



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Nichola Turnbull

Email: nichola.turnbull@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622617

Date: Monday, 4 September 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE** to be held in **CEREMONY ROOM - HEXHAM HOUSE** on **TUESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2023** at **4.00 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr Helen Paterson
Chief Executive

To Tynedale Local Area Committee members as follows:-

T Cessford (Chair), H Waddell (Vice-Chair), S Fairless-Aitken (Vice-Chair (Planning)), A Dale, C Horncastle, JI Hutchinson, D Kennedy, N Morphet, N Oliver, J Riddle, A Scott, A Sharp and G Stewart



Dr Helen Paterson, 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
- 8)

Minutes of the meeting of the Tynedale Local Area Committee, held on 11 July 2023, 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 where a matter arises at a meeting;

- a) Which **directly relates to** Disclosable Pecuniary Interest ('DPI') as set out in Appendix B, Table 1 of the Code of Conduct, to disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote and not to remain in room. Where members have a DPI or if the matter concerns an executive function and is being considered by a Cabinet Member with a DPI they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with the matter.
- b) Which **directly relates to** the financial interest or well being of a Other Registrable Interest as set out in Appendix B, Table 2 of the Code of Conduct to disclose the interest and only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain the room.
- c) Which **directly relates to** their financial interest or well-being (and is not DPI) or the financial well being of a relative or close associate, to declare the interest and members may only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak. Otherwise, the member must not take part in discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.
- d) Which **affects** the financial well-being of the member, a relative or close associate or a body included under the Other Registrable Interests column in Table 2, to disclose the interest and apply the test set out at paragraph 9 of Appendix B before deciding whether they may remain in the meeting.
- e) Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registerable Interest or Non Registerable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the Monitoring

Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk. Members are referred to the Code of Conduct which contains the matters above in full. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

To reply to any questions received from members of the public, which may be received in writing in advance of the meeting or asked at the meeting. Questions can be asked about issues for which the Council has a responsibility. If questions are received in advance of meetings it will increase the likelihood of an answer being provided at the meeting. (Public question times take place on a bimonthly basis at Local Area Committee 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 or 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 Committee.

5. PETITIONS

(Pages 9
- 14)

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:**
 - i) **The Falcon Centre, Wylam**
- 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 ISSUES

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 Committee, 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 Committee.

7. THE TANGA CLUB

Katherine Miller, Chairwoman of the Tanga Club, will be in attendance to give an overview and answer questions about the charity.

8. LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages
15 - 20)

To note the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Committee meetings (any suggestions for new agenda items will require confirmation

by the Chairman of Council after the meeting).

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting (planning only) will be held on Tuesday 10 October 2023.

10. 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 discussed or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- Complete this sheet and pass it to the Democratic Services Officer.

Name:		Date of meeting:	
Meeting:			
Item to which your interest relates:			
Nature of Interest i.e. either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Table 1 of Appendix B to the Code of Conduct, Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest (as defined by Appendix B to Code of Conduct) (please give details):			
Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?		Yes - <input type="checkbox"/>	No - <input type="checkbox"/>

Registering Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest.

Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in **Table 1**) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
- your own financial interest or well-being;
 - a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2** you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied
9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well- being:
- to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. ‘Land’ excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor’s knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body

	<p>where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the councillor’s knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or ii. if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* ‘director’ includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* ‘securities’ means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:

- a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- b) any body
 - i. exercising functions of a public nature
 - ii. any body directed to charitable purposes or
 - iii. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

Agenda Item 2

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at Hexham House, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NH on Tuesday, 11 July 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T Cessford
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

A Dale
SH Fairless-Aitken
I Hutchinson
D Kennedy
N Morphet

N Oliver
JR Riddle
A Sharp
G Stewart

OFFICERS

C Curtis
D Hunt

N Snowdon
N Turnbull

Senior Programme Officer
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager
Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Improvement)
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

2 members of the public and 1 member of the press.

