

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at Hexham House, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NH on Tuesday, 10 January 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T Cessford
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

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

N Oliver
JR Riddle
A Scott
A Sharp
G Stewart
H Waddell

OTHER MEMBERS

G Sanderson

Leader

OFFICERS

A Fisher
D Hunt
R McCartney
N Turnbull

Construction Manager – Local
Services
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager
Infrastructure Manager
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

1 member of the public and 1 press.

90. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Tynedale Local Area Council held on 15 November 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

Ch.'s Initials.....

91. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

92. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

There were none to consider.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

i) **Wentworth Car Park & Hexham Alemouth Road Car Park, Hexham**

The following statement was read out by the Democratic Services Officer on behalf of Mari Stewart, the Lead Petitioner:

“My apologies for not attending the meeting in person due to work commitments.

The decision to keep 100 white / long stay bays seems to be an arbitrary number and my original points in the petition still stand.

There are currently 283 white / long stay bays in Wentworth. This will reduce to 100. There are 250 white/ long stay bays at the bunker site – this will give overall capacity of 350, 67 more than we currently have. On the basis that Travelodge guests will use some of the spaces at the bunker site (google advises they have 69 rooms) – the ‘overall net gain in long stay parking spaces’ mentioned on Page 27, Point 5 does not take into consideration the spaces that will be used by the Travelodge and is slightly misleading.

How was it decided that leaving 100 white / long stay bays would address the issues highlighted in the petition?

The white bays at Wentworth are used by a variety of people. Guests at Railway Hotel, Coach & Horses, County Hotel and The Beaumont (who have limited parking) all use Wentworth long stay – by making parking more difficult for their guests, there is a risk that independent local businesses will lose out as the Travelodge has ‘on site’ parking. We should be encouraging the independent businesses. Do you know how many of these businesses will be affected?

There are a number of local residents who live in the centre of Hexham without on or off street parking. Have you assessed how many? I assume as these households cross a number of wards and an accurate number is not known. These residents are not allowed residents permits.

Another impact which will not have been captured in the report of 2017 where these parking recommendations were highlighted, is the large number of flats being built in the centre of Hexham. While some have parking, most will only have one allocated space. We can safely assume that some will use the all day parking provision in Hexham.

The blue / medium stay bays at Wentworth usually have the most spaces available and the white bays at Wentworth are always full. Hexham as a town is holding more and more all day events and we should be encouraging visitors to spend more than 3 or 4 hours here.

The bunker site white / long stay bays have the opportunity to increase significantly the current demand for long stay parking in Hexham. But even with the decision to keep 100 white bays in Wentworth, it is keeping the likely number available to the public as is, just not as accessible – the walking route from the bunker site into the centre of Hexham is either up Hallstile Bank or through Wentworth. Hallstile Bank is not accessible for many and Wentworth Car Park itself is not an easy car park to navigate as a pedestrian.

I urge you to reconsider. As we approach Spring and Summer with more tourists coming to Hexham (who I assume we want to encourage to stay more than 3 or 4 hours!) we should keep Wentworth as is (with 283 white / long stay bays and seemingly enough blue / medium stay bays) and add signage for the Long Stay parking at the bunker site as you approach the railway bridge to encourage visitors and highlight to those who live locally to use the much needed spaces.

From the responses to my petition and my own view, you are not aligning to the Corporate Plan of:

How - "We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone"

Enjoying - "We want you to love where you live"

Connecting - "We want you to have access to the things you need"

The white / long stay bays are the highest in demand. You have the opportunity to give extra capacity but are choosing not to. Residents, businesses and workers alike will be negatively affected."

Robin McCartney, Infrastructure Manager, provided a summary of the report. Following the opening of the e-petition and concerns raised by County Councillors and other local stakeholders, there had been a review of the decision with approximately 100 long stay spaces being retained instead of all of the long-stay parking spaces in Wentworth car park being converted to medium stay.

He reported that car parks were provided by use by members of the public and they were not required to make provision for hotels and businesses within the town centre. He also made reference to the concept utilised by most towns and cities where the highest tariffs were paid in the centres for short stay

parking with lower rates and longer stay car parks on the periphery to encourage use of car parks located further away.

