

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a virtual meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held on Tuesday, 12 January 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T Cessford
(Chair, in the Chair for agenda items 168 - 171 and 175 -183)

(Planning Vice-Chair Councillor R Gibson in the chair for items 172 - 174)

MEMBERS

A Dale
R Gibson
CR Homer
C Horncastle
I Hutchinson
D Kennedy

N Oliver
JR Riddle
A Sharp
G Stewart
KG Stow

OFFICERS

J Blenkinsopp
K Blyth

M Haworth
D Hunt

P Jones
M Patrick

E Sinnamon
N Turnbull
K Westerby

Solicitor
Planning Area Manager -
Development Management
Planning Officer
Area Manager (West),
Neighbourhood Services
Service Director - Local Services
Principal Highways Development
Management Officer
Development Service Manager
Democratic Services Officer
Highways Delivery Manager

168. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Quinn.

Ch.'s Initials.....

169. PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT A VIRTUAL STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Chair advised members of the procedure which would be followed at the virtual meeting and of the changes to the public speaking protocol.

170. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Tynedale Local Area Council held on 8 December 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

171. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Dale declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in planning application 20/01536/FUL as she knew some of the individuals involved.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Councillor Cessford then vacated the Chair, for Planning Vice-Chair Councillor Gibson to chair the development control section of the agenda, as was the arrangement for all Local Area Councils.

172. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The committee was requested to decide the planning applications attached to the report using the powers delegated to it. Members were reminded of the principles which should govern their consideration of the applications, the procedure for handling representations, the requirement of conditions and the need for justifiable reasons for the granting of permission or refusal of planning applications.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

173. 20/01536/FUL

**Alterations/extension to The Rat Inn and replacement of the adj WI Hall with a new building comprising guest/visitor rooms and a self-catering holiday cottage with associated parking
The Rat, U8182 Anick Grange Junction to Oakwood East Junction, Anick, NE46 4LN**

There were no questions arising from the site visit videos which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a powerpoint presentation and reported the following:

- The applicant had confirmed by email the following toilet arrangements:
 - The internal female toilet was to be upgraded.
 - The male external toilet was to be upgraded.
 - A new external disabled toilet was to be constructed to address Disability Discrimination Act issues.
- A further 4 letters of objection had been received and had been circulated to members the previous day.
- A response from the Council's Design and Built Heritage Officer expressing concern had been emailed and read out to members before the meeting had commenced.

K Blyth, DM Area Team Manager (West) read statements from the following which would be attached to the signed minutes and uploaded to the Council's website:

- A statement in objection on behalf of a number of residents in and around Anick.
- A statement from Sandhoe Parish Council who objected to the development plans.
- A statement in support from the agent acting on behalf of the applicant.

The Solicitor checked with Councillor Kennedy that he had heard everything as his camera had not been on during the presentation. Councillor Kennedy confirmed that he had and was keeping his camera off due to problems with his broadband connection.

Councillor Oliver reported that he had been co-opted on to Sandhoe Parish Council and had not been present at any meetings when this application had been discussed. In response to clarification from the Solicitor, he confirmed that he had an open mind, had not pre-determined and was not prejudiced.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:-

- The current parking situation had been weighed up as the parking issues on the highway and adjacent to the village green had been acknowledged. 14 additional parking spaces were proposed to be provided within the site, which had increased from an original proposal of 8.
- Safety considerations had led to the creation of a footway across the front of the site to enable safe access to the site for all without the need to walk along the carriageway.
- The Highways Authority had no jurisdiction over the village green, whether vehicles could be formally parked on village greens was a separate legal issue and outside of the Highway Authority's remit to investigate.
- The application before Members needed to be considered and did not have to resolve the legacy parking issues. These had been recognised and officers had worked with the applicant to see whether the car park could be better reconfigured with an improved layout.

