

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held at County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Monday, 14 November 2022 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

J Beynon (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

L Darwin	R Dodd
L Dunn	J Foster
V Jones	M Murphy
G Sanderson	D Towns
R Wearmouth	

OFFICERS

A Ali	Planning Officer
M Bulman	Solicitor
V Flint	Homelessness and Housing Options Manager
I Hewitt	Rural Business Growth Programme Manager
M King	Highways Delivery Area Manager
L Little	Senior Democratic Services Officer
J Murphy	South East DM Area Manager
E Sinnamon	Development Service Manager
R Soulsby Stewart	Planning Officer Strategic Housing Manager

Around 52 members of the press and public were present.

57 PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT PLANNING MEETINGS

J Foster, Vice-Chair Planning (in the Chair) advised those present of the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

58 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dickinson.

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59 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday 10 October 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

60 **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Murphy advised that as she was a Board Member of Advance Homes she would withdraw from the meeting for application 21/02551/FUL.

Councillor Murphy was speaking as the Ward Member on application 21/03841/FUL and would take no further part on that application.

Councillor Jones was speaking as the Ward Councillor on application 22/02904/FUL and would take no further part on that application.

61 **DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The report requested the Committee to decide the planning applications attached to the report using the powers delegated to it. Members were reminded of the principles which should govern their consideration of the applications, the procedure for handling representations, the requirement of conditions and the need for justifiable reasons for the granting of permission or refusal of planning applications.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

62 **21/03841/FUL**

**Erection of covered terrace to provide additional seating area and associated car parking updates
Land West Of Paddock Hall, North Choppington, Northumberland**

A Ali, Planning Officer provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation.

Councillor Murphy addressed the Committee speaking as the local Ward Councillor in support of the application. Her comments included the following:-

- The Choppington Ward in which the business sat was a few small villages and some outlying farms and cottages and along with neighbouring Stakeford sat alongside and in between larger towns which seemed to attract funding for which they were not eligible. They were the only Wards in Northumberland with no cycleways; not eligible for Borderlands funding; did not attract tourist funding and were not on the map for the reinvestment in rail travel in the South East of the County. The child poverty level in the Ward was 29.1% and the MP for the area recently produced a report on routes out of poverty for children and families in the area. Of the 15

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recommendations made, 4 of them were linked to the importance and role of local businesses in developing the necessary economic infrastructure to enable residents to thrive; and 4 referenced community wealth, building apprenticeships, part time and flexible working being available in local communities. Tea in the Paddock was one of those essential businesses without which Choppington would be even more impoverished.

- The importance of tourism as a future benefit to the area was highlighted and the need for businesses such as this to meet the needs of those visitors. The area had a beautiful river, riverside walks, stunning woods and could have great links to the rest of the County if they had the necessary infrastructure. These issues had been raised with the Leader and she would keep fighting for them.
- The Officer's report suggested that the exception for approving this application on the grounds of tourism could not be met as there was currently no tourist businesses. That was a circular argument and a real blow to any business wanting to develop tourism in Choppington.
- To develop and encourage tourism there was a need to develop, nurture and encourage the businesses which would make tourists want to come and this was the kind of business which was needed to kick start that process. Without the courage of local business owners, who were prepared to take the financial risks and cope with the worry that went with putting your family finances on the line then she might as well forget about her long term vision for Choppington Woods as a tourist destination. She would love to see NCC encourage tourism in non- traditional tourist areas rather than write them off as non-tourist areas.
- The applicant's agent was here to speak to speak on the technical aspects of the report which they disagreed with, however she was here to present what the business meant to that community. Throughout the report it referred to a building, which gave a picture of bricks and mortar, however it was a simple wooden pergola, a platform for tables and chairs and laid on what was previously a car park. It was in keeping with a farm with stables, looks quirky, fun, rustic and welcoming.
- The petition had been started on a Thursday afternoon and had almost 4,000 signatures by Monday morning and the application had received 185 letters of support. It was a popular business which met an essential community need; was the beginning of tourism infrastructure which could lift a whole community towards a better economy and the County Council was placing significant obstacles in its way.
- Members were here as elected representatives, to represent the interests of their residents and to meet the needs of their communities and whilst she respected planning laws and officers and appreciated the challenges facing them in assessing applications, on this occasion felt that they had got it wrong. It was a sledgehammer to crack a nut.
- If Members were considering supporting the Officer's recommendation then she asked that the application be deferred for a site visit to be undertaken so Members could see the structure being referred to and the almost minimal impact it had on the landscape.

