services Supervisors also work on a rota basis with their shifts.

The rota for the Winter Services Delivery Managers will be circulated to Members shortly. As you can imagine, this role can be very stressful and hectic at times. Members are, therefore, asked to only contact them directly in an **emergency situation**. All non-emergency situations should be reported through the Council's contact centre and the out of hours arrangements via Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service in the usual way. Similarly, Members are requested not to contact Winter Services Supervisors out of hours as their rotas can change and officers not on call or on rest periods can be unnecessarily disturbed.

### **Weather Monitoring**

Arrangements are in place for the winter services manager to use the web based Vaisala weather system which collates all of our local weather station data. This also gives the Council direct access to regional forecasting information across neighbouring authorities. The Council has access through the MeteoGroup system and the Met office Hazard Manager for accurate weather data/forecasts.

Vaisala is a company who collect weather information from various sources including the Meteogroup and their own weather and road surface temperature monitoring equipment on site. They then run a large amount of weather models with this information to accurately predict weather conditions over the next 24 - 36 hrs using weather stations which are positioned around Northumberland. This allows the Council to make informed decisions on road surface treatment.

Forecasts are received on three occasions through the day to allow operational decisions to be made, with any change of forecast also notified to the Winter Services Delivery Manager at any time 24/7 so that changes to planned actions can be made as necessary.

### **Covid 19 Measures**

The Highways team have reviewed existing processes and brought them in line with the current Covid 19 guidance. This has meant the introduction of revised risk assessments and operational procedures to make sure we keep all staff involved in winter services as safe as possible. To minimise the potential impact Covid 19 may have on the delivery of winter services we have reviewed how we deliver the services and introduced new operational guidance to staff and additional checks to ensure the working environment is as safe as possible. Any necessary PPE has been provided to all winter services drivers. Antibacterial wipes are available for vehicle cleaning between shift swaps. All staff involved in winter services have also been strongly encouraged to have a flu jab.

Managers and supervisors will conduct winter services activities remotely using the web-based software systems we have available, as well as on site should the requirement arise. Supervisors and managers will have the ability to communicate with operational staff through a new radio communication which is installed on laptops. All staff involved in Winter Services are available on mobile communication. This allows the teams to still ensure the operation is being conducted in an efficient and effective manner.



During the summer we have set up and are now completing the testing and introduction of a new IT system and vehicle hardware for specialist winter maintenance route management and automated salt spreading technology across the Council's gritter fleet. This will provide a system that allows enhanced vehicle tracking, route management, automated navigation, automated gritting spread patterns, improved data collection and recording, and improved live monitoring of operations. This will improve the resilience of operations considerably as we will be able to deploy any driver with any gritter to any of the routes across Northumberland without them needing prior training on navigation and gritting spread patterns on the particular route. It also improves driver health and safety by automating the control of the spreading rate and patterns for the salt, so that they can focus on driving the vehicle in often very challenging weather conditions. This new system once fully installed and tested will be extremely valuable given the risks of potential driver absence due to seasonal illnesses and coronavirus.

### **Vehicles and Gritting Routes**

The fleet of 28 multi-purpose gritting vehicles with plough attachments have been serviced and prepared ahead of the winter so that all vehicles are on station by mid to late October. In addition to the front line gritters, we also have 2 purpose built snowblowers for use in the high areas of the County to be deployed when conditions dictate, as well as a fleet of 4 gully tankers that are deployed throughout the County, which are available to assist should the need arise with flooding caused by rapid snow melt.

This coming season, we have 28 primary gritting routes. These routes are gritted regularly throughout the winter period in accordance with forecasts as a precaution against icing. In addition, we have 26 secondary gritting routes which are treated in more severe conditions and after the primary routes have been satisfactorily treated.

As part of the ongoing Fleet Replacement programme we are about to take delivery of nine state of the art Mercedes/Econ 6m<sup>3</sup> and 9m<sup>3</sup> capacity gritters. These will be put into service as the winter commences replacing selected existing fleet.

Fleet Services supply all the necessary expertise to keep the vehicle's operating at full capacity throughout the winter period.

Five Hiltip spreaders and ploughs have been put in service and fitted to NCC 4x4 vehicles. These are placed across the operational areas and provide another highly useful piece of equipment that can be deployed rapidly to some of the more difficult areas across the network. This will reduce demand on our gritting fleet and allow it to continue to be dedicated to the primary and secondary network during snow events.

### **Salt Management**

The operation is delivered from 11 manned or unmanned depots across Northumberland. Michael Carle has the responsibility for ordering and management of salt and will oversee the ordering, delivery and ongoing monitoring of stock levels throughout the winter period for each depot assisted by the area based Quantity Surveyors. As mentioned above our new route optimisation software will also monitor exact salt use across the entire fleet and across the network. This will provide the most accurate salt usage data the Council has ever received.

