

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At the meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held at Meeting Space - Block 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Wednesday, 17 November 2021 at 4:00 pm.

#### **PRESENT**

M Swinburn (Chair) (in the Chair)

#### **MEMBERS**

W Daley  
P Ezhilchelvan  
S Lee

M Robinson  
P Scott  
C Taylor

#### **OFFICERS**

H Bowers  
P Brooks

M Bulman  
M Carle  
T Gribbin  
R Laughton  
J Murphy  
J Robertson

Democratic Services Officer  
Head of Northumberland Communities  
Together  
Lawyer  
Highway Services Area Manager  
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager  
Planning Officer  
South East Area Planning Manager  
Environmental Enforcement Principal Officer

#### **28 PROCEDURE AT PLANNING MEETINGS**

The Chair explained the procedure for planning committees as outlined in the report.

#### **29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bowman, Dunbar, Ferguson, Flux and Wilczek.

The Chair conveyed his congratulations to Councillor Wilczek on the birth of her baby.

#### **30 MINUTES**

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RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 22 September 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

A member queried whether members would receive a community safety update. The Chair stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner would be attending the January meeting.

31 **APPEALS UPDATE**

The report provided information on the progress of planning appeals.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**A short recess took place at 16:47 to allow planning officers to vacate the meeting.**

**The meeting recommenced at 17:04.**

32 **DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The committee was requested 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.

33 **20/03863/VARYCO**

Richard Laughton, Planning Officer reminded members that the planning application had previously been considered by the committee in July.

To recap, the extension to 41a Southward had not been constructed in accordance with the approved plans and the application sought retrospective consent through a variation of condition for the development, as built.

Members deferred the application until the November meeting to allow the applicants time to consider making changes to the built extension that would be acceptable on planning grounds.

To date, the applicants had not been in contact with the planning department to discuss and no further plans had been submitted. Therefore, the application had been brought back to committee with a recommendation for refusal.

Mr Laughton continued to describe the application by presentation and plans on screen.

Following the presentation, Mr Laughton explained that the recommendation was

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for refusal and informed the committee that the wording had been slightly amended to include the impact of the external staircase, to read:-

### **Refusal Reason 1**

The two storey rear extension and proposed external staircase, by virtue of their siting, scale, mass and design do not respect or complement the style or character of the existing dwelling and constitute incongruous additions to the street scene, resulting in significant harm to the visual amenities of the locality. This would be contrary to policies DC1 and DC28 of the Blyth Valley District Local Development Framework: Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007), Policy ENV 2 of the Blyth Valley Core Strategy and the NPPF.

### **Refusal Reason 2**

The two storey rear extension by virtue of its siting, scale, mass and height results in significant adverse impact on the amenities of the occupiers of the adjoining property at 39a Southward Avenue in terms of unacceptable loss of daylight/sunlight, visual outlook, structural proximity and an overbearing presence and the proposed external staircase would result in significant harm to the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring property at 41 Southward by virtue of increased overlooking of their rear elevation and rear garden. This would be contrary to policies DC1 and DC28 of the Blyth Valley District Local Development Framework: Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007) and the NPPF.

Mrs Burt, applicant, was in attendance and spoke in support of the application:

- Members would recall that the decision at the July meeting was to defer the application to allow changes to the extension.
- However, plans before the committee were those that were considered earlier this year. Since that meeting, no further objection or comments had been submitted and no further objections since her parents-in-law who resided next door, had since relocated.
- She still believed the proposed extension would not result in any significant impact.
- They had consulted the neighbour next door who had not objected.
- Both properties enjoyed a good outlook with long day time and evening sunshine with the overshadowing effect being short lived.
- The extension was appropriate and constructed with matching materials
- Properties nearby had flat roof extensions and other properties nearby having approved plans for raised balconies.
- Each application must be assessed on its own merits and the issues in the report were subjective and she hoped the committee would recognise that the application followed the established pattern of the estate.
- The Building Control Inspector was fully aware of the deviation of plans and at no time had he told them to stop building and it was he who had put them in this position.
- There had been no objections from neighbours and she kindly asked the committee to grant the application.

Mr Burt was also in attendance and raised the following.