It was hoped that the right balance had been achieved for the location of long and medium stay car parks at Wentworth Road with the provision of an additional 250 spaces in the new car park at Alemouth Road. It was believed this would meet the demand forecast in the 2017 parking study, required by 2031.

Several of the members welcomed the review of the initial decision and the extra car parking provision in the town. The following comments were made:

- Parking provision needed to balance the needs of tourists and residents.
- The residents parking permit scheme had ended in 2014 with the introduction of free car parking. The Town Council had enquired whether it would be possible for residents parking permits to be reintroduced with the administration of the scheme being transferred to them.
- An extra 250 spaces with a 72-hour maximum parking limit would be beneficial.
- Well-lit walking routes from the Alemouth Road car park were available via Aldi or Lidl.
- The Alemouth Road car park would likely be preferred for visitors to flats at the Wool House, Hexham General Hospital etc.
- The reasoning for retaining 100 spaces at Wentworth Road car park was queried as this could be too few.
- The Alemouth Road car park was in close proximity to a number of residential areas although some residents may have to walk slightly further.
- The Travelodge would be of benefit to the town.
- Alemouth Road car park had opened in November 2022 and was not being used to its capacity as yet.
- Whilst car parking was free to the motorist, it was not free for the taxpayer as there were business rates and maintenance costs.
- Hexham needed to be a business friendly centre able to be used by all including visitors and employees. A 4-hour parking limit made this difficult for some users with a number of businesses relocating elsewhere. Permit parking had been beneficial, and its return would be welcomed.

The following information was provided in response to comments and questions:

- The conversion from long stay to medium stay parking at Wentworth had not yet been implemented and therefore motorists who needed to park for longer periods had not yet transferred to the new Alemouth Road car park.
- Implementation of a residents parking permit scheme administered by a town council would set a precedent and be anomalous with other residents parking schemes elsewhere in the county. Discussions would continue.
- The correct balance was needed between short, medium and long stay car parking spaces. Short and medium stay parking provided transitional spaces for visitors.

- 4-hour parking had been implemented in other towns and worked well.
- The administration had committed £10 million to improve town centre car parking across the county.
- Use of the car parks would be reviewed in time to assess whether the correct balance of short-medium and long stay parking had been implemented.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted including the implementation of the decision report 'Introduction of and Amendments to Off-Street Car Parks, Hexham' attached as Appendix A to the report.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none to consider.

93. BUDGET 2023-24 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Councillor Sanderson, Leader of the Council gave a presentation to outline the approach being taken to set the budget for the next financial year with focus on 3 key priorities, namely value for money services, tackling inequalities and delivering growth and jobs. The detail regarding initiatives and schemes would be presented at a meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee which all members would be invited to. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the signed minutes.)

The presentation highlighted:

- Commemoration schemes at country parks across the county for quiet reflection of the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II.
- A summary of what the Council was doing to help address inequalities in health, education and poverty with details of hardship and financial support available including support to refugees from Ukraine, Syrian and Afghanistan.
- Allocation of over £806 million in the Capital Programme in 2022-2026 to drive future growth and job creation with further investment of £452 million through the Borderlands Partnership and additional funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority.
- Investment in Education and skills at a number of school and training establishments across the county to grow the skills needed by local employers and industries.
- Investment in sport and leisure facilities with new premises and improvements at others.
- Delivery of high quality, value for money services with Children's Services rated as 'Good' at its last inspection in January 2020 and an improvement in the number of schools judged Good or better by Ofsted, bringing results for the county above the national average.
- A commitment to maintain frontline services with increased funding for highways maintenance and grass-cutting.

- Continued support for vulnerable residents in the county including praise for the support available to those being discharged from hospital.
- The new Chief Executive was due to commence on 8 February 2023 and would be supported by a new Executive Team, the recruitment of which was in progress.
- A Strategic Change Programme had been developed to deliver the things that were most important to residents in a cost-effective way.
- The provisional settlement from the Government had been welcomed with more provided for Social Care and Education.
- New legislation would give the Council more power to address issues related to second or vacant homes to balance the needs of communities on the rights of property owners.
- It was hoped that compulsory redundancies would be avoided.
- Details of the proposed budget would be released at the beginning of February with an invitation for all Members to attend meetings of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

