

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee** held on **Wednesday, 12 July 2023 at 5:00 pm** in **Ashington JW Rugby Club, Ellington Terrace, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8TP.**

PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

MEMBERS

C Ball
D Carr
E Cartie
B Gallacher
K Nisbet

M Purvis
J Reid
M Richardson
E Simpson
A Wallace

OFFICERS

N Easton
R Greally

S Mavin
R Wealleans

Public Transport Manager
Assistant Democratic Services
Officer
Construction Manager
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager

2 Members of the press and public were in attendance

02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Cliff Humphrey, Jim Lang, Ken Parry, Wojciech Ploszaj and Anna Watson

03 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council meeting held on Wednesday 10 May 2023, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chairman.

04 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Raymond Wealleans, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager, gave an update to committee:-

Waste Service

- Residual, Recycling and Bulky waste collection services continued to perform well.
- A review of routes took place – this resulted in a change of collection day for 4070 households.
 - All households affected were sent a leaflet informing them of the new collection date and provided with a calendar showing future collection dates.
 - All 4070 households were located in the Southeast Area
 - Other households would remain on the same collection day, but their time of collection may have changed. General comms messages went out informing people of this.
- Garden waste service was performing well but could be challenging on occasion – peak season arrived.
 - As usual, a garden waste service review would be undertaken at the end of the season to look for efficiencies and make the service more manageable.
 - There were over 10,000 customers at present for the Garden Waste collection this was a small reduction on last season by around 100 customers

Grass Cutting

The team were on cut 5/6 in Ashington and Newbiggin and Blyth with Gateway cuts in Blyth on 8/9

- Grass cutting proved to be a challenge for our teams in the early part of the year.
- Several days were lost to rain in the early part of the season (following the wettest March for decades) then the region experienced some warm weather, and the grass grew rapidly.
- Bank holidays in the early part of this cutting season added to the challenge imposed on us by the rain.
- This typically presented two challenges, the first being to complete cutting rounds efficiently to avoid having long (and seemingly unmanaged) grass on view.
- The second was the inevitable grass arisings left following the cut of grass which could be longer than usual.

Hopefully conditions would start to stabilise, and the amenity grass cutting would start returning to normal standards.

Weed Control/ Street Cleansing

Weeds

Chair's Initials.....

Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 12 July 2023

- Service was being delivered in house again this year.
- Most areas had received the first weed treatment.
- Ashington was 75% completed
- Blyth Area first spray was completed and second run started.
- There had been some delays due to the wet weather but anticipated completion of all areas over the next couple of weeks
- Were aware of some areas in need of urgent attention to this end we will deploy 2 extra staff members to trim and spray estates within the areas of concern.

Streets

- Street cleansing was ongoing to schedules, fly tips continued to create issues within all areas but high numbers in both Ashington and Blyth.
- Fly tips:
- Ashington 327 and Blyth 304 since the last LAC meeting in May this gave an average of 30 per week in Ashington and 27 in Blyth.
- Enforcement had installed CCTV in and around a couple of Bin stores in the Hirst area and would be checked when fly tipped material is reported.
- fly tippers one in Cambois and another in Brock Lane in Sleekburn caught on covert operations,
- There were ongoing plans to fit more CCTV within identified areas in Blyth and Ashington hopefully identifying and prosecuting offending parties.
- Brock Lane Sleekburn were in the process of organising Traffic Management for early August for a cleansing of the verges and footpaths with the road sweeper carrying out channel sweeping
- A189 Spine Road Overnight works will take place over 4 weekends from the 5th of August 2023

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

- Members thanked Ray and his team for keeping them informed and for the fast response times to queries.
- Officers confirmed that letters communicating information regarding the communal bins went out to all affected. The collections had begun and any problems that arose would be dealt with.
- Officers confirmed they would investigate adding the sandy bay roundabout to the litter pick along the A189.
- Cycle paths were being maintained and it was confirmed that where hedges had been cut back the overgrown soil would also be cut back.
- Officers confirmed that a site meeting could be arranged to look at the shrubs and hedges at Shore Phase 1 as residents had indicated they did not want certain bushes to be cut back as there were nesting birds.
- Members were assured that areas such as North Farm and Lindsay Avenue had been some of the first areas sprayed for weeds and therefore would be due a second spray.

Simon Mavin, Construction Manager, gave an update to committee: -

All highways inspectors and maintenance crews continued to work inspecting, fixing carriageways and footway defects, making repairs, and making safe category one defects across the South East area.

The Gully Emptier was fully deployed dealing with reported issues and cyclic maintenance.

Larger Tarmac Patching: -

Larger tarmac patching had been carried out in the following locations:

- South Newsham Road, Blyth
- Links Road, Blyth
- Amersham Road, Blyth
- Brierley Road, Blyth
- First Avenue, Blyth
- Park Villas, Ashington
- Park Road, Ashington
- Newlands Road, Blyth
- Cambo Close, Blyth
- Sandrigham/Balmoral Drive, Blyth
- Devonworth Place, Blyth
- St Cuthberts Court, Blyth
- Disraeli/Durban Street, Blyth
- North Seaton Road, Ashington
- A189 Woodhorn Museum entrance – traffic safety scheme.

Drainage Improvements: -

Drainage Improvements had been carried out in the following areas:

- Woodhorn Road, Ashington (back lane)
- Bothal Cottages, Ashington
- Wright Street, Blyth
- Newsham Road, Blyth
- John Street, Blyth
- Milburn Road, Ashington
- Park Road, Ashington
- Park Villas, Ashington

LTP – Carriageway Resurfacing

Carriageway resurfacing works had been carried out in the following areas: -

- North View/Matfen Terrace, Newbiggin by the Sea

Upcoming Resurfacing

- Bondicar Terrace, Blyth – 24th July for 3 days
- Twelfth Avenue, Blyth – 27th July, for 3 days

Chair's Initials.....