At the end of last season, we had 14,000T of salt in stock across Northumberland. This is being replenished in all of our main depots and we will have a starting stock of 44,000 tonnes at the commencement of winter. This includes our strategic reserve in Powburn which holds 6,000 tonnes to add to Northumberland's resilience levels.

The service is continuing to progress the construction of new salt barns. The Council has constructed a new salt barn in Otterburn highways depot. We are also going through the process of identifying locations for two more salt barns/strategic storage structures in Bellingham and Morpeth, so that once these final two salt barns are constructed all of Northumberland's 42,000 tonnes of salt will be covered. This investment in salt barns is essential to deliver increased efficiency, better consistency of gritting, reduced wastage of rock salt.

### **Grit Bins/Heaps**

All grit bins and salt heaps throughout the County are currently being inspected and replenished as necessary. This includes removing litter etc and making sure the existing condition is to standard. The service supports an inventory of over 1,600 grit bins and over 200 heaps. Each bin has a notice and serial number attached giving contact details so members of the public can report a bin or heap requiring a refill during the winter period via the website or the Councils call centre.

Whilst the majority of grit bins are bright yellow, you may notice some green grit bins. These bins have been provided by the town or parish council who remain responsible for their upkeep and replenishment although, in practice they generally ask NCC to carry out this service on their behalf on a rechargeable basis.

### **Customer Services**

For all winter service requests for additional gritting, grit bin replenishment and general enquiries please contact our customer services and out of hours teams on **0345 600 6400**.

Winter services information contained on the NCC website is being reviewed and updated accordingly to accurately reflect our operations. There will also be ongoing meetings between Technical Services and Customer Services to ensure call handling procedures and internal communications are in place so that a joined-up service is delivered to the customer with one point of contact.

As with previous years, we will again be producing our customer information leaflet titled 'Highway Services in Winter', that provides useful information to the public on all aspects of the service. The leaflet, which includes when gritting will take place and on which roads and footpaths, as well as giving general advice on how to drive in winter conditions, will be available by the end of November following a thorough review of the information it contains. Given Covid considerations this will be distributed electronically rather than in the usual paper format, with paper copies available on request. The document will be distributed to all County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils. Information on the website includes details of our policies and maps of our primary gritting routes, along with those showing our strategic footpath network which will be treated in severe conditions such as snow or heavy icing.

Alerts are sent out daily during the winter using social media. This will advise people on weather conditions and our proposed response. This information is also made available on the Northumberland County Council website.

### **Additional Support**

We have recently renewed our Snow Clearing contract with local Farmers and sub-contractors to assist our operations by removing snow from the more remote roads in rural Northumberland. We are currently issuing pre-start letters to the farmers and contractors. The Council has requested copies of insurance documentation and a schedule of equipment to be made available to provide support. We are conducting an audit of the equipment and its condition. This is ahead of the winter period and the exercise will be completed by the end of October early November 2021. The new contract will provide the farmers and sub-contractors with designated routes. This will ensure that we are clearing the area in the most efficient way we can during a snow event and not revisiting areas which have been cleared. The contractor's plant and equipment will be integrated into our new automated gritting system to allow the Council full visibility of resources during intense periods of weather.

The Council has still retained the 5 voluntary groups which we refer to as "snow squads" who help with snow clearing from footpaths in villages such as Wooler, Belford and Bamburgh; Hexham Town Council also aid with snow clearance. The offer to be included in the 'Snow Squads' will be rolled out again this winter. All volunteers have been trained, equipped with tools, and supplied salt to assist the Council and clear local footpaths around the County helping to keep residents safe.

In addition, we rely on our colleagues from Neighbourhood Services to assist with snow clearing and gritting of key car parks and footpaths.

### **Cross Boundary Working**

Arrangements are in place with Newcastle City, Durham County Council, Cumbria County Council & Scottish Borders Council, Colas and Highways England to aid each other in periods of heavy snow, to ensure that the strategic routes such as the A69, A686 and A68 are kept clear as far as possible. It should also be noted that the County Council supplies a management service to Newcastle City Council, whereby we decide when precautionary salting is needed across their administrative area as well as in Northumberland. This service is provided under a contractual arrangement and generates added income for the County Council, which helps protect front line services from budget cuts.

### **Severe Weather Procedures**

During heavy snow conditions, it is normal for a “snow room” to be set up to coordinate our response to ensure efficient service delivery on the ground. Also, if required due to the severity of the event we will open the incident support room and work alongside the civil contingencies team and all emergency services within the area.

