

**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, 14 March 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor T Cessford  
(Chair, in the Chair)

**MEMBERS**

A Dale	A Scott
SH Fairless-Aitken (112 - 116)	A Sharp
D Kennedy (112 - 116)	G Stewart
N Morphet	H Waddell

**OTHER MEMBERS**

G Sanderson	Leader
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**OFFICERS**

A Fisher	Construction Manager – Local Services
D Hunt	Neighbourhood Services Area Manager
S McMillan	Interim Service Director Regeneration
N Snowdon	Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement)
N Turnbull	Democratic Services Officer

**ALSO PRESENT**

2 members of the public and 1 press.

**108. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Horncastle, Hutchinson, Oliver and Riddle.

Ch.'s Initials.....

## 109. MINUTES

Minute No. 104

22/00414/FUL

Retrospective permission change to holiday let with associated external changes including rear extension, creation of patio area to front and erection of stone wall

The Parlour, The Green, Acomb NE46 4PJ

It was confirmed that the resolution should read:

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

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meetings of the Tynedale Local Area Council, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the above amendment:

- a) 10 January 2023
- b) 14 February 2023

## LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

### 110. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

### 111. 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. Parts of the network had deteriorated following recent winter weather. Inspections of the main arterial routes were being prioritised with extra resources allocated to ensure that KPIs were met. The number of defects had reduced with 2,760 actionable defects recorded during December and January and 96.38% of defects repaired in line with policy.
- The winter services season would be ending within the next few weeks. Roads had been kept open despite a few challenging days. Salt supplies had been restocked with grit bins and heaps replenished as necessary. Requests regarding winter services during snow and ice events should be directed through the customer contact number 0345 600 6400. Out of hours calls were transferred to the Fire and Rescue Control Room who contacted staff on duty.

- LTP schemes were expected to be completed before the financial year end, weather permitting.

In response to a question, he confirmed that blocked gulleys on the A68 had been forwarded to the Highways Maintenance Senior Team Leader and would be dealt with, along with others, as soon as practicable.

### **Neighbourhood Services:**

- Except for a period of ice and snow in January when Neighbourhood Services staff assisted with winter services operations, there had been some relatively mild winter weather and progress had been made on winter cutting back of trees and hedges.
- Staff were currently working shorter winter hours which would increase at the beginning of April.
- Any issues or outstanding work should be reported to the Neighbourhood Services Area Manager.
- Preparations for the upcoming grass cutting season were being finalised with servicing of equipment and recruitment of seasonal grounds maintenance positions. Depending on ground conditions, grass cutting was expected to commence within the next 2 weeks.
- The HGV Sweeper had been repaired and had been in working again for the past 6 weeks. Overtime being used to catch up on the programme and backlog of reported issues. The machine was not in operation during periods of freezing weather as the brushes were not effective if the vegetation was frozen to the ground.
- Weather related difficulties had resulted in problems with waste collection services during week commencing 16 January. However, alerts had been issued and shared with affected Councillors. Collections had been caught up by the end of the week.
- Refuse collection rounds had been reviewed prior to use of two new vehicles. Some of the garden waste collections on the eastern boundary would now be serviced from the Morpeth depot which would alleviate pressure on the garden waste service and provide some additional capacity on residual waste routes.
- The garden waste collection service had recommenced on 6 March and continued to be popular.

In answer to a question, he reported that a footpath sweeper was funded by Hexham Town Council and worked exclusively in the town, although there were others across the county.

Both teams were thanked for their prompt response to issues raised.

**RESOLVED** that the updates be noted.

## 112. PETITIONS

This item was to:

### a) Receive any new petitions:

It was reported that the following e-petition had been opened on the Council's website on 14 February 2023:

Traffic Calming Measures – Woodlands, Hexham

“The speed drops from 30 to 20 in front of this row of houses but is rarely adhered to, leading to a lot of near misses for people entering or exiting Dene Street and Monk's Terrace. Further traffic calming measures are required, ideally a speed camera but rumble strips or other methods which encourage motorists to slow down would be welcomed by all road users who regularly use these junctions.”

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

#### i) Request to Impose a Speed Limit on a Section of the C234 Between Warden Bridge and Fourstones

Simon Robson, the Lead Petitioner, spoke as the Chair of Warden Parish Council. He highlighted the following key points. In response to numerous requests from local residents, the parish council had set up the petition for the introduction of a mandatory speed limit of 30mph on the half mile stretch of road between Quality Cottages and the Fourstones Paper Mill level crossing. He stated that although accident data was comparatively low, an unrestricted speed limit in the road was perceived to be dangerous for the following reasons:

- Numerous residential properties were located close to the road with blind accesses and a narrow footpath leading from the residents' car park to their front doors.
- The Paper Mill was located adjacent to what was effectively a chicane, multiple articulated lorries reversed in an out of the two accesses to the paper Mill on a regular basis. Employee car parks were located on both sides of the road.
- Numerous walkers and cyclists used the road. The section between the Paper Mill and Hardhaugh Cottages did not have any footpath.
- There was an advisory 30mph sign on the that stretch of road which acknowledged the preference and need for traffic to slow to 30mph. The most recent speed survey showed that average speeds of 42/43mph and 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds of approximately 51mph. Those speeds might be acceptable for an unrestricted speed limit but not for a road with an advisory 30mph.