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- He had built the extension himself and had relied on the Building Inspector's advice. When he had asked about extending the flat roof, had been advised by the Building Inspector that he would sign the work off so as long as the neighbour did not complain.
- Mr Laughton had also indicated to his wife by telephone, that if there had been no objections, the work would have been signed off. He questioned the guidelines from the Council and stated that he had been given the wrong advice.

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

- The application had been brought back by members to give the applicants the opportunity to amend the plans and come back with a design, that was acceptable in planning terms, which they had not done.
- The application was separate to the retrospective permission for partial change of use of downstairs of property to childcare which had been granted temporary permission for 2 years for change of use to allow the applicants to seek alternative premises.
- There had been one objection from the neighbour to the south of the property who had since moved. There had been no objections from anyone else.
- For clarification, Mrs Murphy advised the planning committee that the application went against policies and guidance. The extension as built, did not correspond with the plans previously approved in that it was a different design and larger.
- Mr Laughton reported that he had tried to contact the Building Inspector but he had left the Authority. However he commented that building control regulations were different to planning regulations and it was the applicant's responsibility to ensure that plans were in accordance.
- Mr Laughton stated that the applicants had only contacted him briefly in response to correspondence he had sent to the applicant.
- In response to a question regarding an evidence trail, Mrs Murphy explained that Planning and Building Control were separate departments. It was not up to the Building Inspector to ask the Planning Department whether an applicant had planning permission. It was the applicant's responsibility to make sure that planning permission and building regulations were in place.

A member was concerned about the lack of contact surrounding the application and suggested a review of making contact count.

In response about whether Building Inspection and Planning came under the same directorate, it was advised that Building Inspection fell under Public Protection and Planning fell under Planning and Economy.

Councillor Echichelvan raised concern about the serious breach of trust and was unsure whether he could support refusal of the application. He stated that the process should be revisited and proposed that the committee should disregard the decision for refusal as there was no case of precedence and also the Planning Authority had a responsibility to the public regarding trust.

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Ms Bulman, Solicitor, advised to refuse officer recommendation, there would need to be planning reasons. The issue with the Building Inspector would need to be looked at separately, precedence issues were not a planning reason and the application needed to be looked at in planning terms.

Councillor Scott proposed the recommendation for refusal, which was seconded by Councillor Robinson.

Debate took place and it was stated that the Committee had tried their best to give the applicants time to amend plans back in July. The whole process of the application should be investigated to see what had happened. Concern was raised that the applicant had invested a lot of money and had relied heavily on building control. However, the applicant was aware the extension was not as to the plan and had been given a chance in July to reach a solution. The applicants had very little contact with the planning department since July and had relied heavily on there being no objections, which was not a material planning matter.

Upon being put to the vote the results were as follows:-

**FOR: 5; AGAINST: 2.**

It was therefore:-

**RESOLVED** that the application be **REFUSED** permission subject to the amended conditions/reasons.

#### 34 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been received

#### 35 **PETITIONS**

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

No new petitions had been received.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received: Petition for CCTV n Mill Lane, Seghill.

John Robertson, Principal Officer, Environment Enforcement explained that a petition had been received requesting CCTV to be placed on Mill Lane, Seghill to prevent fly-tipping.

It was estimated that, whilst 4 cameras could be placed at regular intervals along the lane at least 6 cameras would be required to cover all events with enough detail to be used as evidence if a prosecution was to be progressed and successful.

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The amount of equipment and resource required to maintain and supervise the deployment would incur additional costs from the budget. The use and deployment of existing deployable cameras would also have a detrimental impact on other parts of the county.

Seaton Valley Council had been asked to assist, but they had no budget for this type of activity.

Incidents were reported to the area Neighbourhood Waste Teams and Environmental Enforcement Team who would investigate any illegal fly tipping. If a particular area was targeted, consideration would be given to the placement of covert cameras. In order to do this, NCC had to adhere to the RIPA Act 2000 (RIPA) to ensure that deployment was lawful and proportionate.

A further option for consideration for Mill Lane itself could be having the area target hardened at a cheaper cost to prevent vehicular access with a gate or barrier allowing necessary traffic for farmland etc, but preventing its use as a short cut could become a rat run.

