



# Northumberland County Council

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Enquiries to:**

**Email:**

Rebecca.greally@northumberland.gov.uk

**Tel direct:** 01670 622616

**Date:** Tuesday, 5 March 2024

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 FOOTBALL CLUB, ELLINGTON TERRACE, ASHINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND, NE63 8TP** on **WEDNESDAY, 13 MARCH 2024 at 4.00 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**  
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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 PREVIOUS MEETING

(Pages 1  
- 8)

Minutes of the meetings of Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January and Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 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  
- 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:**

Unfinished works at Crofton Grange, Blyth

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

## 6. HEALTHWATCH

D. Nugent will provide information on Healthwatch within the Ashington & Blyth area.

## 7. LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages  
15 - 20)

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).

## 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 15th May 2024.

## 9. 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.

<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. [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. 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 — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (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. '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)— (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.
<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>
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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)

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# Agenda Item 2

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 10 November 2023 at 4:00 pm** in **Room G01, Blyth Community Enterprise Centre, Ridley Street, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 3AG.**

#### PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

#### MEMBERS

C Ball  
D Carr  
E Cartie  
B Gallacher  
J Lang  
K Parry  
M Purvis

J Reid  
M Richardson  
L Simpson  
A Wallace  
A Watson

#### OFFICERS

J Caisley  
R Greally  
N Snowdon  
  
K Westerby

Inspector Neighbourhood Policing  
Assistant Democratic Service Officer  
Principal Programme Officer (Highways  
Improvement)  
Highways Delivery Manager

#### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

G Sanderson

Leader of the Council

About 2 members of the public were in attendance.

## 19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Humphrey, Nisbet and Ploszaj.

## 20 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council meeting held on Wednesday 15 November 2023, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 21 PETITIONS

### (a) Receive any new petitions

Officers informed the committee of new petition that was submitted titled "Finalise Crofton Grange Housing Estate", it had received 102 signatures and it was confirmed that a report was anticipated to come to the next Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee in March 2024.

### (b) Consider reports on petitions previously received

#### Request for a Controlled Pedestrian Crossing on Newbiggin Road, Ashington

Mr Picton, the lead petitioner introduced the petition to the committee. It was highlighted that there were no controlled crossings on the stretch of road which meant that residents in the area were disadvantaged especially those with disabilities. Other crossings on the stretch of the road were island crossings which were not suitable for visually impaired residents to use independently.

Local Councillor Mark Purvis had requested a controlled crossing to for the Local Transport Plan for 2022 and 2023. Mr Picton welcomed the recommendation of another survey as pubs, shops and more houses had been developed. The housing development had grown substantially since the original survey and it was pointed out that the increase in houses meant there was an increase in Council Tax being paid into the County which could have been used to construct the desired crossing.

Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer, introduced the report to committee. The report suggested that a new pedestrian and PV2 traffic survey be carried out to assess the amount of pedestrians and traffic in the area. If the survey results met the criteria then the crossing would be considered as part of the LTP programme.

The survey camera would be positioned in a way that would capture the main crossing in question but would also pick up the other crossing further down the road. The survey would take place as soon as practicably possible and if successful the crossing would be considered in the 2025 Local Transport Plan.

Members raised concerns over the length of time it was going to take to consult, design and construct the crossing. It was suggested that the design process be started at the same time as the survey taking place. Members felt that the survey and hopefully the crossing needed to be started as soon as possible. Several Ashington members suggested that they would contribute part of their small member's scheme to the crossing to help move the process along.

**RESOLVED** that members considered the report and recommended:

- (i) they support the actions proposed;
- (ii) the design process be started alongside the survey

**(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered**

There were no updates on previous petitions.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **22 LOCAL AREA POLICING**

Inspector Jonathan Caisley gave a policing update to the committee. He gave his apologies for Inspector Wayne Daniels who was unable to attend the meeting but had provided an update which would be read out by Inspector Caisley. Within the Blyth area there were two teams each with a sergeant, seven police constables and two Police Community Support Officers. There was a healthy number of officers in neighbourhood policing as there had been good investment.