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Horncastle, Scott and Waddell.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meeting of the Tynedale Local Area Council, held on 13 June 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Ch.'s Initials.....

LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Democratic Services Officer reported that legal advice was awaited in respect of a public question which had been submitted in writing earlier that day regarding the ice cream van at Sele Park. A written response would be provided.

13. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

There were none.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

i) Request for Additional Traffic Calming Measures at Woodlands, Hexham

The Local Area Committee were requested to acknowledge the petition received requesting further traffic calming measures at Woodlands, Hexham. (A copy of the report enclosed with the signed minutes).

Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement), made reference to speed surveys undertaken in May 2023 within the 30mph speed limit. He highlighted that for westbound traffic, there had been an average of 3,651 vehicles per day, with an average recorded speed of 24.3mph, with an 85th percentile of 28.5mph. For eastbound traffic, there had been an average 3,796 vehicles per day, with an average recorded speed of 26.2mph, with an 85th percentile of 30.7mph.

Northumbria Police accident data had recorded one slight personal injury collision in the previous 5 years on Woodlands. In conclusion, it was considered that given the speed survey data in May 2023, existing speed restrictions, signage and road markings were appropriate for the location.

Councillor Fairless-Aitken, the local member, expressed concern that the average speed data was high for entering a 20mph area and made reference to the road being included in the Hexham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure route. She queried whether the speed survey had been carried out in the wrong location and made reference to new highways guidance which suggested that two separate speeds surveys should be undertaken at least a month apart.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) stated that speed surveys were normally carried out at least 150 metres away from a

change in speed. He agreed to check the exact location of the speed survey equipment and also to undertake another survey 150 metres within the 20mph zone.

He informed members that new software would be available soon which would provide data 24 hours per day, 7 days per week where it was compatible with the satellite navigation systems in modern vehicles.

It was suggested that without proof, it could not be assumed that the speeds recorded in excess of the speed limit were necessarily emergency vehicles from nearby stations responding to call outs.

RESOLVED that:

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. A further speed survey be carried out in the 20mph section, west of Woodlands.
3. Speeding concerns continue to be monitored in the area.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

i) Peth Head, Hexham

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement), reported that a new speed survey had been undertaken in January 2023 with the results being very similar to the survey undertaken in December 2019.

He highlighted that for westbound traffic, there had been an average of 1,712 vehicles per day, with an average recorded speed of 23.7mph, with an 85th percentile of 27.5mph. For eastbound traffic, there had been an average 2,122 vehicles per day, with an average recorded speed of 23.5mph, with an 85th percentile of 27.2mph.

Whilst there had been a very slight reduction in speeds, the area still met the necessary criteria for enforcement, and therefore the data had been sent to the police for information. He suggested that enforcement of the speed limit was likely to be the responsibility of the neighborhood police, but the area was unlikely to be seen as a priority for enforcement with the mobile camera van.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) suggested that as average speeds were below 24mph, further traffic calming measures would not be considered at this time other than marking out 20 roundels to complement the existing repeater signs.

Councillor Fairless-Aitken, the local member, queried the calculations. She noted that some of the lowest speeds which would have been disregarded but noted that some of the highest speeds would have lead to driving bans if the drivers were subject to court proceedings.

Other members commented that:

- The road did not lend itself to speeding given the steep incline and that it would be difficult to install additional traffic calming measures given the proximity of junctions.
- Residents had reported that following the introduction of the 20mph speed limit on Corbridge Road, some drivers were cutting through Peth Head as an alternative route to Corbridge Road following the introduction of 20mph speed limit.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) confirmed that he was willing to provide advice on suitable measures as part of the LTP programme. A copy of the full report of the survey undertaken in January 2023 was to be emailed to all members.

RESOLVED that:

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. The 2023 speed survey data be sent to LAC members by email.

14. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

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

Neighbourhood Services:

- Waste collection services were performing well with improvements in the garden waste collection service following the route review which had enabled the service to be more effective.
- Grass cutting conditions had been much improved recently and the service was up to date following the equipment theft reported at the beginning of the season.
- Weed spraying was behind schedule due to weather conditions as it had been hampered by wet and windy conditions. It was hoped that the programme would be complete within the next few weeks, subject to weather conditions. Any areas of concern were to be reported and would be prioritised when the schedule permitted.
- The public toilets at St Mary's Wynd in Hexham had recently been reopened following refurbishment.

The Chair thanked the Neighbourhood Services Area Manager for his update. He reminded members to contact officers by email if they needed to report any issues of concern.

Members were delighted that the St Mary's Wynd public toilets had been reopened as they provided an essential facility for the town. Those involved in bringing the project to fruition were thanked.

In answer to question, it was confirmed that any issues regarding the Fix My Street app or updates be emailed to the Highways Delivery Area Manager, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager or Councillor Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Improving our Roads and Highways.

Technical Services:

The Chair read out the following update on behalf of the Highways Delivery Area Manager who had been unable to attend the meeting:

- Highways inspections were up to date in the Tynedale area with actionable defects being repaired by maintenance teams.
- A £500,000 pothole pilot of category 2 actionable defects had commenced in the North and Tynedale areas to improve the condition and quality of the road surface with a first time cut out and patch repair. This work was being undertaken by a contractor and would concentrate on repairs categorised as requiring repair with 14 or 28 days, due to time limits. Work in the Tynedale area had commenced on the A68 South and the B6278 towards Snods Edge. The majority of highway work would be carried out by NCC teams to maintain the network.
- Use of a new highway management system, Alloy, had commenced to support agile working, data management and analysis to assist with improvement and investment decisions.
- A new online public realm reporting system, Fix My Street, had gone live in May 2023. It allowed Councillors and members of the public to report maintenance issues such as potholes, grass cutting etc. It was hoped that the new system would improve standards of service through the provision of automated updates on actions through to completion of repair.
- Surface dressing works under the LTP Programme were scheduled to be complete by the end of the month. 11 of these were in the Tynedale area.
- £3.8 million of additional funding had been allocated which had enabled work at 16 sites in Tynedale to be included in the programme. An update would be provided in August to enable feedback to Town and Parish Council meetings.
- An update of safety schemes and drainage works completed and programmed for the month of July was outlined.

In answer to questions from members, it was confirmed that:

- Operational decisions on locations where the pilot would be used would be made by the Highways Delivery Area Manager.
- Current guidelines required that any material cut out of the highway had to be tested which required additional time and expense.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

15. NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL BUS BOARD

Chris Curtis, Senior Programme Officer, Strategic Transport and Employability Team, was in attendance to give an overview of the role of the Northumberland Bus Board and to seek a representative from the Local Area Committee to sit on the Board. (A copy of the report was enclosed with the signed minutes).

He explained that on 9 May 2023 Cabinet had authorised the creation of a Northumberland Local Bus Board, as part of the delivery of the Enhanced Bus Partnership, agreed by the North East Combined Authority and the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

Formation of the partnership was required to obtain Bus Service Improvement Plan funding of £163.5 million for the region with £7.8 million expected for Northumberland. The Board would meet quarterly and provide feedback on proposals to the bus network including changes to routes and timetables, punctuality, reliability, highway infrastructure, fares initiatives and public information.

Members agreed that it was important that someone knowledgeable about issues in the west and rural areas be represented on the Local Bus Board.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that:

- Following the changes to the roles of portfolio holders, the Portfolio Holder for Supporting Business and Opportunities was expected to Chair the Board.
- Details of attendees expected to be invited to meetings were listed in section 2 of the draft terms of reference.
- A list of priority initiatives across the county had been identified. There would be wide consultation on schemes for any remaining funds.
- There had been focus on initiatives which could be sustained beyond the period of funding. They did not wish to see schemes commence and then later withdrawn. There were 2 definitions of sustainability:
 - A scheme that would be commercially viable at the end of the funding period (where revenue from fares exceeds operating costs); or
 - Where any gap between revenue and costs could be funded from the Council's normal secured service budget.
- One of the priority initiatives included the return of bus services to Kielder.

