



# Northumberland County Council

Your ref:  
Our ref:  
Enquiries to:  
Email:  
Tel direct:  
Date: 07 November 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE** to be held in **ASHINGTON JW RUGBY CLUB, ELLINGTON TERRACE, ASHINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND, NE63 8TP** on **WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2023** at **4.30 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr. H. Paterson  
Chief Executive

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

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



**Dr. H. Paterson, Chief Executive**  
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF  
T: 0345 600 6400  
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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 OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(Pages 1  
- 8)

Minutes of the meetings of Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday 13th September 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 Registrable Interest or Non Registrable 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](mailto: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.

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

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

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

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

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

And/or:

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

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

and inform the resident of his/her decision.

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

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

## 5. PETITIONS

(Pages 9  
- 18)

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:**

*Petition seeking the continuation of staffing and activities in Hirst Park once grant funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund ceases.*

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

## 6. BUDGET 2024-25 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

This presentation will outline the Council's strategy to the 2024-25 Budget within the context of the Corporate Plan. The presentation will provide details of the approach to setting the budget for the next financial year and the broad impact this will have on the delivery of services.

## 7. WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE REPORT 2023-2024

(Pages  
19 - 22)

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

## 8. COMMUNITY CHEST PRESENTATION

Recipients from the Community Chest in the Wansbeck area will give a short presentation to committee explaining how the grant has helped their business or charity.

## 9. LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages  
23 - 28)

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

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 10th January 2024.

**11. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)**

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.

|   |  |                                |                               |
|---|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>  |  | <b>Date of meeting:</b>        |                               |
| <b>Meeting:</b>   |  |                                |                               |
| <b>Item to which your interest relates:</b>   |  |                                |                               |
|   |  |                                |                               |
| <b>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):</b> |  |                                |                               |
|   |  |                                |                               |
| <b>Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?</b>  |  | 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** –
- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
  - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
  - c. 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:
- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
  - b. 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   |
|--|---|
| <b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b> | Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.<br>[Any unpaid directorship.]  |
| <b>Sponsorship</b>                                       | 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.<br>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.   |
| <b>Contracts</b>   | 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<br>—<br>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and<br>(b) which has not been fully discharged. |
| <b>Land and Property</b>                                 | Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.<br>'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.  |
| <b>Licenses</b>  | Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer  |
| <b>Corporate tenancies</b>                               | Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)—<br>(a) the landlord is the council; and<br>(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.   |
| <b>Securities</b>  | 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"> <li>i. the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</li> <li>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.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

\* ‘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

### ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 13 September 2023 at 6:00 pm** in **Blyth Town Football Club, South Newsham Playing Fields, Sandringham Drive, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 3PS.**

#### PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

#### MEMBERS

|             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| C Ball      | W Ploszaj    |
| D Carr      | M Purvis     |
| B Gallacher | M Richardson |
| C Humphrey  | E Simpson    |
| J Lang      | A Watson     |
| K Nisbet    | A Wallace    |
| K Parry     |              |

#### OFFICERS

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| P Bowman   | Neighbourhood Services Senior<br>Team Leader |
| K Dagleish | Stronger Shores Project Manager              |
| R Greally  | Assistant Democratic Services<br>Officer     |
| A Keogh    | Heart of Blyth Coordinator                   |
| R Mason    | Area Highways Manager                        |

1 Member of the press was in attendance

#### 02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Eileen Cartie.

#### 03 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council meeting held on Wednesday 12 July 2023, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **04 PETITIONS**

(a) Officers informed the committee of new petition that was submitted regarding Hirst Park Pavilion. There were 77 signatures and it was confirmed that a report was anticipated to come to the November meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### **05 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

Russell Masson, Area Highways Manager, gave an update to committee:-

Highways Inspectors and response gangs are continuing inspecting and fixing carriageway/footway defects, will all inspections currently up to date.  
Gully emptier is fully deployed dealing with reactive and cyclic maintenance.  
We current back log of reactive reports to attend to following the recent heavy rain.

##### **Larger Tarmac Patching**

Larger Tarmac Patching has been carried out in the following locations:

- Ennerdale Road, Blyth
- Nordale Way, Blyth (footway)
- Esher Gardens/Heron Close connecting footway, Blyth
- Waterloo Road, Blyth
- Deneview Drive, Blyth
- 12th Avenue, Blyth (structural patching)
- Broadway, Blyth
- Rear Holystone Avenue, Blyth (footway)
- College Road, Ashington

##### **Drainage Improvements:**

Drainage Improvements have been carried out in the following areas:

- Garden City Villas, Ashington
- Briardale Road, Blyth
- Renwick Road, Blyth
- Wansbeck Road, Ashington- Drainage repairs (flooding issue) 23rd Oct

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

Carriageway Resurfacing has been carried out the following areas:

- Bondicar Terrace, Blyth.
- 12th Avenue, Blyth
- Burnside, Ashington,
- Jubilee Estate Ashington– works ran over due to structural concrete failure if questioned.