In the Blyth area crime levels remained steady there had been a decrease in violence linked to nighttime economy. Anti-Social behaviour remained consistent and there had been no spikes. Reports of motorbike anti-social behaviour was at a similar level to previous years – there had been a decline over the winter period which was expected. Inspector Caisley confirmed the team were working with Ashington neighbourhood officers to create a dedicated team to help combat motorcycle disorder. The upcoming priorities were anti-social behaviour, drug dealing as well as retail and business crime.

In the Ashington area crime levels also remained steady however summer tended to see an increase in levels. In August motorcycle disorder spiked in Newbiggin and Ashington. Ashington and Blyth teams were working together and pooling resources to give a consistent approach to tackle motorcycle disorder. It was expected that a greater amount of bikes would be seized and there would be a more targeted approach using technology such as drones.

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

- There was a retail crime partnership in the Blyth area. A panel were taking ideas forward however support had waned. However, if anyone was interested they were encouraged to contact the local neighbourhood police team.
- It was acknowledged that the motorcycle disorder was an issue and the neighbourhood police team were looking to proactively sort the problem using targeted approaches such as drones. The offroad track project was still being looked into but there was no indication of a timescale for this.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **23. BUDGET 2024-25 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Leader of the Council, Glen Sanderson, gave a presentation to the committee. The presentation outlined the intentions for the next budget. The Leader felt that the budget addressed the three priorities of the Council; achieving value for money, tackling inequalities and driving economic growth. There had been two policy conferences held for members to discuss the setting of the budget. There was also an online consultation due to take place to allow members of the public to comment on it. The budget would protect frontline services and it was hoped that compulsory redundancies would be avoided if possible.

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

- Members raised concerns over the lack of detail in the presentation. However, it was confirmed that the presentation was to show where the Council was to the public. The budget was still not complete and was still under consultation. Members were able to discuss the details and figures about the budget in the Corporate Services & Economic Growth scrutiny meeting and at Full Council.
- Members were assured that the consultation was intended to gather responses from stakeholders regarding the budget. There had been policy conferences, meetings with group leaders and an online consultation.
- The Leader confirmed that the budget could not be set and finalised until the Authority had received the final settlement figure from Government which happens in late December. However, conference policies had been carried out throughout the year to try and keep members up to date. Members suggested that more discussion needed to take place during the conference policies.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

## 24. FIX MY STREET

Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Manager, gave a presentation on the new web-based reporting system, Fix My Street (FMS), which had been launched in May 2023. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the signed minutes.)

The presentation outlined:

- The limits of previous systems used by Local Services and other departments with minimal integration of back-office systems and lack of feedback to customers.
- The benefits of FMS which included asset-based reporting, use of photographic evidence, accuracy of locations, integration with other systems, ability to produce reports for users and respond to FOI / EIR information.
- The implementation timetable.
- The benefits for users and staff with slides which demonstrated views of the web and mobile apps and ability to monitor reports made.
- Data on reports logged using FMS from May to September 2023 and comparison with issues logged for the same period in 2022 (there had been an increase of 143%).
- The ability to monitor trends by ward or postcode and obtain a detailed breakdown by category.
- The top 5 reporting categories were:
  - i. Roads – potholes
  - ii. Flytipping
  - iii. Hedges / Overgrown vegetation
  - iv. Blocked gullies
  - v. Grass cutting
  
- Next steps including ongoing enhancements such as inclusion of grit heaps and bins, developments to aid defence of insurance claims, improvements to consistency and feedback to users, increased front end automation of responses with reference to policies, use by more departments such as housing etc.
- The demonstration included a brief overview of the system as viewed by officers, how the system interacted with Alloy (the system used by Highways Maintenance) and how reports could be reassigned between users and departments.
- Users were able see whether the same issue had already been reported.
- Residents could continue to report issues by telephoning the Contact Centre who would enter the details on Fix My Street.

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

- Members thanked Kris for his hard work and agreed the app was beneficial to the Authority. It was acknowledged that the work was on-going and tweaks were still needed.

- It was acknowledged that the data was only as good as the input from the public and output from officers.
- There was an expectation from the public that the Council will deal with all queries however the fix my street app will direct the query to the appropriate service if it is not within the Council's remit.