J Nugent, agent on behalf of the applicant spoke in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- Para. 2.4 of the report stated the 2017 planning permission for the café

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was not ancillary to the equestrian centre and the planning permission was a standalone consent. This had been discussed and agreed with the Planning Manager which they confirmed by email on 22 September

- It was understood the Officer had not carried out a site visit in the 12 months the application had been with the Planning Dept. Their assessment of the application was therefore considered as desktop as no site visit to observe the details of the site had been completed.
- Following the publication of the Committee Report an online petition was set up to support the application. This currently had 3,500 signatures and in addition to the 185 letters of support on Public Access and signatures from the support book at the café the total was over 4,000.
- The principle of development had been established by the existing café. The extended seating area used the same materials as the existing café premises, and the seating area would infill the current L-shape creating a square.
- The assessment of the development was considered incorrect in Para.7.7 as this related to the café being ancillary to the equestrian centre and referred to proposed diversification. These were errors as stated earlier and were not considered relevant in this instance.
- The Officer stated the building had been extended in the past, however this was not supported by evidence and was considered incorrect.
- The development accorded with the Local Plan STP 7 and 8, and Paragraph 149 of the NPPF. Paragraph 149g allowed the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land. Spatially the site was previously developed land by the existing hardstanding and the development would infill the L-shape on the existing hardstanding.
- The site included the equestrian facility and stables, the car park and café, and the dwelling. The pergola and seating area were not observed from the East, South, or West due to the screening by existing buildings at the wider site. The pergola and seating area were only observed from the North. Views from the public highway were considered limited. Where views were afforded, the development was a lower elevation from the host building and materials matched the existing building. The development assimilates with the host building.
- A Bistro was defined in dictionaries as a small informal restaurant, and this reflected the character of Tea in the Paddock. A license to serve alcohol did not change the use of a business to a drinking establishment and did not change the primary use of a premises as it remained ancillary.
- The Officer considered the use of the site to have evolved, however there was no supporting evidence for that statement. The café served an extensive food menu including breakfast, lunch, dinner. The receipts for the business show wet sales as teas, coffee, soft drinks, and food as the prime sales.
- The assessment of this application was understood to have been completed without a site visit and the Officer had afforded weight throughout the report to the café being ancillary to the equestrian centre and this had been confirmed by the Planning Manager to be incorrect. No evidence had been provided to support the statements relating to the assumed evolved uses at the café. The primary sales at the business remained hot and cold non-alcoholic drinks, and food served throughout the day.

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- The development accorded with local and national Green Belt policies by infill on previously developed land and Members were asked to support the application.

L Sinnamon, Head of Development Manager advised that in respect of the Green Belt, on balance Officers felt that the development was inappropriate as the extension would have an urbanising effect and would affect the openness of the Green Belt. It was a matter for Members to consider if they had views on the openness and decide on balance on any harm. In relation to the open countryside, Policy STP1 in the Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) directed development within the settlement boundary and this was outside. Members could consider if the development met the exception Policy ECN13 of the NLP in that it would create job opportunities and create growth. She further advised that this application was able to be evaluated as a desk top exercise in that it was against Green Belt policy and in the open countryside and that visits to a site were not necessary for all applications with the report and information, including photographs, in the presentation sufficient for Members to make a decision.

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

- In line with Policy ECN13, Members could consider whether the application met rural employment needs or if it provided employment opportunities. Officers had no issue with the materials to be used they were just applying Green Belt and Open Countryside Policies.
- If Members were minded to approve the application then it could be delegated to the Director of Planning and Chair to agree to conditions to be attached to any permission.
- There were two tests in relation to paragraph 149g of the NPPF, the first being about previous development and the second not causing harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Officers considered that the application would impact on the openness of the Green Belt, however it was for Members to decide.
- The number of employees or time the business had been in operation was not known, however it was well established and operated 7 days per week and therefore it would be assumed that it had a number of employees.
- The application was for a stand-alone business and its use was not ancillary to the equestrian centre. The application was for the erection of the extension to the covered terrace and Members needed to focus on how they assessed that extension as being in the open countryside.

Councillor Sanderson left the meeting after the first question was asked.