Upcoming Resurfacing.

- Station Road, Ashington – 23rd Oct
- Maddison Street, Blyth – date TBC
- Black Close Bank – flags to flex started on Monday for 2 weeks. Works part of the Northern Line work.

### **Other Completed and Upcoming Schemes**

- QEII footpaths – installed 2500m of footway around the QEII country park.
- Ingram Drive – verge hardening works started on Monday 11/09/23 for one week
- Micro Surfacing: Late August Start
- Micro Surfacing works have been completed at Fulmar Drive and Herron Close, Blyth.

### **Bridge Street Scheme the Link, Blyth**

Regeneration work on Bridge Street, Blyth starts on 2nd Oct

We have started lifting the York stone paving slabs in the marketplace as part of these works, this paving will be re-laid on Bridge Street.

### **Winter Services in SE&C**

- Rotas set up and in place 24 drivers 2 spare drivers
- 8 gritters within the with 2 spares
- Salt barns all fully stocked holding approx 8k tonne
- Vehicles will be on Station from 16th October
- We start monitoring forecast from 1st October
- Main rota started 30th October 2023.

The following comments were made in response to members questions: -

- Members requested gullies on Alexandra Road and Sandybay roundabout be looked at. It was also requested that a camera be deployed down the gully at the bus stop opposite the White Elephant pub as it was repeatedly blocked.
- Officers confirmed that there were no plans for lights to be installed on the North Seaton roundabout.
- It was confirmed that if the leftover salt in the bins was usable the workers would break it up and add to it. However, if the salt was unusable it would be removed and replace with fresh salt.
- The potholing machine had carried out 330 repairs in the South East area. Officers confirmed a schedule could be shared with members to show where the machine was due to go and where it had been.

*Chair's Initials.....*

*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 13 September 2023*

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Peter Bowman, Neighbourhood Services Senior Team Leader, gave an update to committee: -

NEAT – Grounds Maintenance

### **Grass Cutting:**

Grass cutting remains on target to achieve required number of core cuts in all areas.

- We have seen some challenging periods this year due to long spells of very wet weather. This ultimately led to a decision to suspend grass cutting in some areas following assessment and concerns about causing surface damage.
- This resulted in teams being faced with longer grass when we could return to cut – inevitably leading to more arisings.
- The weather has not been kind to us this year...
- We are currently on cut 7 in Blyth and finishing of cuts 7 and starting 8 in Ashington with Newbiggin, Cambois and Sleekburn at cut 9.

### **Street Sweeping:**

- We are working through our normal schedules but will move to leaf hotspots in a month or two.
- A usual, please bring any areas in need of sweeping or issues with leaf fall to our attention.

### **Winter Works**

We are starting to think about our winter works schedules, we have our routine annual maintenance commitments but welcome early requests from members on any areas which you consider require attention over this coming winter.

### **Weeds**

Weeds this year have proved to be a concern in all areas of Northumberland with particular attention needed to the high residential areas the second spray is ongoing throughout the area with the use of additional staff using the weed ripping equipment.

### **Waste:**

- Rounds generally settling down well in most areas, following the recent review, unfortunately experienced some teething trouble within the Stakeford area, which we are working hard to resolve I will update councillors at the next LAC meeting.
- Other than a few minor vehicle breakdowns and staffing shortages, Residual, Recycling and Garden waste collection services are all operating well.
- Income from garden waste has exceeded target.
- Income from commercial waste has also exceeded target.
- No further significant changes to rounds are planned but our teams will continue to review existing collection rounds in order to cope with ongoing housing growth

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*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 13 September 2023*

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as well as continued growth in take up of the garden waste service (in some areas).

- Demand for bulky waste collections remains high, extra slots have been created and covered by deploying extra resource when needed.
- Domestic waste tonnages remain higher than normal, various operational adjustments have been made to cope with the demand, but the situation remains a significant challenge for the service.

### **Other information to make the LAC aware of**

- Verge cutting has been completed county wide, this was achieved within the target period of June & July.
- The construction of the bin compounds within the Hirst area has encountered a slight delay within the Hawthorn Road Area – We are listening to and addressing residents' concerns.

