

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council** held at Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Friday, 25 February 2022 at Time Not Specified.

PRESENT

L Grimshaw (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

E Cartie
K Nisbet
J Reid
C Ball
A Wallace

B Gallacher
K Parry
E Simpson
M Richardson

OFFICERS

R Greally
P Jones

Assistant Democratic
Services Officer
Service Director – Local
Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor D. Carr, C. Humphrey, J. Lang, W. Ploszaj and A. Watson.

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 12 January 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair agreed to move the items on the agenda and brought the Urgent Business forward.

Members voiced concerns regarding the works undergone on Links Road. Concerns were raised regarding the length of the works and members questioned whether there was a way to speed up the works. It was mentioned that there were

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several roads that were being affected by the traffic caused by the works. This was exacerbated with work undertaken on nearby roads at the same time which meant there would be added pressure on Plessey Road and there were congestion concerns. Officers acknowledged the difficulty of the development. It was the best option available for the development regarding traffic management. Members were assured that there were Street work Inspectors on site and the programme would be reduced if possible.

It was felt that there was a lack of clear signage to warn drivers of the temporary pedestrian crossing which raised safety concerns. Members asked for an update regarding the survey that was supposed to be carried out to find a suitable location for a school crossing patrol person. Officers confirmed that the survey would happen and if a suitable location was identified then there would be talks with the school to organise an appropriate school patrol if possible.

It was felt that it would have been beneficial for Councillors to have been informed of the proposed work. Members felt that they could have worked with the Officers to find a more appropriate alternative. It was acknowledged that it may have been beneficial to consult with Councillors. Officers confirmed that suggestions had been helpful during a site visit with members and the suggestions had been taken on board. Members also felt that they should have had prior warning to the proposed work rather than finding out over social media.

It was confirmed that the Highways Development Team would have been included in the planning process and Traffic Management would have looked at different options and would have chosen the best and safest option. Highways had determined that the application would not have a long-term impact.

Members noted that the result of the development would be beneficial to the area and there was a benefit to the disruption. Officers assured members that developments were phased in an appropriate way to cause minimal disruption. Officers assured members that all comments would be noted.

4 **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Local Area Council received a report which set out the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme for 2022-23 for consideration and comment prior to final approval of the programme by the Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Environment and Local Services. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

P. Jones, Service Director – Local Services, introduced the report to the committee and gave an overview. It outlined the funding expected and planned out how the funding would be spent across the four key areas - walking and cycling; safety; roads; and bridges, structures and landslips. The following responses were made to members comments:-

- Members noted that there were micro-surfacing works planned in Blyth on Twelfth Avenue and Blyth Sea Walkway.
- Members noted a significant cycle scheme would be started on North Seaton Road but it was noted that this was funded separately to the Local Transport Plan. Details would be provided in due course.

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- Members were directed to Appendix B, under the Urban Road Safety issues section, where it showed that £50,000 would be allocated to Hollywell Village and Croft ward for the Homezone works.
- The Blyth relief road was an on-going piece of work. Officers were due to meet in the coming weeks and members would be updated in due course.
- Officers confirmed that there were a number of U and C roads that needed urgent attention in terms of maintenance in the LTP. There was another £2 Million funding that is to be accessed where further roads would be looked at through the asset management principle.
- Members noted the process of surface dressing meant that it wasn't appropriate to use in Urban areas which explained why it looked as though there was an imbalance in funding across the County.
- Officers confirmed there was not a policy on concrete roads however they were aware of the expense of repairing the roads. Problems were identified, prioritised and interventions were undertaken where needed. Members were encouraged to share any problem areas with Officers.
- It was explained that there was a set pot of funding allocated for the LTP. The highway asset principles was looked at with the Transport Asset Management Plan which sets out the intervention criteria and allocation of funding for schemes. Information was gathered from inspections and survey work which determined areas in the network that required intervention. The team were very experienced and used as much technology as possible to gather appropriate evidence to support the difficult decisions made. Member engagement was also an important part of the process to ensure problem areas are highlighted to Officers. Members were reminded there was only a finite amount of funding and the Council had robust intervention standards.
- Officers confirmed that there was a Countywide allocation that would pick up the smaller issues that were highlighted to Officers by Members. Officers were working on a way to feedback to Members quicker.
- The LTP process was being reviewed to create a more balanced approach. The process would allow Councillors to effectively highlight issues whilst allowing Officers to respond appropriately. It was hoped that the new process would give Members more value from the service.
- Members noted that it was difficult to programme long term plans for works as the maintenance was reactive and priorities would change over time due to issues arising. There had to be a level of flexibility to address unexpected problems.
- Councillors gave their thanks to Officers D. Rumney and R Mackenzie for their comprehensive help to members queries.
- Members noted that the plan was County wide and highlighted the allocation across all areas of the County. This was to show the distribution of funding in a transparent way to Members. It was felt it was beneficial to see what was being spent in other areas of the County.
- It was confirmed that the £1.5 million for the Cycling & Walking schemes were for new investment to improve the Cycling & Walking in County. Maintenance of the paths fell into the Highways maintenance budget however it was confirmed that where schemes could be tied in there would be an effort to accommodate improvements in existing pathways.
- Members were assured that the Council always strives to receive the maximum funding from Central Government. The service had received the maximum allocation for this year and this illustrated the hard work and

dedication of the service. Members were also assured that the service always endeavoured to find and utilise extra funding available.

- Members highlighted the need for longevity on the work carried out, it was suggested that photos of the work could be shared with members to show the quality of work carried out across the County.
- Members were assured that work carried out by the Council was costed efficiently.
- Members noted that signage would be changed to accommodate locality changes once the developments had reached a certain stage.
- Members were reminded that cyclists were allowed to use carriageways within the Highway Code. Members suggested that a programme should be created to road sweep the cycle paths to keep them in an acceptable condition.
- Members expressed their concern about the lack of funding in the South East of the County and hoped in future programmes there would be more invested into the area. Members were assured that funding was allocated through a robust process.
- Members were reminded to highlight any concerns and send them to Officers to investigate. This was to ensure all areas had been appropriately looked at.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 16th March 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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