- Clarification was provided regarding the additional parking provision in the north, south and rear car parks on site. A member queried whether there were sufficient extra spaces given potential demand from the provision of tourist accommodation, expansion of the restaurant and increased staffing. The Highways Authority were satisfied that the provision of 14 additional parking spaces met the parking requirement for the council for the expansion of the business.
- The planning history on page 8 of the report referred to the former WI hut at the southern end of the site which had initially been refused and overturned on appeal for the development of a residential unit. The presentation had demonstrated the difference in scale and massing for the extant permission with the proposed holiday visitor accommodation.
- The local member confirmed that he had received approaches from the parish council regarding parking issues.
- A replacement hedge was proposed to be put in place for one that may have been removed. The County Archeologist had been consulted and had not raised an objection.
- Additional conditions could be included regarding exploration of landscaping on remaining areas within the site including the planting of a replacement hedge and highway safety mitigations measures for the higher-level car park.
- The impact of the on the Green Belt of the current proposal of tourist accommodation had to be considered, the impact on openness given that although the footprint had reduced, the scale was larger than the extant consent for the residential building. Given the site was in the Green Belt it needed to be determined whether very special circumstances existed to overcome the harm of the development. Tourism and economic benefit of overnight visitor accommodation with the extant consent were considered to give very special circumstances.
- The previous permission for the dwelling on the WI site was no longer extant as it had expired the previous year. However, the consent was a material consideration as a building for residential use of that scale had been considered to be acceptable. Something slightly larger could be considered acceptable due to the tourism and economic benefit. And was used as the basis of very special circumstances.
- There were no buildings below the former WI building which would be overlooked by the proposed development. There were not considered to be any overlooking or privacy issues with this development.
- The requirements of the NNPF were set out in the report. The proposed development, on a previously developed site, needed to be compared with the WI hut, and whether it would have a greater impact on openness than existing in the Green belt. It was acknowledged that proposal was for a larger building which would technically be inappropriate, however, the previous approval had been considered to be acceptable and other elements of the scheme, the economic and tourism benefit provided very special circumstances for approval.
- It was difficult to make comparison to the case referred to in Ripley as officers were unfamiliar with the policies in place there. There were strong economic development and tourism policies within the Tynedale Plan and

the emerging Northumberland Plan and carried a lot of weight in how the application had been assessed and allowed the small increase above what had previously been approved.

- The tourism comment and caveat regarding support if broadly in line with local residents could not be disregarded. However, the scale of the development, which was quite large for the size of the village and therefore significant objection could be expected. The tourism comments and caveat had to be weighed up against the question of harm and the economic and tourism aspirations in the statutory made plan.

Councillor Stewart proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application subject to the conditions contained in the officer's report and work with the applicant on landscaping and car parking. This was seconded by Councillor Kennedy.

Clarification was sought regarding the recommendation and whether additional conditions were to be added regarding landscaping and safety measures for the car park.

Councillors Stewart and Kennedy agreed to the suggestion from the Development Service Manager to amend the recommendation to include delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning to determine appropriate wording of conditions relating to landscaping and safety measures for the car park.

Members of the Committee started to debate the application with Councillor Oliver stating that he would not be able to support the proposal.

Councillor Horncastle queried the procedure being followed at the meeting and whether Councillor Oliver was speaking with an open mind, given the statements he had made and his position as a member of the local parish council. He queried whether Councillor Oliver should be participating in this item, public perception and if it would be grounds for judicial review for the applicant, should the application be refused.

Councillor Oliver objected to the claim that he did not have an open mind.

The Development Service Manager reminded members that they were the decision makers and the comments from the conservation had been circulated prior to the meeting and also read out, in order that they could be taken into consideration.

She suggested that a short adjournment be held to obtain clarification with the Solicitor regarding Councillor Oliver's position on Sandhoe Parish Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.27 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 3.50 p.m.

The Chair confirmed that after a lengthy discussion with the Solicitor, Councillor Oliver would continue to participate in the discussion on the item and vote.