The following comments were made in response to members questions: -

- Members thanked the service for their hard work with collection rates and commented how although there were more homes and more pressures the service still worked like clockwork.
- Officers confirmed that Sleekburn division was still to be weeded, comments would be passed on regarding the flower beds which were overgrown.
- The tree officer would be invited to assess the shrubbery outside of the phase 1 South Shore development.
- Officers confirmed that some areas of shrubs and bushes required a second cut. It was acknowledged that farmers could be encouraged to cut their hedges back further however the request could not be enforced. Only certain staff members were trained on the tractor but the service was looking ta more training. The tractor had also had it's tyres changed which allowed them to cut back in more difficult areas with less disruption.
- There was an awareness regarding the succession of the workforce. The service was looking into the apprenticeship scheme. It was difficult to transfer all the knowledge and skills from an experienced worker to the younger generation.
- Officers confirmed that grass cutting blades had been lifted during the wet weather during the summer months. It was confirmed that depending on the length of the grass blades would be lowered.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **07 STRONGER SHORES**

Karen Dalglish from the Stronger Shores Project gave a presentation to the committee. The Stronger Shores Project, which was funded by DEFRA and supported by South Tyneside was looking into making British coastlines and communities stronger in the face of flooding, coastal erosion, and climate change by harnessing the power of nature.

The project looked to improve the understanding of the coastal protection value of marine habitats such as seagrass, kelp and native oyster reefs, and their wider benefits to climate change and biodiversity. The project was a monitoring project which hoped to quantify the costs and benefits and generate evidence and learning regarding the benefits of harnessing the natural resources. There were native oyster reefs in the Blyth port however with the end of the wild oyster project they had recently been relocated to Roker Pier.

Lindisfarne in Northumberland was one of the last strongholds for seagrass and would have been pivotal in the reintroduction of seagrass to estuaries. There were a number of sites throughout the North East where the project would monitor and gather evidence including; Lindisfarne, Beadnell and Boulmer in Northumberland.

The project welcome any engagement opportunities as it was a chance to promote the project and connect people with the underwater world. They were keen to collaborate with communities and target engagement to make it more meaningful.

The following comments were made in response to members questions:-

- Members raised concerns that the coastline in the Southeast of the County had been neglected for the project. It was confirmed that research had been done to identify areas that would work best for the project. Members acknowledged that the project had chosen suitable areas however reiterated that the southeast part of the County would welcome projects.
- Scarborough had a kelp farm which was commercially successful the project will work with them but not in the commercial aspect. The project was a monitoring project but evidence would be provided regarding the commercial aspect of sea kelp.
- An assurance was given that it was always the intention to move the oyster nurseries from Blyth to the area where they would remain.
- Areas for the seagrass were identified due to the suitability. The areas had often had seagrass before and where seagrass was likely to survive when reintroduced.
- It was acknowledged that there was the estuaries at Wansbeck and Blyth. It was suggested that the "Revitalising our Estuaries" project from Groundwork could be invited to a future meeting to discuss their project.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **08 HEART OF BLYTH PROJECT**

Adeline Keogh, Heart of Blyth Coordinator, gave a presentation to the committee. The Heart of Blyth project was funded by the Shaping Places for Healthier Lives Programme on a three-year joint grant programme with the Local Government Association to address health inequalities. The project was a whole system approach to look at improving the area and building stronger communities by providing the opportunity for residents from different backgrounds to connect. The people of Blyth were an important asset recognised by the project. The project hoped to contribute to creating the conditions for a safer, stronger

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community to flourish by improving how people related to each other, how Blyth was seen by others and how Blyth looked. Key successes were highlighted such as the Heart of Blyth Residents Panel which allowed residents to grant microgrants to stakeholders.

The project was in its final year of funding from the Health Foundation and the next step was to work with residents to leave a legacy behind. The project was about to ask the 300+ stakeholder what they would have liked to retain from the project.

The following comments were made in response to Members questions:-

- Members thanked Ade for her presentation and commented on the passion and energy for Blyth that was clearly felt. Blyth Councillors commented on her continued hard work for the area.
- Members felt that it would be a great loss to lose the project and suggested they write a letter to the Leader of the Council to express their concerns. Although the funding ended in October 2024 it was expected that the project would not fully close down however the more support for it the better.
- The project had made a noticeable change to Blyth, it was hoped that similar projects would be rolled out to other communities within the County. Councillors commented that if they would provide any assistance to grow the project if it was possible.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **09 LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillors were encouraged to raise any items they would like brought to committee with the Chair.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

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

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

*Chair's Initials.....*

*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 13 September 2023*

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

DATE: **15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

DATE: 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

**Petition seeking the continuation of staffing and activities in Hirst Park once grant funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund ceases.**

**Report of:** Paul Jones, Director of Environment and Transport

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr C Horncastle, Looking after our Environment

**1. Purpose of report**

To acknowledge and respond to the petition and seek the views of the Local Area Council.