At the time of the report, the Seghill area overall had 49 reports of fly-tipping, with Mill Lane itself having 19 fly tipping incidents so far this year.

In response to a question regarding an existing fixed camera, Mr Robertson reported that it was hard to get evidence because of the length of the lane.

Councillor Scott, as Ward Councillor stated that he would be happy to use his small scheme budget and was willing to have a conversation with Mr Robertson and his team out with the meeting.

#### **RESOLVED:-**

- 1) To continue with current methods of using deployable CTV equipment to investigate fly tipping events.
- 2) Options to undertake target hardening of the location to prevent vehicles access be investigated.

### **36 YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION**

This item had been deferred to January's meeting.

### **37 NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**

Paul Brooks, Head of Northumberland Communities Together was in attendance to give a presentation on the work of Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) which had been borne out of the pandemic to help and support people who needed it most. (A copy of the presentation was enclosed with the signed minutes).

He explained that the last 18 months had seen a number of challenges and the

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service was now a formal structure which came under Adult Services, and would support vulnerable people in our local communities, using the skills and assets in the community.

The aim was to prevent residents becoming more vulnerable, addressing the social determinants of health which included access to healthcare, housing, transport, hunger, fuel and tackling inequalities. The key role as a Local Authority was to work with partners and the voluntary community sector to deliver on behalf of the residents and to identify which individuals were struggling and sign post them to the most appropriate support.

The team was split across front line operational delivery and programme and project delivery with collaboration with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Community Support Officer with a member of staff on secondment from the Northumberland Lottery to help facilitate the best use of some of the grant funding.

The Council had been successful in a funding bid from North of Tyne Combined Authority to establish community hubs, the first of which had been developed in Cramlington. The library had relocated and the hub was being used by many organisations in the community and was to be replicated in other localities.

There had been a recent review of the VCS commission to support the VCS organisation to work together and provide services that communities needed.

The response hub was open 7 days a week, between the hours of 9 am and 6 pm and could be contacted by telephone and email and out of hours emergency contact.

Pop up activities had been held during lockdown which had enabled contact with vulnerable families, providing advice and assistance. Events had been repeated on request and some communities were now running their own events.

Statistical information included details of:

- Support provided including contacts to clinically extremely vulnerable residents including welfare visits, emergency food parcels, PPE and wellbeing parcels.
- The distribution of statutory aid.
- Community enrichment.

The NCT model had been recognised nationally and was one of five local authorities chosen to develop future plans around the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

Anonymised case studies were provided of the intervention and assistance given to residents which had enabled them to maintain jobs and tenancies.

A summary was provided of the priorities and focus over the winter months, particularly keeping warm and the types of assistance available. Digital connectivity was crucial to enable participation and ensure residents weren't restricted by their location.

NCT were now embedded within the Council as a service and officers were grateful for the support from community groups who had embraced partnership working and had established good relationships. They welcomed opportunities to connect further with new groups as all played a vital role.

The Chair thanked Mr Brooks for his presentation and was amazed at what had been achieved in such a short space of time.

Members echoed their support and a member was pleased that the building in Cramlington had been brought back into use. It was the centre point for the community and the cafe would provide opportunities for those who might not have been able to gain employment. The staff were welcoming to members of the public and provided a 'meet and greet' service.

The community hub in Cramlington had been a great success and was being used as a showcase, with a teaching and learning cafe and a safe base to offer opportunities. This should be promoted regionally and nationally and members were encouraged to visit the Cramlington hub.

Staff were thanked for their incredible amount of work.

Members asked the following questions:

- Were the holiday activities open to all? The DfE had provided funding to engage in activity and had targeted provision to those who were eligible for FSM. However, a wider universal offer was open to those who might not be eligible for FSM but who might want to engage with that type of provision.
- Did NCT have connections with food banks? NCT was a key partner and one of the pathways was bringing like-minded groups together with food partnerships across Northumberland coming together.
- An invitation was extended to meet with West Bedlington Town Council to set up a youth group. Mr Brooks stated that discussion could take place with the Locality Co-ordinators to see if it was appropriate for the town.

