

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Tuesday, 17 January 2023 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

M Swinburn (Chair in the Chair)

MEMBERS

L Bowman
P Echilchelvan
D Ferguson
B Flux

S Lee
M Robinson
C Taylor
R Wilczek

MEMBERS ALSO PRESENT

G Sanderson

OFFICERS

H Bowers
M Carle
T Gribbin

Democratic Services Officer
Lead Highways Delivery Manager
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector J Caisley
Inspector P Davis

Inspector Neighbourhood Policing
Northern
Neighbourhood Policing (Bedlington
Area)

Press: 1

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chicken, Daley and Dunbar.

68. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council, held on 23 November 2022, as circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

69. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been submitted.

70. PETITIONS

This item was to:

- a) Receive any new petitions: No new petitions had been received.
- b) Consider reports on petitions previously received: None received.
- c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered: None received.

71. LOCAL POLICING UPDATE

Inspectors Jon Caisley and Paul Davis from the Cramlington, Seaton Valley and Bedlington Neighbourhood Policing Teams were in attendance and provided an update on policing issues and crime statistics within those areas.

Inspector John Caisley, Cramlington Neighbourhood Policing gave an overview and answered questions about policing and community safety matters in the Cramlington and Seaton Valley command areas which he was responsible for. The key points were:

- Thefts from unlocked vehicles
- Continued traffic patrols along the A19 corridor.
- Antisocial behaviour statistics included youth ASB with the police mainly concentrating on Manor Walks and Brockwell Centre and successfully identifying ring leaders.
- Crime levels had initially increased after Covid but had decreased to previous levels.
- The police relied on residents to make any reports. Any CCTV or door camera evidence was helpful

(Councillor Ezhilchelvan joined the meeting at 4.05 pm).

In response to questions/comments, the following information was provided:

- The main issue of vehicle thefts were opportunist thieves trying car door handles. Patrols would continue to try to establish suspects.
- Inspector Caisley to provide Tony Gribbin with email contacts.
- There had been an increase in crime in the previous year over the summer months, but figures had reduced in the winter. Certain locations in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Delaval had accounted for a great deal of ASB reporting.
- It was understood that local youth club groups had been well attended and previous years' figures be looked at before the groups had been established to consider whether they had a positive impact. The results would be feedback to Cramlington Town Council.
- There had been a rise in violent crime post Covid, but the reason was unknown.
- Motorcycle disorder was more prevalent during the spring/summer months and a number of forces had been canvassed to find out how they were tackling the issue to put together best tactics.
- In response to the comment regarding the 101 calls, Inspector Caisley explained that calls were risk assessed and a decision made on the response based on the call.

Inspector Paul Davis, Bedlington Neighbourhood Policing gave an overview and answered questions about policing in the Bedlington area:

- Anti-social behaviour figures were down from previous years.
- Partnership working had been carried out through education linking with St Benet Biscop schools and the fire service, running sessions on the danger of fires in wooded parks.
- GRIP areas in Bedlington identified with a high level of violence had dedicated foot patrols.
- CCTV in Bedlington Station was run by AssetWatch which could be linked in with Social Services.
- A county wide initiative run jointly with the Council was due to start soon on safety in public places.

In response to questions/comments, the following information was provided:

- Partnership working with the Academy was also considered. Some youths came from outside of the town from other areas. If individuals were identified, then intervention could take place.
- Foot patrols covered different areas and officers would be briefed beforehand if there were any problems. It was important that problem areas were reported.
- Regarding the seizure of motorbikes - conditions had to be satisfied before a vehicle could be seized under Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act.
- A lot of police time had been taken over with quarrels and there was concern over the wellbeing of people across the whole of Northumberland area. Responses to mental health issues were referred appropriately.

- Electric scooters had been used on the road and seized as they were not insured.
- With reference to parents dropping off and picking up at schools - work needed to be prioritised and sometimes certain issues had to take a back seat. Letters would be sent out over the term time to encourage parents to park more responsibly.
- The police received regular information regarding speeding issues and would monitor.