**2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that members consider the report and note that:

a) a great deal of good work has taken place to rejuvenate Hirst Park thanks to investment in the Hirst Park Revival project by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Northumberland County Council (NCC), Ashington Town Council, Ashington Leisure Partnership and others;

b) the lifetime of the project has been extended and now runs until the end of March 2024;

c) staff employed by the Hirst Park Revival Project are now employed locally, remaining professionally linked to Hirst Park and the local community;

and

d) NCC and partner organisations will continue to support and promote events, activities and volunteering within the park as part of the on-going management arrangements for the park, as this is a key part of the legacy of the project and supports achievement of the parks 'Green Flag' status.

**3. Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is particularly relevant to the County Council's corporate priority of tackling inequalities.

**4. Key issues**

- 4.1. As part of the Hirst Park Revival Project, NCC have employed staff to develop and implement a wide-ranging programme of events and activities

within Hirst Park. Funding from the National Lottery heritage Fund will cease at the end of March 2024.

- 4.2. An aspiration of the Hirst Park Revival Project was to establish a Friends of Hirst Park group to support the County Council's management and maintenance of the Park and to ensure the continuation of events and activities beyond the lifetime of the supplied funding. Although the park has a number of enthusiastic volunteers and local residents, it has not been possible during the project period to establish a Friends group to meet the project's aspirations. However, this remains an aspiration that NCC will continue to pursue.
- 4.3. Whilst project staff have moved on to other jobs, a notable success of the Revival Project is that its Park Development Officer and Project Coordinator still maintain strong professional links with the park from roles within Northumberland County Council's Northumberland Communities Together Team and the Full Circle Food project, based at the Growing Zone within Hirst Park.
- 4.4. Remaining project budget has been made available to Northumberland Communities Together and the Full Circle Food Project in order for them to deliver events and activities in Hirst Park until the project ends in March 2024.
- 4.5. The management and maintenance of the park continues, care of the County Council's Countryside and Green Spaces Team and Neighbourhood Services NEAT staff. Under a memorandum of understanding agreement, Ashington Town Council also makes an annual financial contribution towards additional management and maintenance in the park to provide an enhanced offer to park users.

## **5. Background**

5.1. The Hirst Park Revival Project (2018-2023) is a £2.7 million project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Northumberland County Council, Ashington Town Council and Ashington Leisure Partnership. The project has delivered more than five years of investment in Hirst Park, Ashington. This has included:

- A new play zone and splash park
- A new Growing Zone with a new building and outdoor horticultural area, occupied by Full Circle Food Project (with office space for partners)
- New interpretation throughout the park
- A new community performance space and seating area on the former site of the Woodhorn monument
- Revival of the flower garden and new planting schemes throughout the park
- Improved natural heritage including trees and meadow areas

- ☑ A new Hirst Park Memories website where stories of the park are celebrated, and new memories can be created through activities and events
- ☑ A new Hirst Park History Group where local people can explore and research the history of the park
- ☑ A new Friends of Hirst Park Facebook group – a community of 1,600 people who are interested in the park
- ☑ A varied Activity Plan providing events, meetings and activities designed to support wellbeing and bring more people into the park
- ☑ Support for local schools and families to explore the park
- ☑ A volunteer programme providing new opportunities for local people to get active and help look after the park

5.2. As a direct result of project funding, more people are using Hirst Park for a wider range of activities. This means a greater number of people in the local community are able to access the physical, social and mental wellbeing benefits provided by their local greenspace.

5.3. Two Park Development Officers were recruited at an early stage of the project to deliver a programme of activities set out in an activity plan agreed with NLHF. More recently, the activity plan has been implemented by one of the original Park Development Officers, Carla Thompson, and a Project Coordinator (recruited in 2022), Sarah Bredin Kemp. Carla now works for the County Council's Northumberland Communities Together Team, based in the Hirst Welfare Centre. Sarah now works for the Full Circle Food Project, based in Hirst Park's Growing Zone. Both Carla and Sarah and their respective organisations are committed to improving the lives of members of the local community.

5.4. Park users have become increasingly aware of the end date for Lottery funding and concerned over the loss of dedicated staff and the impact on the lives of visitors to Hirst Park. The text of the petition is provided in Table 1 below.

