

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Committee** held at Meeting Room 1 - Berwick Leisure Centre on Thursday, 25 January 2024 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

G Castle (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

C Hardy
I Hunter
W Pattison
M Swinbank
J Watson

G Hill
M Mather
C Seymour
T Thorne

OTHER COUNCILLORS

G Sanderson

OFFICERS

K Keady
R Little

County Sports Development Manager
Assistant Democratic Services Officer

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

B Murray
C Jary
M Devon

Berwick Community Trust
Berwick Camera Club
Cornhill Community Action Group

Around 5 members of the press and public were present.

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19 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bridgett, Clark, and Renner-Thompson.

20 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee meeting held on Thursday, 27 July 2023 and Thursday, 28 September 2023, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chair.

21 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Q.

A written question had been submitted from Shilbottle Parish Council which was read out to members.

“Has the County stopped consulting with Parish Councils on issues which will subsequently have a major impact on their resident’s ability to access services i.e.. Closure of central Greenwell Lane office in Alnwick and the transfer to the remote Lindisfarne Road.

The Chair raised this issue in writing with the Leader of the Council of 08 February 2023, almost 10 months ago and as yet to date had not even received an acknowledgement of the issue. Is this a foretaste of little or no communication in the future?”

A.

Cllr Sanderson read out the written response that was provided to members.

“Thank you for taking the time to write to explain your concerns about travelling to the new Lindisfarne Road Community hub.

The aim of the new community hub is to co-locate a number of important community services and activities including customer services, adult learning, Alnwick Town Council, the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, the local foodbank, and other community activities into one site.

The new site is due to open in April, and we will send you details of our open days and hope that you will be able to come and see the new facilities for yourself.

There will be spaces available for the community to run activities and we expect there to be a wide and varied programme of events.

We are mindful of the fact that the Lindisfarne Centre is outside of Alnwick town centre and some of our customers will have further to travel; however, when liaising with Alnwick Town Forum it was agreed that the benefits of the co-location with our community and voluntary sector partners would be of huge benefit to the community.

Finally, I would highlight that the Leader of the County Council, with relevant officers, continue to meet regularly with Town and Parish Councils on a wide range of issues (both with individual councils and in Town and Parish Councils conferences_ So, the County Council’s commitment to engaging with and listening to our Towns and Parishes remains as strong as ever.”

Q.

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Berwick Town Council asked members if the Pawn Shop in Hide-Hill had received planning permission for the new frontage of the store.

A.

Councillor Seymour explained that she had reported the shop frontage to planning enforcement.

22 **PETITIONS**

- (a) Members noted that a petition called “Creation of Community Woodland on Sheilfield Terrace, Berwick between Dean Drive and Cornhill Road.” had been opened and a report would follow at a future North Northumberland Local Area Committee meeting once the petition had closed.
- (b) There were no petition reports for members to discuss.
- (c) No updates on previous petitions.

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

Councillor Sanderson, Leader of the Council provided a presentation on the Council’s Corporate Plan and budget for 2024-25 where the options for achieving a balanced budget were given. He outlined the consultation process which took place between 12 December 2023 and 26 January 2024 and included presentations at all 5 of the Local Area Committees, an online questionnaire, policy conference, briefings for the political groups and individual meetings, and an online Question and Answer session on 31 January 2024.

The Council’s three priorities of Value for Money; Tackling Inequalities and Job Creation ran all through the proposed budget with more detailed information on proposed savings available within the Cabinet papers for the meeting on 16 January and further detail regarding initiatives and schemes which were presented at a meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all Scrutiny members were invited to.

Councils had four main sources of revenue, namely:

- Council Tax;
- Government grants;
- Business Rates; and
- Fees and charges for services

Members were advised that the Council constantly lobbied Government in relation to sustainable funding for local services. Increased pressures on budgets were in part due to rising energy costs and prices for supplies and services along with pay inflation. Savings would be made by reducing the cost of overheads and potential efficiencies in the way services were delivered and Members were advised there would be no cuts to front line services. The Council’s reserves were in a healthy position and could be used where necessary to manage any transition.