- The Council and other partners had signed the Tackling Inequalities Plan with £1 million investment.
- Inequalities would also be assisted with the creation of jobs and therefore there was significant investment in skills and training to provide opportunities for residents.
- A commission had been formed to address jobs in rural areas with a report and recommendations due to be considered by Cabinet on 14 February. It was hoped that a conference be organised with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, farmers and other local employers.
- Free parking was important to residents, particularly those who lived in rural areas and were reliant on their own transport. Funds were also to be utilised to ensure that bus services operated in the right places at the right time and could connect to other public transport including the Northumberland Line project which was progressing.
- An opportunity had been given to all employees to be considered for voluntary redundancy. The details were confidential. It was hoped that compulsory redundancies would be avoided but could not be guaranteed.
- Clarification of any new skills training provision in the West area would be obtained outside of the meeting.
- The Joint Transport Committee had been allocated £163 million across the North of Tyne Combined Authority Area.
- Projects funded in the West in recent years included the Queen Elizabeth Hugh School in Hexham and funding for the Hexham Heritage Action Zone.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sanderson for his presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

94. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

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

Technical Services:

- Highway inspections were up to date and carried out in accordance with the Council's statutory duty. At 30 November 2022, 5,997 actionable defects had been recorded on footways and carriageways with 96.4% repairs carried out in line with the Council's policy.
- Following recent frosts, parts of the network were starting to deteriorate with road surfaces breaking up in some areas. Area inspectors were concentrating on the main arterial routes (A68, A695, A696). Additional resources would be brought in if required.
- From 8-19 December a total of 4,212 hours had been worked by 112 members of staff rotating across 3 shifts covering a 20-hour period every day. 5,679 tonnes of salt had been spread over 41,120 miles of network by 35 gritters
- Grit bins and grit heaps were replenished when required throughout the winter period with an additional 14,000 tonnes of salt on order.
- Requests regarding winter services during snow and ice events should be directed through the customer contact number 0345 600 6400. These were transferred to the Fire and Rescue Control Room when made out of hours who would contact the relevant members of staff on duty.
- LTP projects were expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.
- A summary of the safety schemes scheduled to be carried out in January was provided if the weather permitted.

Comments made by members included:

- The ground was saturated given recent wet weather and it was important that gulleys and drains were cleared of leaves and other detritus to remove water from the road network.
- The salt did not work at temperatures of -12c which had been experienced during the extremely cold weather in December. It was therefore essential that motorists drove appropriately according to the road and weather conditions at the time.
- Staff were thanked for their swift response to issues reported, particularly during the poor weather.
- Areas to be investigated / followed up included
 - Ditching required to remove surface water on the A68 Low Fotherley to Scales Cross.
 - Surface water from land at the rear of Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham.

Neighbourhood Services:

- Staff were thanked for the work carried out during the year and the recent festive period.
- The refuse collection service had worked well over the festive period with a 20% increase of normal tonnages, in part due to extra days rubbish.
- Publication of an incorrect collection date in Northumberland News had been rectified with a leaflet drop to affected households and a targeted media campaign. There had been a 95% presentation of bins on all days which suggested the communication campaign had been successful.
- The winter grounds maintenance programme continued but had been impacted by the aforementioned leaflet drop and deployment to winter gritting. Any areas of overgrown hedges/shrubs should be reported as soon as possible for inclusion in the schedule. Recruitment of seasonal summer staff would commence in the near future.
- The kerbside glass collection trial would be moving to a 6-week collection frequency from 20 January to assess whether the level of service would meet the needs of residents, deliver savings and provide good value for money. The collection could revert back to 4-week frequency if necessary.
- A 10-month weekly kerbside food waste collection trial had commenced on 10 November 2022. Approximately 4,800 properties were in the trial in areas of Morpeth, Bedlington, Pegswood, Hebron, Longirst and Ulgham.
- It was hoped that parts to enable the street sweeper to be fixed would be received soon to enable it to resume cleaning of routes.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that it was more cost effective to undertake a leaflet drop rather than place stickers on bins to correct the refuse collection date misprint.

The Chair and Councillors expressed their gratitude to the officers and staff for the excellent service during difficult and busy periods. Reference was also made to a compliment received from a member of the public for the professional service carried out by refuse staff.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

95. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. (A copy is enclosed with the minutes.)

Members were invited to email any requests to the Chair and / or Democratic Services Officer between meetings.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

96. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____