## Table 1. Petition narrative

*Not too long ago Hirst Park was only for bowlers, dog walkers and anti-social behaviour. That all got better thanks to funding from a Heritage Lottery bid to improve the park and make it more user friendly. The funding allowed for hiring of staff, improving the park and allowing time and space for a wide variety of activities.*

*Having staff and activities in the pavilion, being able to grab a coffee, sit somewhere warm and friendly has had huge benefits to the mental wellbeing of so many.*

*All that is about to come to an end. The funding runs out in September of 2023. Meaning the building will revert back to an unwelcoming unusable space that is only open when the bowlers are in.*

*We have started this petition to tell Northumberland County Council that we need things to continue in Hirst Park for the benefit of our community. No, the betterment of our community! We need a space to go, friendly helpful staff to help out or just to sit and chat to or check in with, activities provided, a meeting space we can access with ease. A friendly face or two.*

*The staff at Hirst Park Pavilion:*

- *have provided guidance and signposting.*
- *have supported many homeless members of our community*
- *have become a go to face when you need a chat*
- *provided meaningful and fun activities, provide a space to be warm and enjoy a cup of soup during the bad weather and cost of living crisis*
- *kept us all engaged during the multiple lockdowns*
- *got us all engaged in the park and its many uses*
- *keep us informed and welcome our opinions*
- *make us feel welcome,*

*We need this to continue!*

*The Hirst Community cannot afford to lose such an asset. Add your signature below, do not let Hirst Park Pavilion become the barren land it was just a few years ago!*

*As an example, we will lose:*

*Warm hubs, Clothes swaps, Knowledge of the area, Kids craft sessions, Access to public toilets, Holiday activities, Friendly and caring staff.*

*A warm place to be and socialise when we can't afford to put the heating on*

*Now is the time to act!! Sign below.*

5.5. Over the lifetime of the Revival Project the activity plan has been revised and reformed to adapt to significant changes. The first revision, in 2021, was in response to changes in staffing, the effects of Covid 19 and changes in relationships with partners. More recently, the activity plan has been revised as project staff have left and currently describes the remaining work of the project until the end of March 2024. Details of the current plan are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Summary of new Hirst Park Revival Project plan, Oct 2023 - Mar 2024.**

Project plan:

- Formalise relationships with community partners to support community activities for and with local residents in their local greenspace
- Establish a regular programme of community activities in Hirst Park which can continue beyond the end of NLHF funding
- Improve access to the Hirst Park Pavilion as a community venue for a wider range of people
- Increase local ownership and engaging more local residents and partner agencies in managing the park through volunteering and provision of positive activities
- Improve the park's pavilion

This will be achieved by:

1. Staff support from Northumberland Communities Together
2. Continued involvement from Full Circle Food Project to support volunteers and sustain other activities
3. Continuing to provide facilities for the Health Walking group run by Community Link
4. Continued provision of consumables and other resources to support drop in warm hubs run by local volunteers and supported by Northumberland Communities Together and the Full Circle Food Project
5. Continuing to provide community wellbeing activities (e.g. Blossoming Communities activities and yoga)
6. Continue to engage local primary schools, including providing training to school staff to continue activities beyond March 2024
7. Support the Hirst Park football tournament, organised by Ashington Town Football Club
8. Continue legacy support contract
9. Install new pavilion shutters to improve access and use of pavilion
10. Reordering of pavilion to create more storage and a more welcoming space

## **6. Discussion**

A number of areas of Hirst Park life are being considered in light of the end of funding in March 2024. In all cases, these areas have benefited significantly from Lottery funding and will be diminished from April 2024, though to differing extents.

### **6.1. Hirst Park Growing Zone**

6.1.1. NCC officers and Full Circle Food Project (FCFP) staff are currently finalising a lease agreement to underpin continued occupation of the Growing Zone. FCFP make full use of the Growing Zone site, running a range of events and activities there, as well as supporting activities and volunteering in the wider park.

6.1.2. In the months towards the end of Lottery funding, the Revival project has allocated budget to support FCFP activity within the Growing Zone but also from the pavilion and in the wider park.

6.1.3. After March 2024, FCFP will continue to operate from and fully utilise the Growing Zone. FCFP will continue to bring clear benefits to the local community and enhance use and enjoyment of the wider park through their programme of activities and events.

### **6.2. Hirst Park Pavilion**

6.2.1. Hirst Park's pavilion is the heart of Hirst Park and is the focus of the petition's concerns. The pavilion has been the centre point for the range of Hirst Park Revival activities as well as the working base for project staff. It provides a working base for the park's horticultural staff and a home for the park's bowls club.

6.2.2. During the remaining months of the Revival Project, promotion and use of the pavilion will continue care of Northumberland Communities Together and the Full Circle Food Project, ensuring access for events and activities including tea and coffee mornings, yoga sessions, Blossoming Communities workshops and other activities.

6.2.3. NCC staff are currently progressing plans to install new security shutters to the pavilion, to create additional storage, to provide new furniture and to redecorate. Project budget is available to support this, subject to approval from NLHF.

6.2.4. After March 2024, the pavilion will continue to provide a space for events and activities. Countryside and Green Spaces staff will continue to work with staff from Northumberland Communities Together and FCFP to ensure continued use of the pavilion for community events and activities.