It was hoped that concessionary fares would be continued and that opportunities be explored for a trial with Adapt in a rural area.

Nominations were received for Councillor Riddle and Councillor Morphet.

RESOLVED that Councillor Riddle be nominated to act as the Tynedale Local Area Committee's representative on the Northumberland Local Bus Board.

16. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered a list of appointments to outside bodies for 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the following list of appointments be confirmed:

Groundwork North East - Land of Oak and Iron Project Board – **G Stewart**
Haltwhistle Partnership Limited - **A Sharp**
Haltwhistle Swimming & Leisure Centre Man. Cttee - **A Sharp**
Hexham TORCH Centre Management Committee - **T Cessford**
Prudhoe Community Partnership – **A Scott**
Queens Hall Arts Trust – **SH Fairless-Aitken**
Sport Tynedale – **N Oliver**
Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership Board – **H Waddell**

17. 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.

Suggestions proposed for consideration by the LAC Chairs included:

- Rural bus services
- Borderlands update

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting (planning only) would be held on Tuesday 15 August 2023.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

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Northumberland County Council

Tynedale Local Area Committee

DATE: 12 September 2023

Petition regarding the Falcon Centre, Wylam

Report of Strategic Estates and Libraries

Cabinet Member Cllr Jeff Watson

Purpose of report

To acknowledge and respond to the petition and update the Local Area Committee on progress made in addressing the issues raised.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the petition received requesting support for the efforts of the Falcon Centre Action Group (FCAG) to secure the future of the Falcon Centre as a community hub
- Note the potential of FCAG to take on the Falcon Centre as a building to develop as a community hub.

- The issues raised in the petition by Wylam residents, their wish to see FCAG supported in their work to take on and develop the Falcon Centre as a community hub
- The ongoing work of NCC staff to support FCAG
- A library offer will be maintained within Wylam.
- That given the three years that FCAG have already had to develop a proposal, with little apparent progress, the Council, acting in the best interests of the service and the building should be exploring other options for the future use of the building in parallel with any proposal FCAG put forward.

Link to Corporate Plan

The Northumberland County Council (NCC) Corporate Plan 2023-26 has identified the core strategic priorities and supporting key organisational actions of which the following are particularly relevant to the Library Service.

- **Achieving Value for Money**

Libraries are constantly evolving to meet the needs of residents. This process ensures that NCC offers the best most cost effective Library Service

- **Tackling Inequalities**

Evidence is building around the therapeutic value of reading for pleasure, with libraries offering a lifetime's free supply of reading resources available to all. Library staff are a consistent presence offering support through reading in a space that is safe and free to use; provide a wide range of information and signposting which supports public health and wellbeing priorities as well as a programme of events and activities that promote wellbeing through social inclusion.

Libraries offer the space and support to facilitate social support networks through their activity and events programme. They provide supported access to information and signposting that enables residents of Northumberland to obtain advice and support, often within their own community, at the point of need. Whenever possible, they are "empowering our residents to do as much for themselves as possible".

- **Driving Economic Growth.** Libraries provide support and access to digital learning and skills for those seeking employment; access to space, resources, and expert knowledge for use by existing business owners and potential entrepreneurs for group or individual activity which directly contributes to economic growth and regeneration of communities.

Key issues

The Falcon Centre Building

Falcon Centre is the former village school that was built in 1910. It ceased to be a school in the 1970's when the school moved to a new building in the village. Over time it has been home to the village library, a railway museum and other community based groups. As of today the only the library and museum remain and the building is largely vacant.

The building has deteriorated given the limited use and whilst reactive repairs have been dealt with the building is not in good condition with a significant backlog of maintenance.

Background

The Library is the only NCC service delivered from the building, and it only occupies one part. It is open 12 hours per week which are staffed at the following times.