The Solicitor referred to page 145 of the Council's Constitution. Councillor Oliver had confirmed that he had an open mind, had not expressed any views on the application prior to the committee meeting and would make his decision on what he had heard at the meeting. It was his decision as to whether he should participate.

Many of the Members commented on the historic parking problems in the village, the proposed additional car parking spaces, the economic benefits of tourism, reference to considerations within the NNPF and local policies and whether the mitigation of the proposed additional parking spaces was sufficient.

Upon being put to the vote the results were as follows:-

FOR: 10; AGAINST: 2; ABSTENTIONS: 0.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** permission for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report and that delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning to determine appropriate wording of conditions to be added to secure landscaping and safety features of the car park.

174. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

The report provided information on the progress of planning appeals.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

On the conclusion of the development control business at 4.04 pm, Councillor Gibson vacated the Chair. The meeting adjourned for approximately 5 minutes. Councillor Cessford returned to the Chair and continued the meeting at 4.10 p.m.

175. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

176. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

The Democratic Services Officer reported that a new petition had been received which requested Northumberland County Council implement traffic calming measures on the B6318. Officers had been requested to prepare a report for the meeting on 9 March 2021.

The petition stated that:

‘The B6318 stretch from Chollerford roundabout past Chesters to Walwick was experiencing increased road usage. Road users were not obeying speed limits nor driving with due care and attention to residents, walkers or cyclists. Drivers had a clear line of sight heading to and from the Chollerford roundabout and therefore accelerated, not taking into consideration driveways, Chesters Roman Fort entrance as well as other hidden entrances and country lane junctions. There had been accidents on this stretch of road as well as many near misses.

These rural communities were now very different to what they were even two years ago, and traffic calming measures needed to be implemented with immediate effect to take the changes into account.

The residents of Chollerford and Walwick would like the Council to:

- Establish reduced speed limits on this stretch of the B6318 extending from Chollerford Roundabout through to Walwick.
- Increase signage of speed limits and hazards.
- Ask the police to enforce speed limits and responsible driving.
- Erect speed indicator devices.
- Create road markings to signal no overtaking, to visually narrow the road and to create a safety buffer for pedestrians.
- Create visual-feature entrances to each end of Chollerford and Walwick; including signs requesting drivers to respect these rural communities by slowing down.
- Widen the footpath, in particular between 1 New Houses and the roundabout.”

Residents understood that they might have to assist with costs and would request pledges from the community and fund-raise, in due course.

Councillor Gibson, the local member, stated that the process had already commenced with proposals for a traffic survey included within the LTP Programme, the results of scoring and ranking were awaited.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

There were none to consider.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none to consider.

177. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

Members received the following updates and explanation of the impact of Covid-19 on front line services from the Area Managers from Neighbourhood Services and Technical Services:

Neighbourhood Services:

- 2020 had been a difficult period for frontline services.
- Refuse collection had been particularly challenging since 2 January 2021 due to icy road conditions and had resulted in significant missed collections. Officers supported decisions made by drivers to return to depots on safety grounds due the possible consequences of these large vehicles sliding out of control. Extra wagons had been deployed the previous Friday and also during the current week to catch up as much as they were able; extra rubbish would be removed in affected areas.
- 9 members of refuse staff were currently unable to work either due to shielding and underlying health conditions or isolating after positive Covid tests.
- Grounds and street cleansing staff were being deployed as part of gritting rotas or clearance of town centre footpaths.
- Leaf clearance was up to date, but areas of concern could continue be reported. The sweeper could be deployed unless the ground and leaves were frozen.
- Work on shrubs and hedges continued if causing an obstruction on the highway, those in private ownership were referred to staff to inform land owners.
- The process to recruit seasonal summer staff had commenced.
- 3 glass recycling collections had now been undertaken since the trial had commenced. Presentation rates and yields had exceeded expectations.
- The free tree scheme had commenced during December with a significant proportion of the 15,000 items being distributed. However, the scheme had to be suspended during the current lockdown and would be resumed when possible.