The background to the Council’s finances was provided with the baseline gross budget for 2023/24 as follows:-

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- Enabling Services (Transformation) - £147.948 million - providing professional and technical services to support residents and businesses directly and enable frontline services.
- Adults - £235.033 million - supporting vulnerable adults to live independently; assessment and good quality care and support services; safeguarding vulnerable adults; and protecting care services.
- Children, Young People and Education - £269.210 million - providing good quality schools (with 94% currently rated good or outstanding); SEND provision; skills opportunities and supporting families; and investing in the future.
- Public Health, Inequalities, and stronger Communities - £32.831 million- providing public health functions; Communities Together; leisure and culture; and partnerships with voluntary and community sector.
- Place and Regeneration - £131.699 million – supporting business start-up and growth; regenerating communities; investing in towns and villages; investing in jobs and skills development and highways maintenance and improvements.

Following the presentation Councillor Sanderson invited questions from members of the committee and public, which the following information was then provided:

- There was £325,000 in match fundings for the Maltings Project in the Capital Programme.
- £46 million had been allocated for Northumberland Schools.
- £15 million had been secured for SEND provision over a four year period to be spent in the County.

RESOLVED that this was noted.

24 **PLAYZONE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION**

K. Keady - County Sports Development Manager, provided a presentation on the Playzone Project and gave a brief overview of the project and the next steps for the Berwick Playzone as well as the Alnwick Playzone and the emerging Wooler site.

The goal of the project was to get priority groups (lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, disabled people or those with long-term health conditions and ethnically diverse communities) more active by providing a multi-sport facility for the community. Northumberland County Council was invited to apply ahead of its opening nationally because of the successful “Get Onside” application which ran in Ashington and Berwick.

Two sites had been identified in Berwick for the location of the Playzone; Shielfield and Westfield Park with a series of community engagements events in each location carried out in June and July 2023 with 115 online consultation and 30 attendees at events. A number of sports and activities were suggested for the Playzone including 5-a-side leagues, fitness bootcamps and tennis with a number of people interested in volunteering and the private hire of the site.

Members noted the next steps to progress the site which comprised of the site being confirmed and registered with Football Foundation, the application for

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planning permission, match funding of 25% of the total project to be sought as well as creating a site design.

Members thanked Kathie for attending and providing the update.

RESOLVED this was noted.

Councillors Pattison and Thorne left the meeting at this point.

25 **COMMUNITY CHEST PRESENTATIONS**

Councillor Hill introduced the recipients Community Chest Presentations to members and public explaining that funding was from NCC to support Community Groups and Organisations.

Berwick Community Trust

B. Murray introduced herself to as a member of the Berwick Community Trust.

Berwick Community Trust had invested their £1200 into defibrillator equipment for the community for emergency use, with further funding support from the community with £300 donated from the local pub and £600 in funding from the Trust. A local electrician had also donated their services and time and had installed the defibrillator.

Since going live, the North East Ambulance Service had directed members of the public to the box four times, but it had not been used for a variety of reasons. Each time the Trust receives a call to say that the defib has been removed and once it's returned the Trust checks over the equipment and places it back as active for emergency use.

B. Murray thanked members of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee on behalf of the Berwick Community Trust for their support.

Berwick Camera Club

C. Jary introduced himself as a member of the Berwick Camera Club and gave a brief insight to the Camera Club.

Berwick Camera Club had been running for over 50 years and members met weekly during the winter season and monthly during summer months in different locations for evening and Sunday shoots. The programme was renewed each year and consisted of talks, workshops, skills sessions as well as competitions and an annual exhibition linked to the Heritage Open Days, with the focus of the club being sharing skills and having fun with photography.

The club had invested their £1000 into the purchase of a new projector, screen, microphone, and speakers. The quality of the equipment means projected digital images looked more realistic, the club were able to use the projector to show images and an audio-visual presentation at their annual exhibition as well as being able to use Zoom to allow members to join meetings remotely as well as

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use out of area guest speakers.

C. Jary showed members a video of some of the work produced by members of the club and thanked members of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee on behalf of Berwick Camera Club for their support.

Cornhill Community Action Group

M. Devon introduced himself as Chairman of Cornhill Community Action Group.

In 2019 Cornhill First School was offered to Cornhill Parish Council as a Community Asset transfer, where a public meeting was held, and it was the community view that the Cornhill Community Action Group should develop the 1993 school building and fields for community use.

M. Devon showed members photos of works being completed, some crafting workshops as well some of the local outlets which are in the building and thanked members of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee on behalf of Cornhill Community Action Group for their support.

RESOLVED this was noted.

26 **LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED that this was noted.

27 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee was noted as Thursday, 28 March 2024.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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