Councillor Wearmouth proposed approval of the application as it met with the exception of paragraph 149g of the NPPF and did not impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and accorded with Policies ECN13 and STP1 in that it would generate employment opportunities and would provide a positive improvement to the environment with conditions to be attached delegated to the Director of Planning and Chair to agree. This was seconded by Councillor Dodd.

Members stated that whilst they recognised that Officers were technically correct in their assessment of the application, they considered that on balance the

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extension would not be detrimental to the local area or openness of the Green Belt, the business was vital to the area, promoted economic growth and could in time become a destination place to draw in tourists to the area.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application for the reasons as outlined above and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** application as it met with the exception of paragraph 149g of the NPPF and did not impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and accorded with Policies ECN13 and STP1 in that it would generate employment opportunities and would provide a positive improvement to the environment with conditions to be attached delegated to the Director of Planning and Chair to agree.

Councillor Murphy left the Chamber at this point.

63

21/02551/FUL

Full planning application for the construction of 75 dwellings with associated access and landscaping

Land At Hadston Industrial Estate, Hadston, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 9YG

Councillor Wearmouth advised that although he had previously been on the Board of Advance Northumberland and whilst he was aware of the application he had no financial interest, he had an open mind on the application and would take part in the decision.

J Murphy, Planning Area Manager provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. Updates were provided as follows:-

- The report stated that 17% affordable housing was to be provided however this had now been reduced to 10% in line with the NLP and therefore 8 units would be provided. This had been confirmed as acceptable with the Affordable Housing Officer.
- Condition 23 – remove “brought into use” and replace with “occupied”
- Recommendation – remove “towards” from the end of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision: £99,000

A statement from Councillor Dickinson, Ward Member, was read out by the Senior Democratic Services Officer and included the following:-

- His concern regarding the suitability of the site and requested that a site visit be undertaken.
- The site was a working industrial estate complete with recycling centre that often produced fumes.
- The site had a number of garages that were extremely busy and a manufacturing site that was a UK wide supplier and which employed a lot of local people. The factories and garages operated from early until late which was the nature of such a site. The noise, fumes and traffic would be problematic not only during construction but for the people living on the housing estate thereafter.

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- There were also a collection of allotments situated to the rear of the site which were all taken, well used and had the smells, fumes and activity anyone would expect of an allotment site.
- It was important that Members saw the location, the site operations and the surroundings prior to any decision being made.

N. Crowley addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Her comments included the following:-

- The applicant was seeking approval for 75 dwellings of mixed type on a site which was within the settlement boundary and was well connected to local services.
- The principle of development on the site was acceptable.
- The mix of house types to be provided would help to meet local needs.
- 8 Affordable units would be provided in line with policy requirements with a mix of shared ownership and discounted market value units including bungalows, 2 and 3 bedroomed properties.
- The development would include open spaces, play provision and planting would be undertaken.
- The S106 agreement would secure contributions to off-site open space including maintenance for 5 years; affordable housing; SEND provision; coastal mitigation and healthcare.
- Whilst the site was close to industrial uses it had been carefully designed to mitigate against any disturbance.
- An additional noise survey had been carried out as requested by Public Protection, and they had no objection to the application.
- The machinery at the recycling plant whilst large was only used a couple of times per year.
- The development would boost the housing supply and was appropriate to local needs and Members were asked to support the application.

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

- Public Protection had advised of concerns regarding noise from the industrial site, however additional information had been provided on measures to mitigate this and they had advised that their concerns had been addressed.
- Highways concerns had also been overcome.
- The land was white land, it was within the settlement boundary but not allocated and was open to development. Applications would still need to accord with other policies in the NLP.
- The land had a history as employment land in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan but it had been deemed to be surplus to requirements within the NLP and was recommended for de-allocation. The land was still available for development, but this could be either for employment or housing purposes and any application would need to consider the technical issues.

Councillor Towns proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application in line with the Officer's report and as amended above, which was seconded by Councillor Dodd.

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Some concern was expressed by Members on the proximity of the industrial site and potential for complaints from residents in the future, however they recognised that it was for the applicant to provide the appropriate mitigation and for potential residents to be aware of the nearby industrial uses.