He acknowledged 30 years' service and the contribution made by Peter Daley, Refuse Senior Team Leader, who had recently retired.

Technical Services:

- Highways Investment Programme – 42 out of 51 footway and carriageway schemes had been completed in Tynedale with the remainder scheduled for completion prior to the end of the years, weather permitting.
- Hedge to hedge works had been completed around Sandhoe, Henshaw, Bardon Mill and Melkridge areas with over 7.5 of ditching works conducted in these areas alone. Further hedge to hedge work would be taking place around Catton and Allendale and would also include renewal of road signs.

- Maintenance work and inspections had continued to be undertaken by highways inspectors with actionable defects being repaired
- Gully work had continued and would be concentrated in Prudhoe and Corbridge in the near future.
- Updates on Members schemes would be provided by the Area Manager on his return from leave.
- Removal of standing water from the road surface remained a priority and requests for work around Haltwhistle were to be combined.
- Staff were working with the CCG to identify suitable covid testing and vaccination sites and supply grit bins, if required.

Winter Service Preparedness and Resilience Report

Winter services activities were undertaken to ensure that, as far as practical, the highway was maintained in a safe condition, in accordance with legal obligations under the Highways Act 1980. They planned to respond appropriately to forecast weather conditions and have sufficient manpower and resources available.

- 65 full or partial gritting operations had taken place from November 2020 to date, including 10 high route runs.
- 11,500 tonnes of grit had been used across the network and to deal with snow events.
- Contractors (farmers) also provided critical assistance on rural routes.

Issues raised by Councillors included:

- Grit bins were being refilled promptly. Telephone numbers and grit bin references were located on all bins and empty bins could be reported by members of the public.
- Alerts were released on social media to report when gritting work would be carried out, times and areas. Information on routes was also available on the winter services pages of the council's website. Further work was being undertaken to see how systems could be improved.
- Equipment and training were available for snow warden volunteers.
- Hillside water run off was a concern and required urgent attention at Woodside Villas, Hexham.
- The gulleys in Elansgate required clearing.
- A grit heap was requested at Scales Cross on the A68.

Officers and members expressed their gratitude to essential frontline staff in Local Services for their continued work over the festive period and during the most difficult period ever faced. A number of examples were provided where members had been grateful for prompt assistance by officers.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

Councillor Kennedy left the meeting.

178. BUDGET 2021 – 22 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Local Area Council received a presentation as part of the State of the Area debate which outlined the Council's strategy for the 2020-21 Budget within the context of the Corporate Plan. The presentation provided details of the approach to setting the budget for the next financial year and the broad impact this would have on the delivery of services. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the minutes of the meeting.)

Councillor Oliver, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Councillor Wearmouth, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development gave the presentation which covered:

Budget 2021-22 Approach

- Services most important to residents and business were to be maintained.
- The most vulnerable in communities would continue to be supported whilst giving communities more control.
- Leading economic recovery following the pandemic, investing in future economic growth and delivering a green recovery.
- Meeting budget challenges through a programme of continuous innovation and improvement.

State of the Area

- **Public Health** – details of the most up to date coronavirus cases in Northumberland were provided. It was hoped that figures had peaked in Northumberland, but it was important that everyone continued to follow Government guidance.
- **Economy** – Covid had a significant impact on the economy, particularly in rural and coastal areas where employment in the tourism and the hospitality sectors were greater. An environment needed to be created to allow the economy to recover quickly. Many workers had been furloughed during the pandemic with an increase of 62% in unemployment figures since March 2020, particularly those from retail, leisure and hospitality sectors. It was hoped these sectors would be able to recover quickly following the lifting of restrictions with work being undertaken to development the tourism sector.
- **Council Services** - Throughout Covid services of most importance to residents and businesses had been maintained. New ways of working had successfully been adapted with digital solutions having been embraced. Services continued to improve and innovate; Children's Services had been rated by Ofsted as 'Good' in 2020. Local democracy had been maintained by switching to virtual meetings and preparations continued for local elections.