The Chair reiterated his thanks to Mr Brooks for the helpful and informative presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be received.

## 38 **WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE**

The report which was an information item was to provide an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season.

The following information was provided in response to member queries:-

- Front line salt was in place.
- There was a policy and scoring mechanism for grit bins based on

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locations. An Inspector would visit the locations of Lanercost Park/Beech Avenue.

- Grit heaps tended to be in the rural areas.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 39 **LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

Members received the following updates and explanation of the impact of Covid-19 on front line services from Tony Gribbin, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager:

### **NEAT – Grounds Maintenance:**

#### **Covid**

Staff in all sections continued to deliver high profile services despite the continued challenges of COVID. Revised working practices and continued self-isolation conditions.

#### **Bereavement Services (SE)**

Thankfully cremation service numbers and burial number were as expected around this time of year.

#### **Grass Cutting**

Grass cutting has been completed for the season

There had been some challenging period throughout the year with very wet the periods of very hot weather

The team was currently on cut 10 in Bedlington, cut 18 in Seaton Valley and 12/13 in Cramlington, as some areas were too wet to complete the 13<sup>th</sup> cut in some areas

#### **Street Sweeping**

The team was working through their normal areas but have moved to leaf hot spots and members were thanked who had assisted in identifying accumulations. As usual, any areas of attention should be brought to the team

#### **Winter Works**

The programme has commenced and would continue until March 2022.

#### **Waste Service:**

Residual, recycling and garden waste collection services were all operating well

The collections rounds and resources were currently be reviewed in the south east due to the current housing developments.

Glass recycling facilities continued to be well used and additional collections

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were being targeted in those areas showing high usage. The trial area in this LAC are was Bedlington. The trial had been extended for an additional 12 months to capture more data to ensure the data captured so far had not been distorted by COVID/lockdown and the new Environment Bill Legislation was also being consulted on. Also, it was expected that Central Government would provide burden funding so it did not directly cos NCC council tax payers.

Demand for bulky waste collections remained high and a temporary crew had been deployed to address the increased demand. This would be reviewed post Christmas.

Domestic waste tonnages remained higher than pre-lockdown, operation adjustments had been made in an effort to cope with the demand, but the situation remained a significant challenge for the service.

There would be a change of collection days over the Christmas period.

Members asked a number of questions including:-

- Service delivery and climate change - how was that being reflected in policies in the Cramlington area?
- Grass cutting in certain areas.
- Residents and motorists had complained about the height of the weeds at Broadoaks roundabout, which blocked their view. A scheme had been intimated to get rid of the weeds and had anything been done about it?
- The removal of weeds in Bedlington
- Where were the pilot projects for glass collection ?
- Was the hedge and bush cutting in the programme?
- A bottle bin had been requested to the Community Centre in Bedlington but nothing had been received.
- Leaf clearance on cycleways and estates
- Problems with gully cleaning and leaves
- When will the overgrown weeds at the islands at roundabouts, Barns Park and the Burn be addressed ?

Mr Gribbin reported as follows:

- A harder approach would be taken cutting back the shrubs and hedges, so when it grew back it would not encroach.
- Regarding the grass cutting, he had spoken to the contractor who would assess whether to mulch or cut and remove
- The maintenance of the Broadoaks roundabout was the developer's responsibility, but from a safety point of view, Mr Gribbin said the team would try and resolve this.
- There had been a delay in treating the weeds in Bedlington as the machine had broken down and was awaiting repair.
- The pilot scheme for glass collection was in West Bedlington. There had been a series of pilot areas across 11,000 houses which would be escalated to 13000 and the trial would be extended for another 12 months. The scheme had been very successful. The Council wanted to ensure that the data they have received is not artificial because of lockdown. It was hoped that funding would be available from Central Government to

- implement the costs.
- There was a 22 week winter maintenance period. Grass cutting starts in March depending on weather conditions.
- He had asked for a bottle bin to be placed at the community centre.
- The leaf clearance in the estates had not been done yet. A driver and vehicle had been requested from another area
- The problems with gully cleaning and autumn leaf fall was a problem. The Council did not have the resources and had to target the resources they had as strategically as possible. It was hoped to get a machine as soon as they could or blow the leaves away with backpacks and use the small machines.
- The new mechanical ripping machine was going to be used on the roundabouts, but the condition of the surface was a concern in case it was damaged. He had hoped to have a meeting with the Environment Agency regarding riparian ownership. He had met with one of the flood defence officers and had emailed for an update. Once he received this information, it would be shared.
- He had reported the problem of the footbridge to colleagues in the countryside team, however, the bridge was not registered to anyone but he would chase this up and report back.

