

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at 4:30 pm** in **Ashington JR Rugby Club, Ellington Terrace, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8TP**

**PRESENT**

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

**MEMBERS**

C Ball  
E Cartie  
B Gallacher  
J Lang  
K Nisbit  
K Parry

J Reid  
M Richardson  
L Simpson  
A Wallace  
A Watson

**OFFICERS**

N Dawson  
L Dixon  
R Little  
S Mavin

Countryside and Green Spaces Manager  
Democratic Services Assistant  
Assistant Democratic Services Officer  
Construction Manager

**IN ATTENDANCE**

J Chisholm  
S Storey  
P Tanney  
M Touray  
B Wren

Cycling 4 Everyone  
Ashington Cricket Club  
Ashington Rugby Club  
Northumberland Church of Sanctuary  
Seaton Hirst Veterans

About 10 members of the public were in attendance.

## 11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Carr, Humphrey, Ploszaj and Purvis.

## 12 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council meeting held on Wednesday 13 September 2023, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 13 PETITIONS

### (a) Receive any new petitions

Officers informed the committee of new petition that was submitted titled “Call for a pedestrian crossing on Newbiggin Road”, it had received 83 signatures and it was confirmed that a report was anticipated to come to the next Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee in January 2024.

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

Petition seeking the continuation of staffing and activities in Hirst Park once grant funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund ceases.

N. Dawson introduced the report which gave detailed information and the key issues surrounding the petition.

The Hirst Park Revisal project had delivered significant improvements to Hirst Park, both in terms of the capital works but also in terms of the public’s use and enjoyment of the site. Project staff, in particular the Park Development Officer and Project Coordinator, had brought about a wide range of events and activities within the park that had enriched the lives of local people.

The Hirst Revival Project would not be able to continue after the funding ends in 2024. However, a number of activities and events in Hirst Park were planned to continue, managed by partners such as the Full Circle Food Project and NCC’s Northumberland Communities Together team. The park would continue to be able to host events organized by local community groups and organisations such as Heart of the Hirst.

NCC’s Countryside and Green Spaces Team were keen to maintain existing and develop new relationships with local people and organisations in order to ensure that the park continued to play a significant role in the enjoyment, health and wellbeing of local people. The park had achieved the “Green Flag” award. One of

the key elements for maintenance of the park's Green Flag status was the active involvement of the local community in the park and whilst the formation of a creation of a "Friends of" group was an aspiration of the Hirst Park Revival Project, that had not been met however the formation of a Friends group remained an on-going aspiration for NCC and NCC remained committed to ensuring the parks Green Flag status was maintained.

Members were disappointed that the funding would not continue and suggested that a report should go to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as Cabinet to be included in the discussions for the 2024-25 budget.

**RESOLVED** that members considered the report and noted:

- i. A great deal of good work had taken place to rejuvenate Hirst Parks thanks to investment in the Hirst Park Revival project by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Northumberland County Council, Ashington Town Council, Ashington Leisure Partnerships, and others.
- ii. The lifetime of the project had been extended and was planned to run until the end of March 2024.
- iii. Staff employed by the Hirst Park Revival Project were employed locally, remaining professionally linked to Hirst Park and the local community.
- iv. NCC and partner organisations would continue to support and promote events, activities, and volunteering within the park as part of the on-going management arrangements for the park, as this was a key part of the legacy of the project and supported achievements of the parks "Green Flag" status.

**(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered**

There were no updates on previous petitions.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**14 BUDGET 2024-25 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

Members noted that this item was withdrawn from the agenda however voiced their disappointment that they would not be given longer to discuss issues before being voted upon by Council.

**15 WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE REPORT 2023-24**

S. Mayben introduced the report which provided an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the winter services season and invited any questions from members, the following information was then provided:

- During weather events, once the main and secondary routes were treated to a satisfactory level, then the neighborhood services team would look into requests from Fix My Street for further gritting areas.
- 4x4's were available in each area to grit tight streets.
- 5-7 days of continuous gritting were classed as weather events.
- Gully wagons would still be deployed during the winter season.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 16 COMMUNITY CHEST PRESENTATION

### Ashington Cricket Club

S. Storey introduced himself to the committee as the Chair of the Ashington Cricket Club. Ashington Cricket club was a non-profit organisation which had run for over 100 years with the help from volunteers.