### 6.3. Hirst Park greenspace

6.3.1. Capital investment during the Hirst Park Revival project has greatly enhanced the park, its infrastructure and horticulture. The revamped park is managed and maintained by the County Council's Countryside and Green Spaces Team and Neighbourhood Services NEAT Teams. Ashington Town Council provide financial support towards the additional maintenance and management of the park to help ensure that the capital improvements / enhancements made to the park are sustained to a high standard.

6.3.2. During the remaining months of the project and thereafter, management and maintenance of the park will remain the responsibility of NCC staff. NCC and FCFP staff will continue to seek to bring volunteers into the park to undertake general maintenance and horticultural tasks.

### 6.4. Hirst Park activities

6.4.1. Another main focus for the concerns of petitioners, the Hirst Park Revival Project's funded activity programme, developed and managed by project staff, has ensured that the park has been able to offer a range of activities and events for the local community.

6.4.2. During the remaining months, events and activities will continue within the park care of NCC, NCT and FCFP.

6.4.3. After March 2024, NCC will have no dedicated budget to support a continuing activity programme. Northumberland Communities Together and Full Circle Food Project will continue to be able to use the pavilion as a venue for their own activities and events. NCC will continue to make the pavilion available for community use such as regular residents' coffee mornings and a location for youth support work.

### 6.5. Hirst Park Digital Engagement

6.5.1. The Friends of Hirst Park facebook page, developed and managed by project staff, has around 2,000 followers. Regular posts raise awareness of the park and advertise upcoming events and activities. In addition to the park's social media presence, the Revival Project has created a Hirst Park Memories website to collect and curate written and photographic material submitted by local people and further afield.

6.5.2. During the remaining months of the project, and thereafter, the park's facebook page will continue to be provided. The Hirst Park Memories website will be in place for at least 10 years, though there are currently no dedicated NCC staff to accept contributions and undertake administration.

## 7. Summary

- 7.1. The Hirst Park Revival Project has delivered significant improvements to Hirst Park, both in terms of the capital works but also in terms of the public's use and enjoyment of the site. Project staff, in particular the Park Development Officer and Project Coordinator, have brought about a wide range of events and activities within the park that has enriched the lives of local people.
- 7.2. When funding ends in March 2024, the Hirst Revival Project as a funded and staffed project, will not be able to continue. However, a number of activities and events in Hirst Park will continue, managed by partners such as the Full Circle Food Project and NCC's Northumberland Communities Together team. The park will continue to be able to host events organised by local community groups and organisations such as Heart of the Hirst.
- 7.3. NCC's Countryside and Green Spaces Team are keen to maintain existing and develop new relationships with local people and organisations in order to ensure that the park continues to play an important role in the enjoyment, health and wellbeing of local people. The park has achieved the prestigious 'Green Flag' award which puts it amongst the best parks in the country. One of the key elements for maintenance of the park's Green Flag status is the active involvement of the local community in the park and whilst the formation of a creation of a 'Friends of' group (or similar) was an aspiration of the Hirst Park Revival Project that has not been met, the formation of a Friends group remains an on-going aspiration for NCC and NCC remains fully committed to ensuring the parks Green Flag status is maintained.

### Implications

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Policy</b>  | The Council has recently adopted a new Environment Policy Statement that strengthens its commitment to maintaining protecting and enhancing the environment. Ensuring that local communities have access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces is a key commitment within the Environment Policy and the Council will continue to work with partners to ensure that community activities and events take place at Hirst Park and the park is managed and maintained to retain its 'Green Flag' status. |
| <b>Finance and value for money</b>                       | Project funding continues until the end of March 2024. Thereafter management and maintenance of Hirst Park continues using normal revenue funding (with some support from Ashington Town Council).  |
| <b>Legal</b>   | None  |
| <b>Procurement</b>                                       | None.   |
| <b>Human Resources</b>                                   | Countryside and Green Spaces staff and Neighbourhood Services NEAT staff manage and maintain Hirst Park.  |
| <b>Property</b>  | The site is owned and managed by the County Council.  |
| <b>Equalities</b><br>(Impact Assessment attached)<br>Yes | Some issues relating to possible negative effects for older visitors, less able visitors and women and girls. Continued NCC presence in the park together with a continuation (albeit partial) of activities and events may ameliorate this.  |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Risk Assessment</b>        | None.   |
| <b>Crime Disorder</b>         | & A reduction in activities and events at Hirst Park may give rise to an increase in antisocial behaviour. However, the Council works closely with partners organisations and Northumbria Police to mitigate this risk and address any ASB that occurs.   |
| <b>Customer Consideration</b> | A reduction in staffing levels and number of events and activities is giving rise to concerns from members of the local community. However, there will still be events and activities at the park and the pavilion remains available to provide a space for events and activities.  |
| <b>Carbon reduction</b>       | None.   |
| <b>Health and Wellbeing</b>   | The revival project has rejuvenated Hirst Park and the park now provides a diverse range of activities for local residents to participate in and offers a high quality green space and leisure facility for the local community supporting their health and wellbeing. Work will continue with partners to make sure that a range of activities and events are provided and that the park remains well managed and maintained to help support the health and wellbeing of local people. |
| <b>Wards</b>                  | Hirst.  |

**Background papers:**

None.