Tuesday 10:30 am - 12:30 pm / 1.30 - 4.30 pm

Thursday 10.30 am - 12.30 pm / 1:30 - 4:30 pm

Saturday 10:00 am - 12:00 noon (alternate Saturdays)

The Library Service have an agreement with Wylam Parish Council to oversee visitor use of the Railway Museum located at the same end of the building for an annual fee £ 1200 per year

The use of the building by further NCC services has been considered but no further uses have been identified. Further use of the building by third party occupiers would require careful consideration of the current state of repair and any improvements necessary to meet the requirements of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, which prevents the letting of buildings with a sub-standard energy efficiency rating.

Wylam Library – Service status

Emerging from the pandemic, the Library Service has reinstated usual operating arrangements at Wylam. The activity programme is recovering and can be supported as long as the activity takes place within library opening hours. Requests for use outside these hours cannot be supported by the Library Service. Two requests have been received so far in 2023 that have had to be declined.

Access to the Museum is similarly limited to library opening hours. The Parish Council were asked for volunteer support in March 2022 to enable the covid safe opening of the museum but with the relaxing of restrictions, the pre-pandemic model of library staff oversight has become usual practice again.

Sporadic antisocial behaviour has caused damage to the building and combined with the poor external lighting on the approaches to the building, this has discouraged library use after dusk. Hence the current pattern of opening hours.

A town Library is located in the Spetchells Centre in Prudhoe (2.9 miles away) but access by public transport is not easy

Previous Community Engagement and Feedback

During the Library Service consultation exercise which ran from December 2019 to March 2020, an information drop in session was held at each library. At the Wylam event on 21st January 2020, several regular library users and others attended. From this it was established that the priorities of those who attended focused on preserving service provision and encouraging children and young people to use the library. This feedback was noted as part of the overall consultation exercise.

The Petition

On 6 June 2023, Northumberland County Council formally received a petition from the Falcon Centre Action Group. The petition has a total of 98 signatories and requests the following option be considered:

That the efforts of the Falcon Centre Action Group (FCAG) to secure the future of the Falcon Centre as a community hub are supported.

(We believe the best way to secure the Falcon Centre for the benefit of the local community would be for the Centre to be run by and for the local community. The FCAG should be allowed time to develop a robust business plan in conjunction with other community partners. A future application to NCC from the FCAG for a Community Asset Transfer should be given sympathetic consideration.)

NCC Response

In response to receiving this petition, all NCC colleagues involved in the discussions that have taken place in recent years were consulted on their most recent contact with FCAG.

It should be noted that previous meetings have been held with FCAG about the future use of the Falcon Centre, during which they expressed an interest in taking on the building as a 'Community Hub' type setting and as part of this, enhancing the level of library service provision and access to the Museum via a volunteer network and ultimately a paid employee.

Initial contact was made with the Regeneration team in January 2020 to discuss a potential asset transfer. A Parish Council representative has attended meetings with the group as well as NCC officers from the Library Service, Strategic Estates and the Town Regeneration team, the latter's role to support FCAG in the development of their business case in preparation for a community asset transfer (CAT) of the building.

The FCAG were provided with a suite of documents in August 2021 relating to building condition, running costs etc. to enable a business case to be formulated. No further contact was received from the group until March 2022 when the group was contacted for an update. NCC was advised the group required structural surveys, a business plan as well as a wider review of community facilities in the village. At the

end of March 2022, the group were given a 6-month time limit to submit an application for a Community Asset Transfer, after which time the group was advised NCC would begin looking at alternative options for the site. No application was submitted by the end of this period and the group were made aware they could continue to develop their own plans if they wished and an asset transfer would be considered in light of any developments in NCC planning for the site. Meetings have taken place as requested by FCAG on an irregular basis

From a Library Service perspective, FCAG were provided with documentation in July 2022 to confirm discussions about the concept of a Library Service / volunteer / community group collaboration being able to realise the continued provision of a library service and access to the Museum within a community hub.

