

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 13 September 2023 at 6:00 pm** in **Blyth Town Football Club, South Newsham Playing Fields, Sandringham Drive, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 3PS.**

#### PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

#### MEMBERS

|             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| C Ball      | W Ploszaj    |
| D Carr      | M Purvis     |
| B Gallacher | M Richardson |
| C Humphrey  | E Simpson    |
| J Lang      | A Watson     |
| K Nisbet    | A Wallace    |
| K Parry     |              |

#### OFFICERS

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| P Bowman   | Neighbourhood Services Senior<br>Team Leader |
| K Dagleish | Stronger Shores Project Manager              |
| R Greally  | Assistant Democratic Services<br>Officer     |
| A Keogh    | Heart of Blyth Coordinator                   |
| R Mason    | Area Highways Manager                        |

1 Member of the press was in attendance

#### 02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Eileen Cartie.

#### 03 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council meeting held on Wednesday 12 July 2023, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **04 PETITIONS**

(a) Officers informed the committee of new petition that was submitted regarding Hirst Park Pavilion. There were 77 signatures and it was confirmed that a report was anticipated to come to the November meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### **05 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

Russell Masson, Area Highways Manager, gave an update to committee:-

Highways Inspectors and response gangs are continuing inspecting and fixing carriageway/footway defects, will all inspections currently up to date.  
Gully emptier is fully deployed dealing with reactive and cyclic maintenance.  
We current back log of reactive reports to attend to following the recent heavy rain.

##### **Larger Tarmac Patching**

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

- Ennerdale Road, Blyth
- Nordale Way, Blyth (footway)
- Esher Gardens/Heron Close connecting footway, Blyth
- Waterloo Road, Blyth
- Deneview Drive, Blyth
- 12th Avenue, Blyth (structural patching)
- Broadway, Blyth
- Rear Holystone Avenue, Blyth (footway)
- College Road, Ashington

##### **Drainage Improvements:**

Drainage Improvements have been carried out in the following areas:

- Garden City Villas, Ashington
- Briardale Road, Blyth
- Renwick Road, Blyth
- Wansbeck Road, Ashington- Drainage repairs (flooding issue) 23rd Oct

##### **LTP - Carriageway Resurfacing**

Carriageway Resurfacing has been carried out the following areas:

- Bondicar Terrace, Blyth.
- 12th Avenue, Blyth
- Burnside, Ashington,
- Jubilee Estate Ashington– works ran over due to structural concrete failure if questioned.

Upcoming Resurfacing.

- Station Road, Ashington – 23rd Oct
- Maddison Street, Blyth – date TBC
- Black Close Bank – flags to flex started on Monday for 2 weeks. Works part of the Northern Line work.

### **Other Completed and Upcoming Schemes**

- QEII footpaths – installed 2500m of footway around the QEII country park.
- Ingram Drive – verge hardening works started on Monday 11/09/23 for one week
- Micro Surfacing: Late August Start
- Micro Surfacing works have been completed at Fulmar Drive and Herron Close, Blyth.

### **Bridge Street Scheme the Link, Blyth**

Regeneration work on Bridge Street, Blyth starts on 2nd Oct

We have started lifting the York stone paving slabs in the marketplace as part of these works, this paving will be re-laid on Bridge Street.

### **Winter Services in SE&C**

- Rotas set up and in place 24 drivers 2 spare drivers
- 8 gritters within the with 2 spares
- Salt barns all fully stocked holding approx 8k tonne
- Vehicles will be on Station from 16th October
- We start monitoring forecast from 1st October
- Main rota started 30th October 2023.

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

- Members requested gullies on Alexandra Road and Sandybay roundabout be looked at. It was also requested that a camera be deployed down the gully at the bus stop opposite the White Elephant pub as it was repeatedly blocked.
- Officers confirmed that there were no plans for lights to be installed on the North Seaton roundabout.
- It was confirmed that if the leftover salt in the bins was usable the workers would break it up and add to it. However, if the salt was unusable it would be removed and replace with fresh salt.
- The potholing machine had carried out 330 repairs in the South East area. Officers confirmed a schedule could be shared with members to show where the machine was due to go and where it had been.

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Peter Bowman, Neighbourhood Services Senior Team Leader, gave an update to committee: -

NEAT – Grounds Maintenance

### **Grass Cutting:**

Grass cutting remains on target to achieve required number of core cuts in all areas.

- We have seen some challenging periods this year due to long spells of very wet weather. This ultimately led to a decision to suspend grass cutting in some areas following assessment and concerns about causing surface damage.
- This resulted in teams being faced with longer grass when we could return to cut – inevitably leading to more arisings.
- The weather has not been kind to us this year...
- We are currently on cut 7 in Blyth and finishing of cuts 7 and starting 8 in Ashington with Newbiggin, Cambois and Sleekburn at cut 9.

### **Street Sweeping:**

- We are working through our normal schedules but will move to leaf hotspots in a month or two.
- A usual, please bring any areas in need of sweeping or issues with leaf fall to our attention.

### **Winter Works**

We are starting to think about our winter works schedules, we have our routine annual maintenance commitments but welcome early requests from members on any areas which you consider require attention over this coming winter.

### **Weeds**

Weeds this year have proved to be a concern in all areas of Northumberland with particular attention needed to the high residential areas the second spray is ongoing throughout the area with the use of additional staff using the weed ripping equipment.