**Report sign off:**

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

|  | Full Name of Officer |
|--|----------------------|
| Monitoring Officer/Legal                     | n/a                  |
| Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer | n/a                  |
| Relevant Executive Director                  | pp Paul Jones        |
| Chief Executive                              | n/a                  |
| Portfolio Holder(s)                          | Colin Horncastle     |

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## **Winter Services Preparedness and Resilience Report 2023-2024**

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

### **Key Issues.**

The County Council undertakes its winter services activities to ensure, 'as far as is reasonably practicable' that the highway is maintained in a safe condition in accordance with our legal obligations under the Highways Act 1980. There has been no change to the service standards or winter maintenance policy since last winter. The Council is still treating the same lengths of road within the same agreed timeframes and meeting all of the Council's agreed policies and standards for winter services.

### **Background Staffing and Control of Operations, Highways and Transport**

Winter Services are carried out by the Highways and Transport division. Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Manager, has countywide responsibility for winter services, with Andy Olive, Area Highways Delivery Manager, acting as countywide operational lead.

All our primary and secondary routes remain unchanged from the 2022/23 season. Following the completion of previous contracts, the arrangements for additional support from agricultural contractors for dealing with snowfall and prolonged periods of extreme cold weather have been re-procured.

The delivery of the winter service overall requires 105 staff, including managers, supervisors, drivers and operatives. Staffing rotas are in place to ensure sufficient staffing resource is available on the three-shift rota. The majority of staff involved in winter services come from Highways, with a small number of drivers also coming from with Neighbourhood Services.

Highways have 3 Winter Service Delivery Managers (Russell Mason, Tony Bell and Andy Olive) who operate on a three-week rota (24/7) and whose job it is to consider the variable forecasting information and make a decision on the most appropriate course of action and what, if any, treatment is necessary based on the forecast information provided by our forecaster (Meteogroup) and bureau provider (Vaisala).

The Winter Service Delivery Managers then pass instructions on to the Winter Services Supervisors who manage the gritting operations. The Winter Services Supervisors also work on a rota basis with their shifts.

As you can imagine, this role can be very stressful and hectic at times. Members are, therefore, asked to only contact them directly in **an emergency situation**. All non-emergency situations should be reported through the Council's contact centre and the out of hours arrangements via Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service in the usual way and also Fix My Street.

Similarly, Members are requested **not to contact** Winter Services Supervisors out of hours as their rotas can change and officers not on call or on rest periods can be unnecessarily disturbed.

Weather Monitoring Arrangements are in place for the winter services manager to use the web based Vaisala weather system which collates all of our local weather station data.

This also give the Council direct access to regional forecasting information across neighbouring authorities. The Council has access through the MeteoGroup system and the Met office Hazard Manager for accurate weather data/forecasts.

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

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

All staff involved in Winter Services are available on mobile communication. This allows the teams to still ensure the operation is being conducted in an efficient and effective manner. Also, with our Exactrak system is vehicle hardware for specialist winter maintenance route management is an automated salt spreading technology across the Council's gritter fleet. This system that allows enhanced vehicle tracking, route management, automated navigation, automated gritting spread patterns, improved data collection and recording, and improved live monitoring of operations. This has improved the resilience of operations considerably as we will be able us deploy any driver with any gritter to any of the routes across Northumberland without them needing prior training on navigation and gritting spread patterns on the specific route being treated.

It also improves driver health and safety by automating the control of the spreading rate and patterns for the salt, so that they can focus on driving the vehicle in often very challenging weather conditions. This system is extremely valuable given the risks of potential driver absence due to seasonal illnesses and holiday cover.

### **Vehicles and Gritting Routes,**

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

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

As part of the ongoing Fleet Replacement programme, we have taken delivery of nine state of the art Mercedes/Econ 6m<sup>3</sup> and 9m<sup>3</sup> capacity gritters over the last two seasons.

Fleet Services supply all the necessary expertise to keep the vehicle's operating at full capacity throughout the winter period. Four Hilltip spreaders and ploughs have been put in service and fitted to NCC 4x4 vehicles. These are placed across the operational areas and gives us another highly useful piece of equipment that can be deployed rapidly to some of the more difficult areas across the network. This will reduce demand on our gritting fleet and

allow it to continue to be dedicated to the primary and secondary network during snow events.

