

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held at Meeting Space - Block 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Monday, 14 March 2022 at Time Not Specified.

PRESENT

J Beynon (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

S Dickinson
L Dunn
P Jackson
M Murphy
R Wearmouth

R Dodd
J Foster
V Jones
D Towns

OFFICERS

J Blenkinsopp
H Bowers
M King
P Lowes
J Murphy
R Soulsby

Solicitor
Democratic Services Officer
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager
South East DM Area Manager
Planning Officer

92 PROCEDURE AT PLANNING MEETINGS

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

93 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bawn, Darwin, Sanderson and Towns for lateness.

94 DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report requested the Committee to decide the planning applications attached to the report using the powers delegated to it. Members were reminded of the principles which should govern their consideration of the applications, the procedure for handling representations, the requirement of conditions and the need for justifiable reasons for the granting of permission or refusal of planning applications.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Proposed demolition of Storey Park Community Centre, Storey Park Community Centre, St Mary's Field, High Church, Morpeth, NE61 2QF

Ryan Soulsby, Planning Officer provided an update to condition 3 in relation to noisy working times, these were to be removed as the working times would be secured by a Demolition Method Statement which formed part of the approved plans listed in Condition 2 – hours of work 8:00 am to 4.30 pm with no weekend working.

The Planning Officer continued to introduce the application with the aid of a power point presentation.

Hannah Wafer, George F White addressed the Committee, speaking in support of the application. Her comments included the following information:

- The building had originally been built in the 1950s and owned by the County Council with the ownership later transferred in 2020 to Morpeth Town Council.
- The building had fallen into disrepair and due to the significant costs to bring the building up to standard, the decision had been made to close Storey Park.
- Some residents had been disappointed at the closure and had requested that the building be identified as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) and the building was listed as an ACV in March 2021.
- The designation did provide some protection to the building; however, it did not prevent its demolition or suitable redevelopment.
- Prior to its closure, the community centre had only been used at approximately 25% of its potential capacity and it had not been considered appropriate use of public funds to undertake such repair work.
- The emerging Northumberland Plan provided guidance which affected assets of community value, and it was considered that the demolition wholly complied with the policy with the addition that there was alternative facilities including the newly refurbished St James Community Centre.
- Whilst the proposal was to demolish the building, there was no intention to redevelopment the land
- She asked that members grant permission of the demolition of the community centre building.

Councillor Richard Wearmouth addressed the Committee as Ward Member. His comments included the following:-

- The decision to the application to demolish the community centre had not been taken lightly
- There was other provision elsewhere within the town
- The building was in a state which could not be economically developed
- If funding were to become available in future, the site could come

Ch.'s Initials.....

- back to use, but there were no plans to do that
- Every opportunity had been explored to try to develop the building further
- He supported the recommendations made by officers.

Councillor Wearmouth then withdrew from the meeting.

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

- The proposed site plan marked the land to be used as hardstanding area after demolition. If there were plans for development in the future, it would be subject to whoever owned the site.
- After the building was demolished, the site would not be recognised as an ACV and become a brownfield site. It would be up to the owner to determine what to do with it in the future.

Councillor Dodd proposed acceptance of the officer's recommendation to grant permission as outlined in the Officer report, which was seconded by Councillor Beynon.

Councillor Jackson stated that the building was unsafe and inoperable, there had been substantial investment in the community over the years and he hoped that the site would remain in public ownership for any future development.

A vote was taken on the proposal to accept the officer's recommendation to grant permission as outlined in the report and was unanimously agreed.

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

96 APPEALS UPDATE

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

A short recess was taken at this point during which time Councillor Towns and Wearmouth joined the meeting. The meeting recommenced with Councillor Beynon in the Chair.

97 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been submitted.

98 PETITIONS

PETITIONS

This item was to:

Ch.'s Initials.....

a) Receive any new petitions:

i) Speed Reduction Northern Bypass – St Georges roundabout – Northgate roundabout, Morpeth

It was noted that a new e-petition had been opened on 2 February 2022 on the Council's website. A report would be prepared for a future meeting.

Councillor Towns explained the background to the issue and explained the reason why the petition had come forward. He was unhappy that he had not been able to contact officers in Highways and asked when the report was brought back that the committee look at the wider issues of road safety in that area. He hoped that Highways would meet to discuss the speeding issues.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

None received

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none to consider.

Councillor Dodd queried a petition regarding the Military Road between Stagshaw and Heddon on the Wall. Democratic Services would follow up with the relevant officer.