- Burnside, Ashington – 14th August, for 4 days
- Jubilee Estate – 21st August for 3 weeks, deep carriageway patching

Other completed and upcoming schemes

- Newbiggin beach – sand removed on behalf of the flood team, completed 7th July
- QEII footpaths, started on 10th July, for 4 weeks, installation of paths
- Maddison Street, Blyth, 29th August for 5 weeks

Micro Surfacing: Late August start

- Fulmar Drive
- Herron Close

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

- Officers agreed to look at resurfacing works at Disraeli/Durban Street as well as looking at the gully emptier for Union Street.
- It was confirmed that 'Fix my Street' was still in a transition period. Members had concerns over whether the app was overwhelmed. Officers confirmed that if a problem had been reported it could not be reported again by another individual reducing multiples. However, concerns would be passed on to maintenance engineers regarding lack of feedback to customers. Members suggested that County Councillors received the same training that was delivered to Parish Councillors on the app.
- Members requested more detailed feedback regarding the cycle path between Ashington and Pegswood.
- Officers confirmed they would investigate the drain that had dropped in Bridge Street near Ridley Avenue.
- Members asked that they be notified of smaller schemes that had been completed in the Local Transport Plan as well as the larger schemes.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

06 PETITIONS

(c) An update was read out from Neil Dawson, Countryside and Green Spaces Manager: -

NCC have continued to monitor the playing fields at Hirst Park to understand the behaviour of dog owners, and to quantify the amount of dog fouling and the number of reports/complaints received and acted upon. During the time since the last report, 2 fixed penalty notices had been issued for dog fouling on or beside the playing fields at Hirst Park (one fine paid, one requiring prosecution). Despite the concerns over levels of fouling expressed in the petition, for the time being it did not appear that dog fouling at Hirst Park was at a level that would enable NCC to make a Public Space Protection Order banning

Chair's Initials.....

dogs from the Hirst Park playing fields, given the existence of the county wide PSPO against dog fouling already in place.

The following comments were made in response to the update: -

- Members expressed their sadness that a protection order was not being pursued as dog fouling was a problem.
- Members asked if data could be provided regarding enforcement and the frequency of their visits to the site.
- Members wondered if Officers had contacted the football club affected. It was suggested that the football club should report any evidence of the dog fouling to the Council for the Officers to get a clearer picture on the problem.
- It was hoped that the Council would work with the football club to get to a viable solution.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

08 NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL BUS BOARD

Neil Easton, Public Transport Manager, introduced the report to committee. The Authority sought a nomination from the local area committee to join the newly established local bus board. The Authority had recently secured £163 million from the Department of Transport in funding which was to be used to establish an improvement plan. The improvements would include service enhancements across the region. As part of the funding a mandate was to create a bus board which would facilitate engagement with localities. The Authority felt it was important to that there was appropriate geographical coverage on the board and therefore had invited a member from each local area committee to join.

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

- It was confirmed to members that an enhanced service was going to be introduced in the Cambois area. A briefing note would be sent to the Local Councillors to outline the new service.
- The Local Authority requests the data of services it was supporting. Arriva were reluctant to share data on commercial due to the sensitivity. However, the Authority was happy to share data collected with Councillors regarding the enhanced services.
- Most of the funding would be used on enhancing existing services by extending operating hours and looking at the routes. There were several routes that had been cancelled during the pandemic that the Authority were looking to reinstate. However, it was confirmed that the funding would not be used to subsidise profitable routes.

- Several routes were suggested to officers including bus routes to hospitals during visiting hours, night buses and buses that connect expanding housing estates. Officers welcomed the suggestions but also explained the complexities of bus routes and the balance that was needed between accessibility and having a reliable service that is efficient. Officers also highlighted that it was important not to extract patronage from existing commercial routes.
- It was acknowledged that the Northumberland Line would have an impact on the services. The Authority were working collaboratively to look at integrated ticketing and matching timetables with the Northumberland Line. It was noted that Arriva had warned of potential shrinkage to some services due to the Northumberland Line.
- It was acknowledged that there were over 2500 bus stops in the County and it would have taken approximately 6 weeks to replace bus timetable information. Members welcomed the idea of working collaboratively with Town and Parish Councils and suggested that the Authority revisit their original offer to Parish and Town Councils regarding replacing timetables in their wards. However, some members raised concerns over certain Town and Parish Councils having the work force to carry out this function.
- Members thanked Neil and his team for his hard work.
- Councillor Alex Wallace proposed Councillor Liz Simpson to be appointed to the board as it fit in with her remit as Shadow Cabinet Member for Strategic Transport and Infrastructure. Councillor Jeff Reid seconded this proposal.

RESOLVED agreed that Councillor Liz Simpson be appointed to the Local Bus Board and the information be noted.

10 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered a list of appointments to outside bodies for 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the following list of appointments be confirmed:

Blyth Valley Disabled Forum – **Kath Nisbet**

Northumberland Community Voluntary Action – **Vacancy**

Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley – **Anna Watson (to be confirmed)**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Chair's Initials.....

Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 12 July 2023

The date of the next meeting was due to be agreed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council on 17 May 2023 and was likely to take place in June 2023. Details would be circulated when the date had been confirmed.

Chair _____

Date _____