**Salt Management** The operation is delivered from 10 manned or unmanned depots across Northumberland. Andy Olive has the responsibility for ordering and management of salt and will oversee the ordering, delivery, and ongoing monitoring of stock levels throughout the winter period for each depot assisted by the area-based Quantity Surveyors. As mentioned above our route optimisation software will also monitor exact salt use across the entire fleet and across the network. This will provide the most accurate salt usage data the Council has ever received.

At the end of last season (2022/23), we had 31,000T of salt in stock across Northumberland. This is being replenished in all of our main depots and we will have a starting stock of 44,000 tonnes at the commencement of winter. This includes our strategic reserve in Powburn which holds 6,000 tonnes to add to Northumberland's resilience levels.

**Grit Bins/Heaps** All grit bins and salt heaps throughout the County are currently being inspected and replenished as necessary. This includes removing litter etc and making sure the existing condition is to standard. The service supports an inventory of over 1,600 grit bins and over 1200 heaps. Each bin has a notice and serial number attached giving contact details so members of the public can report a bin or heap requiring a refill during the winter period via the website Fix My Street or the Councils call centre.

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

Customer Services can be contacted for all winter service emergency request. For additional gritting, grit bin replenishment and general enquiries please use NCC web site Fix My Street or our customer services teams on 0345 600 6400.

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

As with previous years, we will again be producing our customer information leaflet titled 'Highway Services in Winter', that provides useful information to the public on all aspects of the service. The leaflet, which includes when gritting will take place and on which roads and footpaths, as well as giving general advice on how-to drive-in winter conditions, will be available by the end of November following a thorough review of the information it contains.

The document will be distributed to all County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils. Information on the website includes details of our policies and maps of our primary gritting routes, along with those showing our strategic footpath network which will be treated in severe conditions such as snow or heavy icing. Alerts are sent out daily during the winter using social media. This will advise people on weather conditions and our proposed response. This information is also made available on the Northumberland County Council website.

Additional Support for our Snow Clearing contract with local Farmers and sub-contractors to assist our operations by removing snow from the more remote roads in rural Northumberland.

We are conducting an audit of the equipment and its condition. This is ahead of the winter period and the exercise will be completed by the end of November early December 2023.

This contract has provided the farmers and sub-contractors with designated routes. This will ensure that we are clearing the area in the most efficient way we can during a snow event and not revisiting areas which have been cleared. The contractor's plant and equipment are intergraded into our new automated gritting system to allow the Council full visibility of resources during intense periods of weather.

The Council has still retained voluntary groups which we refer to as "snow squads" who help with snow clearing from footpaths in villages such as Wooler, Belford and Bamburgh; Hexham Town Council also aid with snow clearance. The offer to be included in the 'Snow Squads' will be rolled out again this winter.

All volunteers have been trained, equipped with tools, and supplied salt to assist the Council and clear local footpaths around the County keeping the County residents safe.

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

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

Severe Weather Procedures During heavy snow conditions, it is normal for a "snow room" to be set up to coordinate our response to ensure efficient service delivery on the ground. Also, if required due to the severity of the event we will open the incident support room and work alongside the civil contingencies team and all emergency services within the area. Winter Storms/ Flooding Staff on the Winter Service rota will respond to precautionary gritting and winter events as normal. Where applicable and when the weather dictates, they will also respond to flooding issues supporting the existing Out of Hours rota in anything above and beyond the normal response levels. The authority receives severe weather warnings many days in advance from several sources including the Met Office Hazard Manager. This gives us the ability to track storms and plan resources around the potential impact



**Northumberland County Council  
Ashington and Blyth Area Committee  
Work Programme 2023-24**

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

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

**ISSUES TO BE SCHEDULED/CONSIDERED**

**Standard items updates:** Public question time , petitions, members’ local improvement schemes (quarterly).

**To be listed:**

**Northumberland Communities Together**

**Tourism**

**Town Markets Update**

**Healthwatch**

Northumberland County Council  
 Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee  
 Work Programme 2023-24

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|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>15 November 2023</b> |  |
|                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Winter Preparedness Update</li> <li>• Community Chest (Wansbeck)</li> </ul>           |
| <b>10 January 2024</b>  |  |
|                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northumbria Police Update</li> <li>• Fix my Street Report</li> <li>• Community Chest (Blyth)</li> </ul> |

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>13 March 2024</b> |   |
|                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Chest (Newbiggin)</li> </ul> |
| <b>15 May 2024</b>   |   |
|                      |   |

Northumberland County Council  
Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee  
Monitoring Report 2023-2024

| Ref | Date | Report | Decision | Updates |
|-----|------|--------|----------|---------|
| 1.  |      |        |          |         |
| 2.  |      |        |          |         |
| 3.  |      |        |          |         |
| 4.  |      |        |          |         |

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