**25 LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillors requested that a presentation on tourism within the area be brought to committee. It was confirmed that officers had been contacted and a date would be scheduled as soon as practicably possible.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**26 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee would be held on Wednesday, 13 March 2024.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

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

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



**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 14 February 2024 at 4:00 pm** in **Welbeck Suite, Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre, Woodhorn Lane, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, NE64 6HG.**

**PRESENT**

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

**MEMBERS**

C Ball  
D Carr  
E Cartie  
B Gallacher  
C Humphrey  
J Lang  
K Nisbet

K Parry  
M Purvis  
J Reid  
M Richardson  
L Simpson  
A Wallace

**OFFICERS**

R Greally  
N Snowdon  
  
R McCartney

Assistant Democratic Service Officer  
Principal Programme Officer (Highways  
Improvement)  
Infrastructure Manager

**27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors W Ploszaj and A Watson.

**28 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME AND HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT IN U AND C ROADS AND FOOTWAYS PROGRAMME 2024-25**

Robin McCartney, Infrastructure Manager, and Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer, were in attendance to answer questions from members. The report set out the details of the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways programmes for 2024-25 for consideration and comment by the Local Area Committee, prior to final approval of

the programme by the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Improving our Roads and Highways.

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

- Members asked that the format of the report be changed to group the lists into areas to make it simpler to see what was being spent in their ward.
- It was acknowledged that the plan goes through a process and was put together on a needs basis. However, members raised concerns over the distribution of the funding throughout the County and felt that the process needed reviewed. Members felt there was not sufficient money being put into the South East area despite it having the largest population of the County.
- There was a suggestion from members that the current process to repair potholes was not up to standard and questioned whether the micro surfacing was fit for purpose. Officers assured members that repairs were made to an appropriate standard. It was important that potholes were repaired within the statutory timeframe and the process currently used allowed that. The Authority was above the national average for repairing roads. The cost of squaring potholes was significantly more than the current process.
- It was confirmed that the Authority were following guidance given and spending the pothole fund from Government appropriately.
- Members were assured that the Authority did intervene with speeding but only when it was over an 85% percentile in the area. The Authority did discuss speeding hotspots with the Police and looked at enforcement and accident rates.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **29 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee would be held on Wednesday, 13 March 2024.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

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

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

*Chair's Initials.....*

*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 14 February 2024*



## Northumberland County Council

Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee

Wednesday, 13 March 2024

### Submitted Petition - Crofton Grange, Blyth

**Report of Councillor(s)** Cllr Horncastle, Cabinet Member for Looking After our Communities

**Responsible Officer(s):** Simon Neilson, Executive Director - Place and Regeneration

#### 1. Purpose of report

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

#### 2. Recommendations

That Members determine the appropriate action to take in response to the petition, which can include:

- Making Recommendations to Full Council, Cabinet, a Committee or to Officers
- Taking no further action
- Accepting the actions officers propose to take as set out in this report

#### 3. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The issues raised in the petition and the Council's response to the petition are indirectly relevant to priorities included in the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2023-2026 as follows:

- 'how' - The Council faces tough decisions that will not be universally popular. These are not taken lightly and the council pledges to listen and consider views
- 'enjoying' - the Council wants to protect and improve quality places, but also make sure that the places where people live, work and play continue to evolve and grow whilst retaining and deepening their appeal.

#### 4. Key issues

A petition has been submitted and received by Northumberland Planning Department from residents of Crofton Grange, Blyth, raising concerns pertaining to unfinished work on the residential site. The petition states that Persimmon vacated

the estate with Taylor Wimpey having left some years prior. However, both developers did so with unfinished work, which has presented a number of issues.

The issues have become increasingly frustrated once the developers have left the site with neither having taken responsibility for completing certain areas of work and outstanding issues which have created a detrimental impact on residents of the estate. The outstanding issues have become a deciding factor in some families looking to purchase properties on the estate.

The residents have become increasingly concerned at the level of incomplete works and/or works that they consider have not been in line with the planning permission that was granted.