Budget 2021-22: Financial Context

- Savings target circa £8.3 million.
- Improvement of frontline services.

- Increasing demand for services.
- Covid-19 pandemic.
- Ambitious capital programme.
- Continued investment in infrastructure and services whilst delivering savings.

Details were provided of the funding analysis from 2014 – 2024 along with the overall funding arrangements. Adult Social Care was to be increased by 3%, over the next two-year period. Information was also provided on the savings to be made by each directorate and the summary of savings by year. It was proposed that Council Tax would be increased by 1.99%. Investment was to be balanced with manageable debt as previous levels of debt had not been considered to be sustainable.

Budget 2021-22: Summary

- The budget position, whilst challenging, was under control.
- Through managing debt better, revising assumptions around social care and local government reform, the savings gap had been reduced.
- The organisation was in much better shape to do more and provide better value.
- Increased costs and growing pressures in demand remain, particularly in adult and children's services.
- Tough decisions were still to be made but the Administration was committed to protecting the most vulnerable.
- Ambitions for the future included a targeted £748 million capital investment programme.
- Investment from North of Tyne Devolution Deal to make a real difference in people's lives.
- Potential of the Borderlands Growth Deal to act as a catalyst for further investment.
- To highlight all that was great about Northumberland as a place to work, live, visit and do business.

Budget 2021-22: Next Steps

- The budget consultation had started on 10 December 2020 with in excess of 450 responses.
- Views from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Local Area Councils were invited with consideration of the final version by Full Council in February.

Councillor Wearmouth presented details of the investment programme going forward.

- **Investing in Growth** – details of Northumberland's strengths were highlighted. This included reference to: a strong agricultural sector, an internationally recognised tourism and creative sector, natural capital and green businesses in the Port of Blyth, opportunities for offshore wind and

the recent announcement by Britishvolt about manufacturing electric car batteries.

- **Investing in the transition to a future economy** - opportunities in South East Northumberland to lead the green revolution and ensure that residents would benefit from the jobs created.
- **Investing in our places, culture and tourism** – the introduction of passenger rail services between Ashington and Newcastle were close to being secured and funding was being sought to transform the corridor throughout that route. Town deals were being sought for Blyth, Ashington and Bedlington. There was an Ambitious Capital Development Programme and as part of Borderland Investment and potential for mini town deals, including Haltwhistle and Bellingham and a commerce heritage action zone in Hexham.
- **Investing in transport and digital connectivity** - improvements to address gaps in infrastructure for internet and broadband connectivity; dualling of the A1 and other strategic road improvements, reopening of Gilsland railway station which was supported by local MPs.
- **Investing in people, jobs, skills and livelihoods** –the Energy Learning Hub project in Blyth; maximise training and opportunities for residents in Northumberland, part of which was ensuring the influence of the kickstarter programme and Education Challenge Fund.
- **Investing in a rural green recovery** - significant aims in terms of Low Carbon Heat Networks, expansion of the Great Northumberland Forest; investing in renewable energy; expansion of the network of electric vehicle chargers and investing in green homes.

Councillor Dale sought clarification of the total impact of increases on Adult Social Care of 1.75% for 2021-22 and proposed increase of 1.99% on Council Tax. Some residents were having a difficult time and were experiencing problems paying bills. Councillor Oliver agreed that the impact of these increases would be made very clear.

The Chair thanked Councillors Oliver and Wearmouth for their presentation.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

179. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

At 5.20 pm it was agreed that standing orders be suspended to continue the meeting beyond the 3 hour limit.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, standing orders be suspended and the meeting continue over the 3 hour limit.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

180. COVID UPDATE

The Chair advised that this item had been withdrawn as Members had received an update at Council the previous week and regular briefings were being held for Members.

181. 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 as Appendix B.)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

182. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 9 February 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

183. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair reminded members of the deadline for the final tranche of Community Chest funding which closed on Friday 15 January 2021.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____