The Inspectors were thanked for attending the meeting.

72. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Mick Carle, Neighbourhood Services Manager, provided the following information:

- All Highways Inspectors and maintenance crews continued to work inspecting, fixing carriageway defects, making repairs, and making safe category one defects across the South East area.
- Gully emptier was fully deployed dealing with reported issues and cyclic maintenance.

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

- A192 Red Lion, Bedlington
- Seghill First School

Drainage Improvements:

The area teams were continuously looking and programming future planned works both patching and drainage improvements.

- Underpass at Cramlington

LTP - Carriageway Resurfacing

LTP Carriageway Resurfacing schemes were being programmed and all affected members would be notified in advance.

Winter Maintenance

Since the cold snap during the early to midpart of December winter had quietened down. There was still have half of the Winter season ahead. These were often the harshest few months. They were currently working with suppliers to carry out a mid-season salt restock of 10,000 Tonnes. This restock with the existing 6000 Tonne strategic store at Powburn should give the service more than sufficient levels to see it out till the end of the winter season.

During the last period of bad weather, over 11 days in December, the Winter Services Team had worked 20 hours during a 24 hour period, travelling over 41,420 miles of road network.

In response to members comments, Mr Carle responded as follows:-

- A dual pump system was being used for the underpass as one pump was damaged and the other broken. A new pump was being sourced from a local supplier as the current supplier had let them down.
- The team was thanked for the gritting of roads in Bedlington, and a small stockpile of salt was requested for the Hartlands estate where many residents were elderly. Mr Carle to pass on information to Councillor Taylor.
- Details of sinkages at Eldson Drive and Denholm Drive would be passed on to the Maintenance Engineer.
- White lines on roads were carried out in spring. Details to be passed to Mr Carle.
- The chevron signs for the Free Wood in Bedlington would be chased up with Traffic Management.
- More investment was being looked at to clear gullies at schools.
- Speed issues on the B1331 would be passed to Integrated Transport.
- A make-do repair would be carried out to some potholes and a repair done within 14-28 days.
- Streetworks was responsible for permits and Development Control decided when the work was to be carried out.

Tony Gribbin, Local Services Area Manager provided the following information:

Refuse crews had worked across the entire Christmas period, including bank holiday Tuesday and their efforts had been recognised and praised.

Waste Service

- Refuse collection service worked well over the Christmas period.
 - Very few resident complaints of reports of missed bins.
 - Incorrect collection dates had been published in the Northumberland News publication and staff worked with Comms and staff from other parts of the organisation to leaflet drop to affected households.
 - Refuse staff collected approximately 700 tonnes of residual waste between Christmas and New Year, about 15% increase on the previous collection.
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- **Grounds Maintenance**
 - Currently in the winter works programme
 - Progress had been impacted by teams deployed to winter gritting services in support of highways and deployment to the leaflet drop.

- Please submit any work requests regarding hedges and shrubs as soon as possible.
- Leaf clearance close to being completed. Any areas that require further leaf clearance to contact the team.
- The recruitment process of seasonal staff would start soon.

Street Cleansing

- Business as usual

Glass Trial Update

- The trial had continued as per last update in November and was well received.

Food Trial Update

- The weekly trial started w/c 21 November for 10 months.
- There were approximately 4,800 properties in the trial areas.
- The trial was being operated from the Morpeth depot to the following areas Morpeth, (Loansdean and Lancaster Park), Bedlington, Pegswood, Hebron, Longhirst and Ulgham.
- A report on the findings of the trial would be provided for members at the end of the trial period.

Bereavement Services

- No current issues and staff were coping with current service demand.