The Council takes the matters raised very seriously. This report outlines how decisions are currently made and why, and where relevant identifies some matters which we will look to pursue to improve and refine the planning decision-making process.

## **The Petition**

### *Finalise Crofton Grange housing estate (Blyth)*

*The Crofton Grange estate has existed for over a decade, houses on the estate are by Persimmon Homes & Taylor Wimpey.*

*In 2022 having completed all house building on the estate one developer - Persimmon vacated the estate, with Taylor Wimpey having left some years prior. However, they both did so with the estate not completely finished.*

*Having two housing developers share a site and then vacate once all work has been completed in terms of building homes has presented a number of issues. These issues have become increasingly frustrated once the developers have left and neither have taken responsibility for the completing of certain work and outstanding issues which are having a detrimental impact on residents currently. In addition these issues to be complete, were in some cases a deciding factor in certain families purchasing a property through the developer and moving to the estate.*

*After Persimmon Homes left site mid 2022 frequent emails and letters have been sent to both developers and local councillors from residents which have led to no movement on the most pressing topics.*

*The issues in which we seek some assistance in helping progress to being resolved include:*

- *The topping of all existing roads on site,*
- *The topping of all existing paths on site,*
- *missing/damaged kerbstones replaced,*
- *Proposed Park/Play Area included in site plans from developers to be erected,*
- *The adoption of ALL green areas by landscapers to ensure everywhere is cut and maintained when on site,*
- *A completed path to exit the Crofton Grange estate on both sides of the entrance road (currently only one side has a entrance path), communication from all parties with relevance to the one and only entrance to the estate causing significant congestion especially AM, proposals were to have two.*

*These are an example of some but not all of the issues within the estate currently.*

*Opened for signatures on 06.10.2023*

*Closed for signatures on 12.12.23*

*Number of signatures as at 12.12.2023 – 102*

## **5. NCC activity since receipt of the Petition**

Northumberland County Council Planning Department were made aware that a petition would be forthcoming in 2023 regarding the matters identified above. Since then, discussions have taken place with the Highways Development Management (HDM) officers to establish an up-to-date position around adoption of the site.

From a highways perspective there are no signed s38 agreements (new highways) for this estate, nor has there been any s278 works as the developers have not undertaken work in the existing publicly maintained highway.

Notwithstanding this, there has been an understanding that the developers were moving towards adoption and, as such, throughout the lifespan of the development HDM have been inspecting the works that have been undertaken and are currently pursuing the developers to complete the highway elements of the scheme, namely the repair of damaged kerbs and the laying of the final surface course to the carriageways, footways and footpaths which the developer is proposing to put forward for adoption.

The current understanding and the most recent feedback received from the developers is that, after having received details of the outstanding work from HDM that are required to complete the highway elements, the developers have gone out to tender to get prices to complete the works. HDM will continue to liaise with the developers to pursue the S38. It should be noted that whilst all the indications are that a S38 will be entered into, there are no powers available to the local authority to ensure this happens. As such, until this is entered into, the site remains in private ownership (i.e. the developers).

With regards to the play area, the Planning Enforcement Team is currently preparing a notice to issue to the developers to establish their latest position on its installation. The response to that will determine the next course of action from the team. It is noted, however, that the play area features in the original plan and all subsequent plans relating to the development.

## **6. Background**

Outline planning permission was granted for circa 850 dwellings on land at west Blyth accessed from Chase Farm. The original application was made by George Wimpey UK and Millhouse Development Ltd and was considered by Blyth Valley Council. The application was refused planning permission as the report set out the following:

To advise Blyth Valley Borough Council that planning permission should not be granted for this development unless it has been demonstrated that approval

- would not result in an oversupply of housing land in Blyth;
- Would not prejudice the bringing forward of previously development sites in the town for housing development in the future; and

- that the release of the site for housing on the scale proposed at this time would not prejudice the potential release of previously developed land likely to arise in the foreseeable future, in particular from regeneration proposals within the Blyth Estuary quayside areas of the town

The report to Members concluded that the need for development in this location at that time and its impact in terms of the potential to develop better located sites, including previously developed land, which demonstrated wider benefits towards achieving regeneration and housing market rebalancing aspirations in the town of Blyth must be fully considered before the Borough Council considered granting planning permission.