A vote was taken to approve the application as follows: FOR 7; AGAINST 0; ABSTAIN 1.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report and amended above and the finalisation of the S106 containing the following:

- Off site open space contribution of £47,53.98 (including 5 years; maintenance)
- 10% on site affordable housing provision;
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision of £99,000
- Coastal Mitigation of £617 x 75 dwellings = £46,125.00
- Healthcare financial contribution of £36,900

Councillor Murphy returned to the Chamber.

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22/02504/FUL

Change of use from garden room (C3 Use) to nail and beauty treatment room (Sui Generis) (retrospective)

16 Druridge Avenue, Hadston, Northumberland, NE65 9SJ

J Murphy, Planning Area Manager introduced the report to the Committee with the aid of a power point presentation.

In relation to parking, it was stated that the applicant's intention was to request customers to park around the corner from the property and to eventually block pave the front drive to provide additional parking but this could not be conditioned. Monitoring of any complaints received about indiscriminate parking associated with the business would be undertaken and if necessary then discussions would be held with the applicant and possibly Highways.

Councillor Beynon proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application in line with the report, which was seconded by Councillor Darwin.

Concern was expressed regarding the potential for car parking issues in the future should any other residents decide to operate businesses from their properties and the possible expansion of this business. Members were reminded that any applications needed to be ancillary to it being a residential property and this application was very small scale. A point was put forward that should the business grow then they should look for alternative premises.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

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22/02904/FUL**Installation of concrete hardstandings and pathways to accommodate a horse walker****La Luna Farm, Mill Lane, Heugh, Northumberland, NE18 0PS**

R Soulsby, Planning Officer provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation.

H Horrocks addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- He was also speaking for a number of other concerned local residents within the locality of the application.
- The applicant currently only had temporary planning permission for a chalet, however this development, with the laying of concrete, seemed very permanent. It seemed presumptuous of the applicant that permanent status would be obtained for the chalet and thus the timing of this development seemed to be premature.
- The proposed development was outside the nearest curtilage, in the middle of fields which were within the Green Belt and within an area of high landscape value and as such any applicant needed to consider the impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Under planning law this was not just a case of whether it could be seen or blocks a view
- This development appeared to be very visible from Mill Lane and some local people believed this proposal would negatively impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- No clear argument had been put forward by the applicant in the planning documents on why the proposed development met planning regulations. In the recent Stamfordham Parish Council minutes the applicant had stated that the development was for business use only, however in the Council's technical submission it referred to recreational use. Previous planning applications made in relation to La Luna were made on the basis of the planning was for business use.
- The arguments put forward seemed to be confused and contradictory and the Committee needed to assess whether this development was just for the applicant's hobby activity and if so then any future applications associated with La Luna should also be assessed on that basis.
- The opinions of several horse owners, vets, the British Horse Society and leading equine companies had all confirmed that this equipment was not essential for owning and exercising a horse.
- This appeared to be a retrospective application as at least 7 cement lorries had gone up the lane to La Luna and concrete was being laid where this development was planned.
- He asked the Committee to take into consideration the history of retrospective planning matters related to this applicant and La Luna and that the applicant had shown a total disregard for the Council's planning policies.
- He requested that the Committee also assess the environmental impact of the development as he did not believe that a full independent review had been conducted that considered the proximity of the muck heap to a water

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source; impact on local wildlife including barn owls, newts and bats; and impact on the local spring.

- The applicant had stated at the Parish Council meeting that she was protecting Green Belt however it was believed that the Green Belt was being destroyed by this development.
- A petition with 72 signatures had shown local people were against this development and the application should be refused.

Councillor Jones, the local Ward Councillor addressed the Committee. Her comments included the following:-

- The property was within the Ponteland West Ward and was within the Green Belt. She had been surprised that the application was recommended for approval considering the robust reasons put forward for the previous application to be refused.
- She considered this was creeping development and questioned what facilities were required essential to support a temporary home and residential caravan; why the fields had been designated as La Luna rather than the name of the farms.
- She questioned the reason for this latest application for a hardstanding and horse walker and how vital this was to a horse owner.
- She questioned if this was a retrospective application following the delivery of concrete to the site or whether that had been for a previous application.
- She highlighted that the report said that there had been 6 objections received yet there had been a petition signed by 72 people.
- She asked the Committee to refuse the application.