The Parish Council were grateful that the request was being considered given the daily anxiety of local residents, particularly those with young children.

Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement), made reference to the proposed actions within the Local Transport Plan programme for 2023/24 which included investigation of a number of road safety improvements such as improved gateway features, additional warning signs, road markings and potential implementation of a 40mph speed limit if considered appropriate. He commented that there had been a significant reduction in the volume of traffic using the road according to speed surveys carried out in 2011 and 2022, which could in part be due to the impact of the Covid pandemic.

Several of the members expressed their support for the petition including Councillor Morphet, the local member. He commented that there were many sharp bends and hidden entrances and a 30mph speed limit would make the road safer for walkers. He was concerned about the speed of vehicles which ignored the advisory 30mph speed limit and suggested that this needed to be enforced. Comments from other members included:

- Speeds of 51mph were considered to be too fast for that stretch of road.
- The road ran parallel to the A69 and was used as a 'rat run'.
- The road was a key recreational route.
- Whether it would be appropriate for rumble strips to be installed.
- Clarification of the criteria for the implementation of a 30mph speed limit.

In response to the issues raised it was confirmed that:

- The policy for the introduction of a 30mph speed limit required a minimum of continuous frontage development of 600 metres of 30 or more houses, which was in line with national guidance issued by the Department of Transport. Implementation of a 40mph speed limit would be considered.
- The installation of rumble strips elsewhere had resulted in complaints regarding noise vibration.

Members were in favour of a 30mph speed limit given the bends in the road and requested that this be taken into consideration.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. A design brief be included within the 2023-24 Local Transport Plan programme to investigate potential road safety improvements on the C234 between Warden Bridge and Fourstones.

**c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:**

There were none to consider.

### 113. NE DEVOLUTION UPDATE AND REGIONAL CONSULTATION

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council and Sarah McMillan, Interim Service Director Regeneration, were in attendance to raise awareness of the consultation on the devolution deal for the North East. (A copy of the presentation was attached to the minutes).

The Leader explained that this was the culmination of 18 months of work. He believed that the deal should be progressed as the region would benefit from significant investment. All residents and business were invited to submit their views on the deal. A number of consultation events were taking place across the County involving Members, stakeholders, residents and businesses. Consultations were also ongoing across all the involved authorities in the North East which included Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Sarah McMillan, Interim Service Director Regeneration shared a presentation which highlighted the following:

- Devolution would see the transfer of power and authority from central government to local decision makers.
- The government was 'minded to' approve the deal which would see the formation of a new combined authority covering the seven local areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland and would be headed up by a Metro Mayor. The North East Combined Authority and North of Tyne Combined Authority would cease to operate.
- There would be no changes to the seven local authorities who would continue to provide the same services they did currently.
- The Metro mayor would be directly elected by residents of the Combined Authority's geographical area.
- The deal would bring significantly more power and money to the region than the two existing authorities have at the moment. There was potential for £4.2bn of investment in the region over 30 years across the following areas:
  - Transport
  - Investment Fund
  - Skills, Education and Inclusion
  - Housing, Land & Digital Infrastructure
  - Clean Energy & Net Zero
  - Rural Economy & Sustainability
  - Culture, Tourism and Place
  - Health & Public Service Reform
- A governance review had been undertaken by the 7 local authorities to explore whether a new combined authority for the region would be beneficial to the North East. It had concluded that the new combined authority would benefit economic growth and delivery of public services and unlock new funding and powers.

- The public consultation began on 26 January 2023 until 23 March 2023. Hard copies of the consultation document were available at key locations or on an online questionnaire could be completed.
- The feedback would be reviewed at the end of the consultation period with individual councils deciding whether or not to proceed. If all councils agreed, a summary of the consultation would be prepared, and once approved by Cabinets, submitted to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities. The Secretary would then decide if the statutory criteria had been met and whether the relevant authorities had been given the necessary consents, before making the statutory order to create the new mayoral combined authority. In May 2024 the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority would be formed and an election held to appoint a Metro Mayor.

Several members expressed their support for the North East devolution deal. Comments included:

- It was regrettable that devolution had not progressed at previous opportunities in the past. It was hoped that the deal would be supported by all authorities and that none withdrew.
- Greater Manchester and Tees Valley Combined Authorities were doing well.
- This deal would allow the North East to catch up with other regions.
- Northumberland had a smaller population than some of the other areas and it was hoped that this would not be the sole factor determining the allocation of funding.
- It was important that all organisations worked together for the best deal for residents.
- There would be a concern if the creation of the combined authority created an additional Council Tax precept.