Members of the committee agreed with the officer's report and planning permission was refused for the following reasons:

1. The local planning authority is of the opinion that the proposal is not required to meet a five year supply of housing land in Blyth.
2. The local planning authority is of the opinion that there is a significant amount of previously developed land identified in the Urban Capacity Study which is sequentially preferable to this peripheral greenfield site.
3. The local planning authority is of the opinion that the release of this site for housing in the scale proposed at this time would prejudice the potential release of previously developed land likely to arise in the foreseeable future from regeneration proposals with the Blyth Estuary.
4. The local planning authority is of the opinion that the release of the site would compromise the ability to meet housing needs in the main town and service centre of Cramlington where there is a current shortfall of housing land.
5. The local planning authority is of the opinion that the proposal is contrary to policies H14 and policies WB12 as it fails to deliver an element of affordable housing.
6. The local planning authority is of the opinion that there is inadequate information provided to assess the design and built form of the proposed development against the criteria set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3.
7. The local planning authority is of the opinion that inadequate information has been provided in the Environmental Statement in relation to the effects of Archaeology, Wildlife and Nature Conservation to allow a positive decision to be made on the application.
8. The local planning authority is of the opinion that the Transportation Assessment does not adequately address the transportation issues raised by the development in particular the matter of junction capacity and the implications of traffic generated by the proposed development on traffic congestion on Cowpen Road.

The applicant appealed the refusal decision to the Planning Inspectorate who, in their deliberations, concluded that planning permission should be granted for 850 dwellings with associated infrastructure together with 0.25 hectare site for community uses. This decision was referred to the Secretary of State for their consideration, who also concluded that the proposal should be approved and in doing so, attached 36 conditions to be adhered to as part of the permission.

It is understood that all housebuilding is now fully complete on site.

**7. Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	Corporate Plan 2023-26
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Dependent on outcome of future meetings and proposed solutions
<b>Legal</b>	As set out in the report
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no direct procurement considerations
<b>Human resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	As set out in the report
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - not required at this point Dependent on outcome of future meetings and proposed solutions
<b>Risk assessment</b>	None
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	None
<b>Customer considerations</b>	That failure to resolve matters will continue to cause disruption and concern to the residents of the estate
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	Benefits to the health and wellbeing of the residents to having the issue resolved
<b>Wards</b>	Kitty Brewster;

**8. Background papers**

B/02/00621/OUT  
B/07/00434/REM

**9. Links to other key reports already published**

N/A

**10. Report sign off**

Relevant Executive Director: Simon Neilson

Director of Housing and Planning: Rob Murfin

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Riddle

Cabinet Member for Looking after our Environment: Cllr Colin Horncastle

**11. Author and Contact Details**

Judith Murphy, South East DM Area Manager

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**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**

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

Page 17

<b>15 November 2023</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>• Budget</li> </ul>
<b>13 March 2024</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthwatch</li> </ul>
<b>15 May 2024</b>	

- Community Chest (Blyth)
- Tourism

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

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Updates
1.	15.11.2023	<b>Petition seeking the continuation of staffing and activities in Hirst Park once grant funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund ceases.</b>	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> that members considered the report and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A great deal of good work had taken place to rejuvenate Hirst Parks thanks to investment in the Hirst Park Revival project by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Northumberland County Council, Ashington Town Council, Ashington Leisure Partnerships, and others.</li> <li>ii. The lifetime of the project had been extended and was planned to run until the end of March 2024.</li> <li>iii. Staff employed by the Hirst Park Revival Project were employed locally, remaining professionally linked to Hirst Park and the local community.</li> <li>iv. NCC and partner organisations would 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 was a</li> </ul>	

			key part of the legacy of the project and supported achievements of the parks “Green Flag” status.	
2.	10.01.24	<b>Request for a Controlled Pedestrian Crossing on Newbiggin Road, Ashington</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that members considered the report and recommended:  (i) they support the actions proposed; (ii) the design process be started alongside the survey	
3.				
4.				
5.				

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