### **Winter Storms/ Flooding**

Staff on the Winter Service rota will respond to precautionary gritting and winter events as normal. Where applicable and when the weather dictates, they will also respond to flooding issues supporting the existing Out of Hours rota in anything above and beyond the normal response levels. The authority receives severe weather warnings many days in advance from several sources including the Met Office Hazard Manager. This gives us the ability to track storms and plan resources around the potential impact.

## **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	There are no changes to winter services policy or gritted network for the 20/21 winter season.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	None
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	None
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Additional risks due to coronavirus have been considered in operational processes
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	None
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The delivery of winter services will assist the public to travel safely during the winter period.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None
<b>Wards</b>	All

## **Background papers:**

None

**Report sign off.**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

	Full name of officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	N/A
Relevant Executive Director	Rob Murfin
Chief Executive	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	John Riddle

**Author and Contact Details**

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**Northumberland County Council  
Ashington and Blyth Area Council  
Work Programme 2021-22**

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (a) To enhance good governance in the area and ensure that the Council's policies take account of the needs and aspirations of local communities and do not discriminate unfairly between the different Areas.
- (b) To advise the Cabinet on budget priorities and expenditure within the Area.
- (c) To consider, develop and influence policy and strategy development of the Council, its arms-length organisations, and other relevant bodies, to ensure that they meet local requirements and facilitate efficient and transparent decision making.
- (d) To receive information, consider and comment on matters associated with service delivery including those undertaken in partnership agencies, affecting the local area to ensure that they meet local requirements, including matters relating to community safety, anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.
- (e) To consider and refer to Cabinet any issues from a local community perspective with emerging Neighbourhood Plans within their area, and consider local planning applications as per the planning delegation scheme
- (f) To consider and recommend adjustments to budget priorities in relation to Local Transport Plan issues within their area, and to make decisions in relation to devolved capital highway maintenance allocations.
- (g) To engage, through the appropriate networks, with all key stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to facilitate the delivery of area priorities. This will include undertaking regular liaison with parish and town councils.
- (h) To inform, consult and engage local communities in accordance with Council policy and guidance, through the appropriate networks.
- (i) To, as appropriate, respond or refer with recommendations to local petitions and councillor calls for action.
- (j) To make certain appointments to outside bodies as agreed by Council.
- (k) To determine applications for grant aid from the Community Chest, either through Panels for individual Local Area Councils, or through the Panel of Local Area Council Chairs for countywide applications.
- (l) To refer and receive appropriate issues for consideration to or from other Council Committees, and as appropriate invite Portfolio Holders to attend a meeting if an item in their area of responsibility is to be discussed.
- (m) To exercise the following functions within their area:-
  - (i) the Council's functions in relation to the survey, definition, maintenance, diversion, stopping up and creation of public rights of way.
  - (ii) the Council's functions as the Commons Registration Authority for common land and town/village greens in Northumberland.
  - (iii) the Council's functions in relation to the preparation and maintenance of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
  - (iv) the Council's functions in relation to the Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum (Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007).



- (v) the Council's role in encouraging wider access for all to the County's network of public rights of way and other recreational routes.

## ISSUES TO BE SCHEDULED/CONSIDERED

**Standard items updates:** Public question time (bimonthly, not at planning only meetings), petitions (bimonthly, not at planning only meetings), members' local improvement schemes (quarterly).

### To be listed:

Off-street Electric Vehicle Charging Points  
Cycling and Walking Board  
Enforcement

Northumberland County Council  
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### 14 July 2021

- Planning and Rights of Way
- Local Services Update
- Appointments to Outside Bodies
- Members Local Improvement Schemes

### 11 August 2021

- Planning and Rights of Way

### 15 September 2021

- Planning and Rights of Way

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Services Update</li> <li>• Local Transport Plan Update</li> <li>• Police Crime and Commissioner</li> <li>• Northumberland Line Corridor</li> </ul>
<b>13 October 2021</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> </ul>
<b>10 November 2021</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> <li>• Local Services Update</li> <li>• Community Together and Community Hubs</li> <li>• Youth Service Provision</li> <li>• Winter Services Preparedness and Resilience</li> </ul>
<b>15 December 2021</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> </ul>
<b>12 January 2022</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> <li>• Budget Presentation</li> <li>• Local Services Update</li> </ul>
<b>16 February 20</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> <li>• Local Transport Plan</li> </ul>
<b>16 March 2022</b>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> <li>• Local Services Update</li> <li>• Members Local Improvement Schemes</li> <li>• North of Tyne Mayor</li> <li>• Enhanced Services with Town and Parish Councils</li> </ul>
<b>13 April 2022</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Rights of Way</li> </ul>

<p>Northumberland County Council  Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council  Monitoring Report 2020-2021</p>				
Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Updates
1.				

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