In response to members' questions, Mr Gribbin responded as follows:

- Parking on grass verges would be looked in to
- There was no spare capacity in the waste service in the south east and a review was ongoing due to the current housing developments across the LAC area and areas in the south east.
- Mr Gribbin had received the email regarding the ivy on the pavilion at Alexandra Park and inspected the building. He had passed this to NCC Assets Team as it was their responsibility.
- In relation to waterlogged area adjacent to Ann Welfare / Cramlington FC pitches, Mr Gribbin had met with Adrian Farer (CJFC) and walked the area that was waterlogged. This had been raised this with colleagues in Countryside. However, some areas waterlogged were / are areas that NCC were not responsible for however, he would endeavour to identify what, if anything, could be done.

The Chair conveyed his thanks to Mr Gribbin and his team, this was echoed by Members.

73. BUDGET 2023-24 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Councillor Sanderson, Leader provided information on the State of the County reflecting on the work the Council were undertaking based on the Council's priorities of providing value for money, tackling inequalities and delivering growth and jobs. A copy of the presentation would be filed with the signed minutes of the meeting and uploaded to the Committee papers on the Council's website.

He firstly informed members of the news of British Volt and the Devolution Deal outcome for the North East.

The Council continued to invest in education and skills with a number of capital projects coming forward including schools within the Astley and Berwick Partnership, the Port of Blyth; Energy Central Learning Hub in Blyth; Seghill Construction Training Centre and the new Northumberland College.

Following consultation with residents a number of park commemoration schemes had been announced to form a countywide celebration of the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II. Information on what the Council was doing to help address inequalities in health and education, with the belief that all children should be offered the same opportunity in life to flourish, and the financial support being offered to those people most in need were outlined. The response by residents and communities to an appeal for donations to support Ukrainian nationals had been tremendous. The Council's current Capital Programme included over £806m investment in 2022-2026 to ensure that the infrastructure and facilities were provided to drive future growth and job creation within the County along with further investments through the Borderlands Partnership and North of Tyne Combined Authority.

The commitment to maintain frontline services had remained with increased funding for highway maintenance in 2022-23, however the recent bad weather had impacted on the number of defects on the road network being reported. The Council had been praised for its work in supporting people requiring care packages after being discharged from hospital and was grateful for staff who provided this service. There was always a need to attract more care workers and travel allowances had been increased to try to encourage more people into this sector.

A new Chief Executive was to start at the Council on 8 February 2023 and recruitment was also underway for a new Executive Team. The Corporate Plan was to be refreshed to drive improvements in all services and a Strategic Change Programme developed to deliver the things that were most important to residents in a cost-effective way. It was hoped that compulsory redundancies could be avoided, but this could not be guaranteed. The recently announced Government settlement had been better than expected and new legislation would give the Council more power to address issues related to second or vacant homes and the pressure this put on some communities. There would still be inflationary pressures on the budget going

forward in relation to pay and other factors. Details of the proposed budget would be released at the beginning of February and all Members would be invited to the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 February 2023.

In response to a comment in relation to Bedlington Memorial Schemes, the Leader advised that the schemes could not be installed in every place and tried to cover as many places in the county as possible.

(Councillor Taylor left the meeting at 5.50 pm).

Members welcomed the vocational training but questioned the increase in Council Tax.

The Leader explained that all future vacancies would have to be approved and go through a proper process before being agreed, this was to ensure services continued to be delivered. NCT (Northumberland Communities Together) would continue to deliver funding to those who needed it and a Council Tax Support Scheme.

In response to the memorial awards, the Leader stated that if a specific scheme was required to let him know.

Discussion took place on the indicators of deprivation and the use of local contractors to deliver certain services.

In response to the inclusion of high school children to free school meals, the Leader advised that this would need to be discussed with officers and suggested an email to be sent to him to be raised with the Director of Education.

With reference to British Volt, members were informed that the Blyth local MP had been contacted and would also be raised with the Prime Minister. Action would be taken to facilitate a large employer for the plant.

74. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.

75. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 21 February 2023.

CHAIR

DATE