Members received the following updates from Mick Carle, Highways Delivery Services Area Manager:

All Highways Inspectors and maintenance crews continued to work inspecting, fixing carriageway defects, making repairs and making safe category one defects across the South East area.

The gully emptier was fully deployed dealing with reported issues and cyclic maintenance.

#### **Larger Tarmac Patching had been carried out in the following locations:**

- St. Johns Road, Bedlington
- Hartford Road, Bedlington
- Cheviot View, Seghill
- Exeter Close, Cramlington
- Rear Tintagel Close, Cramlington
- Lower End of Totness Drive, Cramlington
- Rear Brockwell Centre
- Whitsun Grove, Bedlington

#### **Drainage Improvements:**

Drainage Improvements had been carried out in the following area:

- Beatty Road, Bedlington

The area teams were continuously looking and programming future planned works both patching and drainage improvements.

#### **LTP - Carriageway Resurfacing**

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LTP Carriageway Resurfacing schemes had been carried out in the following areas:

- Cumbrian Road, Cramlington
- Stead Lane, Bedlington
- Bedlington Bank
- Beaconhill, Cramlington
- A189 Spine Road North of the A19 Moor Farm
- Fisher Lane, Cramlington
- Nelson R/A, Cramlington
- East Hartford, Cramlington

Footway and Carriageway LTP Resurfacing had been identified and programmed for the following areas:

- Stead Lane, Bedlington
- Arcot Avenue, Cramlington
- A192 East Hartford, Cramlington

### **Winter Maintenance**

A Winter Services Preparedness Report had been previously reported as an information item.

Members raised the following questions:-

- Was there an update for the speed sign request for Attlee Bank?
- Resurfacing of bank on Bedlington bank on the Blyth side
- Traffic speed signs study. Had the signs been effective?
- A report was requested regarding the consistency of speed indicators signs across the county, what is a good sign, what is good practice and why the signs were different in Cramlington. The Chair agreed that a report should be forthcoming.
- The repair work Shields Road was going to be in the LTP but was not in the programme
- A request for missing streets signs and one to be moved in Cramlington village, no action had been taken. The Chair would forward the email to Mr Carle to chase up.
- The carpark behind Dewley shops at Cramlington which was in a bad condition and believed to be owned by Shenstone. Was there any update on negotiations?

Mr Carle responded as follows:-

- The request for the speed sign had been passed on when it had been raised and he would chase this up.
- The bank was done with micro asphalt the year before and was in good order
- The traffic speeds signs were the responsibility of the Integrated Transport Team. Some signs could be switched off but still record and download the information and could also record whilst switched off. He would speak to

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- colleagues regarding this.
- Regarding Shields Road, it would depend how high that had scored, but he would check and chase this up.
- He would speak to Russell Mason regarding the carpark behind the shops and also Shenstone.

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

#### 40 **LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

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

Members were invited to email any requests to the Chair and / or Democratic Services Officer between meetings.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

#### 41 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 22 December 2021. (Planning only).

#### 42 **URGENT BUSINESS**

A report was requested from Highways regarding ongoing road safety across the county, specifically in relation to Crowhall Lane, which was a blackspot area. The Chair agreed with the request.

The transfer of the Sporting Club to the local academy school. The Chair reported that a number of issues had been discussed with the school, whilst it was very informative he was very surprised as it had not been discussed with members. He had requested that a representative from Active attend the meeting, but no one was able to attend.

The Chair relayed information he had received from the Sporting Club.

**RESOLVED** that a report be requested from Highways regarding road safety across the county, specifically ongoing road safety at Crowhall Lane, Cramlington.

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