C. Ross addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- Thanked the Officers for recommending approval and for the succinct report which clearly identified what was being sought, why it was acceptable and why it should be approved.
- The applicant was seeking permission to replace an existing gravel surface with some concrete and to site a horse walker at the end of the existing buildings.
- This was not a retrospective application, with the concrete being used for the barn foundations.
- Much had been said about mission creep and the temporary chalet, but officers had focussed on the content of the application and clearly set out that a permanent planning permission was in place for the access road, the buildings and the arena.
- The Planning Inspector who had allowed the previous appeal also acknowledged that respondents to the appeal had concerns with the evolution of the site, however the Inspector confirmed that the appeal should be determined on the basis of what was before him. The same should be done for this application.
- In respect of the NLP, Officers had concluded that the principle of development was acceptable because the proposed development was proportionate and would provide improved facilities supporting the growth and expansion of the existing enterprise, which accorded with STP2 and ECN14 of the NLP.

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- The development was appropriate within the Green Belt and would not cause harm to the openness, accords with the NPPF, STP7 and STP8 of the NLP and the wider exemptions to Green Belt policy and the forms of development which were Green Belt compliant.
- There were no objections from Highways, the proposed development was well screened and not readily visible and there would be no ecological impact.
- The application should be assessed on its own merit taking account of the material considerations and conclusions outlined in the report.
- Asked that the application be approved in accordance with Officer recommendation.

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

- The Officer had visited the site and there was no evidence of the hardstanding or horse walker and the access to the site was gravel.
- The application for the chalet had been granted temporary approval at appeal and this would end in 2023. The applicant was in the process of submitting an application for the permanent siting of the chalet, however this would be part of a separate assessment. The barns and riding arena had permanent permissions.
- Members were reminded to focus on the application before them today and were directed to the tests in paragraph 149b of the NPPF and Policy ECN13 of the NLP.
- The provision of concrete in the countryside was not unusual and Members must decide if this was acceptable.

Councillor Towns proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth.

Members were concerned that this was mission creep and advised that they would not be happy if these were the tactics being used in relation to this or any other application coming forward and expressed concern that the history of the site could not be taken into account. The use of concrete on farms was highlighted and was not felt to significantly harm the openness of the Green Belt and policies did support the application.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application as follows: FOR 6; AGAINST 1; ABSTAIN 1.

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

Councillor Jones re-joined the meeting.

66 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

A short recess was held at this point to allow officers to join the meeting.

67 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted.

68 **PETITIONS**

(a) Receive New Petitions – Members were advised that an e-petition had received 129 signatures and qualified for a report to be prepared for this Committee. The petition asked the Council to take action to repair streets on the Green and Margaret Street in Widdrington and install a one-way system along Margaret Street to improve traffic flow and safety.

(b) Petitions Previously Received – There were no reports.

(c) Updates on Petitions previously received – In connection with the petition for a speed reduction on the Northern Bypass St Georges roundabout to Northgate roundabout, Morpeth, Highways had advised that the intention was to include a scheme for a reduced speed limit in the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) for 2023/24 which should hopefully provide some reassurance to residents. The informal crossing arrangements were not flagged as hazardous in the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit as it was standard practice to use this arrangement on all our roundabouts built in the last 1-0 years before Local Transport Note 1/20 was published. A Pedestrian Vehicle Survey had been carried out and the necessary criteria was not met for a light controlled crossing, however if the speed limit reduction was introduced then a signal controlled crossing could be considered in a future LTP programme. Improved signs and markings at the existing crossing points would also be considered as part of the overall speed reduction scheme.

69 **LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

M King, Highways Area Manager advised that in respect of reactive maintenance category 1 works were reported as up to date with routine inspections ongoing and on target. Reactive 3rd party requests remained higher than other areas and there had been a substantial reduction in the backlog of planned works. Gully maintenance was nearing completion on the strategic routes and all drainage works had been identified and this year's programme should be ready to go by the end of October 2022, this had been delayed due to staffing resources. The minor patching work had been completed and work for next year was being reviewed. Details of schemes would be circulated to Members in the update report after the meeting. Members were also advised that the Goosehill car park would be opening the following week.

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Difficulties were still being encountered in recruitment of suitable staff with further interviews being held that week. Final preparations for winter services were ongoing with grit bins being filled however teams were fully trained and routes had been confirmed.