### **Waste:**

- Rounds generally settling down well in most areas, following the recent review, unfortunately experienced some teething trouble within the Stakeford area, which we are working hard to resolve I will update councillors at the next LAC meeting.
- Other than a few minor vehicle breakdowns and staffing shortages, Residual, Recycling and Garden waste collection services are all operating well.
- Income from garden waste has exceeded target.
- Income from commercial waste has also exceeded target.
- No further significant changes to rounds are planned but our teams will continue to review existing collection rounds in order to cope with ongoing housing growth

*Chair's Initials.....*

*Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 13 September 2023*

as well as continued growth in take up of the garden waste service (in some areas).

- Demand for bulky waste collections remains high, extra slots have been created and covered by deploying extra resource when needed.
- Domestic waste tonnages remain higher than normal, various operational adjustments have been made to cope with the demand, but the situation remains a significant challenge for the service.

### **Other information to make the LAC aware of**

- Verge cutting has been completed county wide, this was achieved within the target period of June & July.
- The construction of the bin compounds within the Hirst area has encountered a slight delay within the Hawthorn Road Area – We are listening to and addressing residents' concerns.

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

- Members thanked the service for their hard work with collection rates and commented how although there were more homes and more pressures the service still worked like clockwork.
- Officers confirmed that Sleekburn division was still to be weeded, comments would be passed on regarding the flower beds which were overgrown.
- The tree officer would be invited to assess the shrubbery outside of the phase 1 South Shore development.
- Officers confirmed that some areas of shrubs and bushes required a second cut. It was acknowledged that farmers could be encouraged to cut their hedges back further however the request could not be enforced. Only certain staff members were trained on the tractor but the service was looking ta more training. The tractor had also had it's tyres changed which allowed them to cut back in more difficult areas with less disruption.
- There was an awareness regarding the succession of the workforce. The service was looking into the apprenticeship scheme. It was difficult to transfer all the knowledge and skills from an experienced worker to the younger generation.
- Officers confirmed that grass cutting blades had been lifted during the wet weather during the summer months. It was confirmed that depending on the length of the grass blades would be lowered.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **07 STRONGER SHORES**

Karen Dalglish from the Stronger Shores Project gave a presentation to the committee. The Stronger Shores Project, which was funded by DEFRA and supported by South Tyneside was looking into making British coastlines and communities stronger in the face of flooding, coastal erosion, and climate change by harnessing the power of nature.

The project looked to improve the understanding of the coastal protection value of marine habitats such as seagrass, kelp and native oyster reefs, and their wider benefits to climate change and biodiversity. The project was a monitoring project which hoped to quantify the costs and benefits and generate evidence and learning regarding the benefits of harnessing the natural resources. There were native oyster reefs in the Blyth port however with the end of the wild oyster project they had recently been relocated to Roker Pier.

Lindisfarne in Northumberland was one of the last strongholds for seagrass and would have been pivotal in the reintroduction of seagrass to estuaries. There were a number of sites throughout the North East where the project would monitor and gather evidence including; Lindisfarne, Beadnell and Boulmer in Northumberland.

The project welcome any engagement opportunities as it was a chance to promote the project and connect people with the underwater world. They were keen to collaborate with communities and target engagement to make it more meaningful.

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

- Members raised concerns that the coastline in the Southeast of the County had been neglected for the project. It was confirmed that research had been done to identify areas that would work best for the project. Members acknowledged that the project had chosen suitable areas however reiterated that the southeast part of the County would welcome projects.
- Scarborough had a kelp farm which was commercially successful the project will work with them but not in the commercial aspect. The project was a monitoring project but evidence would be provided regarding the commercial aspect of sea kelp.
- An assurance was given that it was always the intention to move the oyster nurseries from Blyth to the area where they would remain.
- Areas for the seagrass were identified due to the suitability. The areas had often had seagrass before and where seagrass was likely to survive when reintroduced.
- It was acknowledged that there was the estuaries at Wansbeck and Blyth. It was suggested that the “Revitalising our Estuaries” project from Groundwork could be invited to a future meeting to discuss their project.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **08 HEART OF BLYTH PROJECT**

Adeline Keogh, Heart of Blyth Coordinator, gave a presentation to the committee. The Heart of Blyth project was funded by the Shaping Places for Healthier Lives Programme on a three-year joint grant programme with the Local Government Association to address health inequalities. The project was a whole system approach to look at improving the area and building stronger communities by providing the opportunity for residents from different backgrounds to connect. The people of Blyth were an important asset recognised by the project. The project hoped to contribute to creating the conditions for a safer, stronger

community to flourish by improving how people related to each other, how Blyth was seen by others and how Blyth looked. Key successes were highlighted such as the Heart of Blyth Residents Panel which allowed residents to grant microgrants to stakeholders.

The project was in its final year of funding from the Health Foundation and the next step was to work with residents to leave a legacy behind. The project was about to ask the 300+ stakeholder what they would have liked to retain from the project.

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

- Members thanked Ade for her presentation and commented on the passion and energy for Blyth that was clearly felt. Blyth Councillors commented on her continued hard work for the area.
- Members felt that it would be a great loss to lose the project and suggested they write a letter to the Leader of the Council to express their concerns. Although the funding ended in October 2024 it was expected that the project would not fully close down however the more support for it the better.
- The project had made a noticeable change to Blyth, it was hoped that similar projects would be rolled out to other communities within the County. Councillors commented that if they would provide any assistance to grow the project if it was possible.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **09 LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillors were encouraged to raise any items they would like brought to committee with the Chair.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_