99 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Neighbourhood Services

Paul Lowes, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager provided the following updates:-

Grounds Maintenance

- Winter works were drawing to a close.
- A mild winter had helped teams recover some ground lost to storms and were on target to complete all scheduled winter works tasks.
- Teams continued to work a 28 hour week during the winter period. Progress through scheduled work had been a challenge but ultimately successful.
- He requested members contacted him if they believed any requested work had not been completed.
- Grass cutting would be starting soon and preparation had been made
- All grass cutting equipment had either been serviced or was scheduled to be serviced.
- Interviews had been carried out for seasonal grounds maintenance positions for this year and working through the recruitment process.
- Weed control activities would be undertaken in-house again this year
- Blue dye would be used for weed killing this year and it had been well received pre-pandemic.

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Street Cleansing

- It was anticipated that the increase in footfall experienced last year (due to the pandemic, staycation) would reduce this year, which should ease pressure on cleansing teams.

Waste

- Residual and recycling
- Business as usual for waste collection services
- Elevated tonnages from households were still being received following the pandemic due to people working from home
- Due to the rate of housing growth in recent years, the waste service will see additional investment this year of 2 additional RCVs and crew
- Work was underway to evaluate existing demands on the service and plan routes to ensure these resources were deployed in the most efficient way possible
- Garden waste collection had started
- Increased housing and customer numbers had means additional tweaking of rounds had been required to accommodate the increase
- Initial take up for the service was high, the scheme remains as popular as ever

Additional Information

- The glass trial had been extended by 12 months. Presentation rates and yields remained encouraging in most areas.
- A food waste collection trial was currently being planned and members would be provided with more information on the trial when plans were finalised.

In response to members' comments, the following information was provided:-

- Extra contractors had been helping the Tree teams to help with storm damage.
- A meeting and site visit would be arranged with residents to hopefully resolve the situation of residents having to wheel their bins to the end of their lane.
- There had been no problems with recruitment.
- It was hoped to run food waste collections in line with the glass waste collections.
- Mr Lowes would report back on the issues at Choppington Woods.
- Additional cuts to parishes were given the opportunity to have early cuts, there should be no reduction to cuts during the season.
- Arrangements would be made to clean the cycle path between Lynemouth and Woodhorn.
- The Tree Officer was aware of the problem with the tree referred to. Neighbourhood Services and the Trees and Woodlands Team would have to work together to try and solve the problem.

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- Concerns with fly-tipping were shared and the team would do their best
- A report could be provided on the number of parish councils taking up the additional cuts.
- The Glass Trial related to Government Plans and needed to be line with national legislation. Further information would be brought back to the committee.

Highways

Mr King provided an update on progress with the delivery of Highways works:-

- Teams were currently undertaking Cat 1 works while they continued with the catch the catch up from recent storms
- Routine inspections were ongoing, however, there was a slight backlog
- Reactive third party requests continued to rise higher than any other area
- Backlog of works continues to be reduced; introduction of 2 hotboxes with a reported 4800 competed within the last 3 month period
- A major scheme at Goosehill was moving forward. Issues with contaminated waste and drainage which had now been resolved.

All LTP works had been completed for this year, save for North Road, Ponteland and work had been completed in minor patching.

Gully maintenance

- New routes had been identified and it was proposed to introduce these from February, this would provide backup data for frequency.
- New vehicles were arriving with a proposed roll out for April, training required for operatives before vehicle roll out.

Drainage works

- A large amount of drainage works had been identified and a programme of works had been issued and ongoing. Works were still being identified from storm damage with a number of areas requiring clearing of debris which was the main cause of blockages. Works were currently being programmed for post April start date with all works communicated prior to start date.

In response to members' comments, the following information was provided:-

- It was expected that the car park at Goosehill would be completed at the end of Autumn, the land contamination had delayed the completion date
- The issue regarding HGVs using the road from Berwick Hill towards Kirkley was a matter for the police
- The comment regarding wagons travelling through Ponteland would be taken up with the Traffic and Road Safety Team.
- Thanks were conveyed to the Highways Team for the refresh of road markings in Lynemouth
- Councillor Wearmouth would seek clarification regarding the draft LTP query. (Democratic Services to remind).

Ch.'s Initials.....

- A date would be provided for the traffic calming measures at Ellington.
- 4800 potholes had been completed in just over 3 months.

The Officers were thanked for their updates.

100 LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair advised that this was for information and should Members wish to ask for any items to be added to the agenda, then they contact either himself or Democratic Services.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

101 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Monday 11 April 2022.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.'s Initials.....