Ashington Cricket Club had used their grant money to improve facilities in the Club House, which abled the Cricket Club to increase how welcoming and professional they look and feel, which in turns increased the likelihood of the venue being hired out for functions, which in turn would bring further money into the club.

S. Storey thanked the members of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee on behalf of Ashington Cricket Club for their support and the grant.

### Cycling 4 Everyone

J. Chisholm introduced herself to the committee as a Founding Director of Cycling 4 Everyone which supported members of the public to cycle safely, the organisation had used their grant money to purchase a Cargo bike.

Following the purchase of the Cargo bike, Cycling 4 Everyone were able to secure a contract with Northumberland County Council to provide free adult cycle training around the County.

J. Chisholm thanked the members of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee on behalf of Cycling 4 Everyone for their support and the grant.

### Seaton Hirst Veterans' Institute

B. Wren introduced himself to the committee as Trustee of the Seaton Hirst Veterans Institute and gave a brief history of the club.

As Ashington was originally designed as a mining village, the clubhouse was a wooden hub on Newbiggin Road where elderly gentlemen met, socialised, and played snooker and billiards. In 1965 Seaton Hirst Veterans became a registered non-profit charity, and created a space where it was a safe place to meet others, participate in recreational activities or a chat over a hot drink.

In 1998 the clubhouse was moved to a built for purpose brick building, the facilities included a main snooker room, including two snooker tables, a games room including dominos, darts, chess, and a library.

The money granted to the Seaton Hirst Veterans' Institute was used to reupholster the two snooker tables so members could continue playing on a good quality table for their Snooker League.

B. Wren thanked the members of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee on behalf of Seaton Hirst Veterans for their support and the grant.

#### Ashington Rugby Club

P. Tonney and R. Harmer introduced themselves to the committee as the President and Secretary of Ashington Rugby Club with the aid of a PowerPoint Presentation.

Ashington Rugby Club had a large user base, with a number of different varieties of rugby across all ages and ability ranges. Several local groups also utilised the facilities on the grounds, including Ashington Rugby Cricket Club, Green Lane Able Bodies and Disabled Archery Club, Ashington Town Junior Football Club, Ashington Hirst Running Club, The Northumberland Veterans Motorcycle Club (Reivers Section) and The Kingfishers. In addition to those groups, a local Karate Club used the grounds for training during the summer and a local falconer used the grounds to train her hawks also.

Ashington Rugby Club used their Community Chest grant to improve their facilities in the club house, with the aim of delivering level access additional toilets, enhance the social space to make it more attractive and accessible to outside users, making the club more financially stable. With the grant the club was able to deliver accessible toilets, a new storeroom, the transfer of the laundry into a new laundry room created in the changing rooms.

P. Tonney and R. Harmer thanked the members of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee on behalf of Ashington Rugby Club for their support and the grant and invited members to tour the facilities after the meeting ended.

## Northumberland County of Sanctuary

M. Touray introduced himself to the committee as a member from the Northumberland County of Sanctuary.

Northumberland County of Sanctuary was founded in 2016 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2019. The objectives of NcoS were:

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who were refugees and asylum seekers, (including convention refugees, refugee communities, people with leave to remain, asylum seekers and ex-detainees), socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position by promoting and/or co-ordination services and facilities to assist them to adapt within a new community.
2. The relief of financial hardship among asylum seekers and refugees living or working in Northumberland by acting as an umbrella and resource for local refugee support services.
3. The advancement of education of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum and human rights.
4. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit by promoting activities to foster understanding and good relations between the general public and people seeking sanctuary.

The organisation used their Community Chest grant by hosting an International Day Celebration and inviting members of the public to join in the celebrations with various activities throughout the day including Hunter Theatre arts dance display, Northumbrian Pipers, Living History teaching children traditional games as well as a variety of International Cuisine.

M. Touray thanked the members of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee on behalf of the Northumberland County of Sanctuary for their support and the grant.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **17 LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

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

Councillor Watson inquired whether information regarding the Blyth beach development could come to a future Local Area Council, Councillor Grimshaw agreed and noted that a briefing note could be sent out to members and Blyth Town Council.

Councillor Wallace also inquired whether information of changes to elections could be circulated to members regarding polling cards.

Councillor Ball noted that she feels there had been a slippage in the Ashington schemes and that money had been removed from the 2022-23 budget and moved into other schemes would like an officer to attend to explain what is happening with the remaining “levelling up” money.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**10 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee would be held on Wednesday, 10 January 2024.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

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

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