The report of the Neighbourhood Services Manager would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

The following issues were raised by Members:-

- Damaged traffic island entering into Pegswood from Whorral Bank had not been repaired and residents were concerned that there would be a further accident as the temporary structure was not lit. The adoption of the road should be progressed with Barratts.
- Concerns regarding Ash die back within the County and in particular the effect this could have on the road and power networks. Members were advised that this issue had been raised with G Gavin and S Wardle following the previous meeting and a further reminder would be sent.
- Lane lines were required approaching roundabout at junction with A69 in Throckley. A further reminder would be provided to N Snowdon.
- Lights being covered by overgrown trees in Darras Hall Estate and possibility of working with the Town Council to get a team in to encourage residents to have these trimmed. Members were advised that letters could be sent giving advice however if there was an obstruction then these could be subject to legal notices requiring work to be undertaken.
- Consultation on Pegasus crossing in Ponteland and if found not to be required it was questioned whether this would negate the necessity for the speed to be reduced to 40 mph. It was thought this was part of a scheme for a shared surface for pedestrians/cyclists/horse but this would be checked with the Design Team.
- The fallen chevrons at the roundabout at Dobbies Garden Centre would be removed, but it was not known when a permanent repair would be carried out.
- Outage of street lights on Stakeford Lane would be looked at.
- Safety works which had been expected to start on the A196 the previous week had not materialised and this. This would be discussed with the construction team.

M King was thanked for his attendance at the meeting and his team for their work.

70 **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING**

The report provided information for Members on the service provision for residents who were homeless or at risk of homelessness in Northumberland and provided an outline of the key data and services available for people rough sleeping. J Stewart, Strategic Housing Manager and V Flint, Homelessness and Housing Options Manager were in attendance to provide an introduction to the report and answer questions from Members. In relation to concerns regarding begging and rough sleeping in Morpeth, Members were advised that work was ongoing with the Police in relation to begging in Morpeth and clarified that the people involved were not rough sleeping.

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

- The loss of private rented accommodation was a major contributor to the increase in homelessness within Northumberland with a number of properties being converted to holiday lets.
- The Government white paper placed a lot of responsibility of landlords to bring their properties up to decent homes standard and therefore an accreditation scheme had recently been launched by the Council which supported landlords to remain in the private sector rented market and it was hoped that this would help to retain good landlords.
- In relation to homelessness caused by domestic violence and removing perpetrators of domestic violence from a property and allowing the victims and children to remain in their homes it was stated that often the team were only made aware of the situation when crisis point had been reached and the victims had already left the property.

Members thanked the Officers for their attendance and presenting the interesting report which highlighted the prevention work undertaken and identified the priorities for tackling homelessness within the Council's draft Homelessness Strategy which would shortly be presented to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

71 **RURAL BUSINESS GROWTH SERVICE - PRESENTATION**

I Hewitt, Programme Manager for the Rural Business Growth Service was in attendance to provide a presentation on the service advising that there was £7.9 million of investment part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020, and the North of Tyne Combined Authority. This was Delivered by Advance Northumberland on behalf of Northumberland County Council and they worked with micro, small and medium sized enterprises located in the rural areas of Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside.

The aim of the service was to grow the economy in the North of the Tyne area creating growth and jobs by providing a single point of contact and access to one-to-one specialist advice, to help businesses secure funding and financial support. The rural definition used by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) included Ashington and Newbiggin but did not include Bedlington, Cramlington or Blyth.

Grants were available for eligible businesses with clear growth potential that required direct capital investment to grow, expand productive capacity or diversify into new markets or products and would create a minimum of one full time job. The type of business eligible were food and drink production; manufacturing; Knowledge intensive businesses; culture, creative and tourism (excluding retail and accommodation); energy products and services; and environmental products and services. There were currently 500 businesses registered and workshops promoting the service across the area were continuing to be undertaken.

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This particular funding stream would cease in 2023 but it would support the development of enterprise hubs or business parks if these were creating jobs. Different funding streams were also available for areas or organisations not able to access the Rural Growth Fund and assistance could be provided through Advance or J Rose's team to find support mechanisms should they be required.

Members thanked I Hewitt for his attendance at the meeting and for his interesting presentation.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

72 LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair advised that the work programme was for information and should Members wish to ask for any items to be added to the agenda, then they contact either himself or Democratic Services.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

73 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The meeting of the Local Area Council (Planning only) was scheduled for 4.00 pm on Monday 12 December 2022.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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