Funding has been provided by NCC to support the group in developing the feasibility work to assemble a business case. It is understood from recent discussion with the group that this work has not begun.

NCC Activity following receipt of the Petition

In response to a request from FCAG, the Library Service Manager met with representatives on 3rd August and subsequently provided a further document on the potential for the Library in Wylam with FCAG support.

Implications

Policy	Corporate Plan 2023-26
Finance and value for money	Dependent on outcome of future meetings and proposed solution.
Legal	As set out in the report
Procurement	There are no direct procurement considerations.
Human Resources	None
Property	As set out in the report.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes No	Not yet completed – dependent on outcome of future meetings

N/a	
Risk Assessment	Not yet completed – dependent on outcome of future meetings
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	Continued provision of a fit for purpose Library offer in Wylam to meet the needs of the community
Carbon reduction	Current building is old and inefficient to operate
Health and Wellbeing	Benefits of social interaction and learning
Wards	Bywell

Report sign off

	Full Name of Officer
Relevant Executive Director	Simon Neilson Gill O'Neil
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Jeff Watson

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Northumberland County Council
Tynedale Local Area Committee
Work Programme 2023 - 2024

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (1) 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.
- (2) To advise the Cabinet on budget priorities and expenditure within the Area.
- (3) 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.
- (4) 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.
- (5) 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.
- (6) 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.
- (7) 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.
- (8) To inform, consult and engage local communities in accordance with Council policy and guidance, through the appropriate networks.
- (9) To, as appropriate, respond or refer with recommendations to local petitions and councillor calls for action.
- (10) To make certain appointments to outside bodies as agreed by Council.
- (11) 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.
- (12) 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.

ISSUES TO BE SCHEDULED/CONSIDERED

Standard items updates: Planning Applications (monthly), public question time (bimonthly, not at planning only meetings), petitions (bimonthly, not at planning only meetings), members' local improvement schemes (quarterly)

To be listed: Fix My Street

Northumberland County Council
Tynedale Local Area Committee
Work Programme 2023-24

12 September 2023

- Planning
- Local Services Update
- The Tanga Club Presentation
- Petition Report –The Falcon Centre, Wylam
- Members Local Improvement Schemes
- *Other items to be confirmed*

10 October 2023

- Planning

14 November 2023

- Planning
- Local Services Update/ Winter Preparations
- *Other items to be confirmed*

12 December 2023

- Planning

9 January 2024

- Planning
- Local Services Update
- Members Local Improvement Schemes
- *Other items to be confirmed*

13 February 2024	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning
12 March 2024	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Local Services Update • Fostering Presentation • <i>Other items to be confirmed</i>
9 April 2024	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning
14 May 2024	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Local Services Update • Members Local Improvement Schemes • <i>Other items to be confirmed</i>

Northumberland County Council
Tynedale Local Area Council Monitoring Report 2023-2024

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Updates (if any)
1	11 July 2023	Petition Report - Request for Additional Traffic Calming Measures at Woodlands, Hexham	RESOLVED that: 1. The contents of the report be noted. 2. A further speed survey be carried out in the 20mph section, west of Woodlands. 3. Speeding concerns continue to be monitored in the area.	
2	11 July 2023	Northumberland Local Bus Board	RESOLVED that Councillor Riddle be nominated to act as the Tynedale Local Area Committee's representative on the Northumberland Local Bus Board.	
3	11 July 2023	Outside Bodies	RESOLVED that the following list of appointments be confirmed: Groundwork North East - Land of Oak and Iron Project Board – G Stewart Haltwhistle Partnership Limited - A Sharp Haltwhistle Swimming & Leisure Centre Man. Cttee - A Sharp Hexham TORCH Centre Management Committee - T Cessford Prudhoe Community Partnership – A Scott Queens Hall Arts Trust – SH Fairless-Aitken	

Sport Tynedale – **N Oliver**
Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership Board – **HR Waddell**

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NT 31.08.23