The following comments were made in response to members questions:

- Northumberland would retain its fire and rescue service.
- Rurality had been identified as a priority for the new Combined Authority
- All local authorities retained a right of veto for proposed actions in their localities.
- The existing arrangements for the Police Crime Commissioners would remain due to boundary issues.
- Investment in jobs in neighbouring areas would benefit the residents of Northumberland. The priorities for Northumberland would be included.

The Leader was delighted with the support that had been expressed by members. He offered to meet with anyone if more information was required.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sanderson and the Interim Service Director Regeneration their presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be received.

## 114. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Acting Inspector Kate Benson to the meeting to give an overview and answer questions about policing and community safety matters in the East and West Tynedale command areas.

Acting Inspector Kate Benson explained that she had been acting up as the Neighbourhood Inspector for Tynedale since 9 January 2023 following Inspector Garry Neill's move to the Rural Crime Team. She continued to work with him closely due to the rural nature of the area. She made reference to the very sad death of Holly Newton who had been stabbed in January. She reassured members that Hexham was a safe place to live.

In the 3-month period since 1 December 2022, the following numbers of crimes had been recorded:

75 - Haltwhistle, 4,000 residents  
144 – Prudhoe, 10,000 residents  
149 – Hexham, 11,000 residents  
127 – Ponteland, 10,000 residents

The highest number of crimes had been recorded in January and related to missing individuals or those in crisis with mental health concerns – 200. Other categories included:

Road traffic collisions - 56  
Anti-social behaviour - 27  
Neighborhood disputes - 5  
Begging - 2  
Youth related incidents - 4  
Minor damage – 26  
Public order – 20  
Burglaries - 5

She made reference to the petition discussed earlier in the evening and confirmed that they worked closely with Highways regarding the provision of accident data and where speed enforcement was required. There were strict criteria regarding the locations where police speed camera vans or where hand held devices could be used by officers and speed watch volunteers. They needed to be able park safely, have clear visibility and a minimum distances from a change in speed limit.

The majority of drivers speeding were believed to be local residents who were familiar with the roads. She questioned whether the behaviour of drivers would change if there was a change in the maximum speed limit. Traffic calming measures were costly although some communities provided their own funding for the installation of flashing speed warning signs.

The following information was given in response to questions:



- An update would be obtained regarding digitisation of speed cameras in Acomb.
- Whilst the crime data was able to identify if there were repeated victims, suspect or locations, there had been no connections of significance in the report for the last period with the exception of low level assaults against staff at Cygnet Hospital in Hexham, which dealt with patients with complex mental health needs.
- The results of investigations regarding alleged homeless individuals in Hexham had concluded that these did not involve people trafficking, forced labour or abuse of vulnerable people. Community Protection Orders had been issued to prevent individuals loitering in the doorways of businesses. Addresses were required to summons an individual to court and this was proving difficult. Officers were speaking with their legal department to consider if other options were available. The immigration status of two individuals had been checked and verified. Further intelligence was welcomed from the community, particularly vehicle registrations.
- The rural crime team were working successfully with colleagues across the borders of Scotland, Durham and Cumbria to prevent organised crime of plant theft.
- Information would be obtained regarding the process to register as a Community Speed Watch Volunteer. Councillor Morphet had registered 18 months previously but had not yet been approved.
- Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) were useful tools to address anti-social behaviour and its impact on individuals and communities. Other tools included appropriate behaviour agreements, civil orders, dispersal orders, supporting youth club activities, scout groups and other youth initiatives, attending middle and high schools to give talks on knife crime and staying safe online. The police preferred to build relationships with young people.

Councillor Sharp, who was also Chair of Haltwhistle Town Council, relayed concerns regarding recent incidents of antisocial behavior expressed by a significant number of residents who had attended a meeting of the town council the previous evening.

Acting Inspector Benson apologised that she had been unable to attend the meeting due to another commitment. She was concerned regarding the terminology being used on social media and did not want young people being wrongly labelled. It would be more accurate to state that a group of youths had been responsible for an affray on 3 March and that this was being investigated.

She added that of the 20 stop and searches carried out recently, no weapons had been found. The only knife crime had been the stabbing of Holly Newton where the parties had been known to each other.

Funding had been provided to increase the patrols and police visibility in Haltwhistle and other places. Multiagency meetings were held where there were concerns regarding children and young people. She stressed that Haltwhistle was a safe place to live.

Another Councillor commented on the positive impact and good relations following meetings with young people in Hexham the previous year and the invaluable work carried out by Police Community Support Officers.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

**115. 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.

**116. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 28 March 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_