

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Committee** held at Cramlington Voluntary Youth Project on Wednesday 24 July 2024 at 6:00 pm.

PRESENT

M Swinburn (Chair)

MEMBERS

L Bowman
E Chicken

M Robinson
R Wilczek

OFFICERS

L Bewick
H Bowers
R Mason
A Peadon

Library Supervisor
Democratic Services Officer
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Library Service Manager

ALSO PRESENT

C Ashworth
A Fellows

Northumberland CAB

A Madjin
D Beattie

Samatha's Legacy

Public: 5

12. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded members of the pre-election period guidelines and restrictions on political publicity.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Daley, Ferguson, Flux, Lee, and Taylor.

14. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Joanne Hogg, Bedlington

Referred to the removal of trees for the cycle route on the B1331 and why no information had been provided.

Councillor Robinson explained that he had requested details at the public consultation and that no information had been received. The Chair stated that this would be taken forward and information requested from the Leader.

R Hogg, North Ridge, Bedlington

At a meeting in December, the Leader had stated that safety measures and traffic calming would be installed. As yet, there were no signage measures. Members were informed that planning had been approved for the signs and were waiting to be installed. After that, any speeding would be the responsibility of the police.

A Hogg, Bedlington

At the last meeting he had spoken on behalf of a resident who had submitted a petition and was disappointed that there had been no response to issues raised and queried whether there was a resource issue, or if issues were being ignored.

Members discussed the issue and stated that lack of communication needed to be raised. The Chair stated that he would contact the Leader/Deputy Leader to see if there were ways communication could be improved.

A request was also put forward for the Chair to consider a public meeting in Bedlington for LCWIPs (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans).

15. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

The following updates were given on Neighbourhood Services:

NEAT GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Grass Cutting

- A wet start to the grass cutting season with saturated ground conditions prevented the teams commencing their respective programmes earlier which had hoped to begin mid-March.
- The teams were able to commence these programmes, although later than hoped, and continued to do so.
- The programmes, since they commenced, had been interrupted due to a number of rain weather events. However, teams had been undertaking weekend work to compensate for some of the lost days.

- Target number of cuts for this season were again 10 to 13 in Cramlington and Bedlington, 16 to 20 in Seaton Valley currently on cut 5 in Bedlington and Cramlington and cut 8 in Seaton Valley.

Weed Control

- The wet start to the season, combined with almost perfect growing conditions (warm and wet) for weed growth, had impacted on this too with a challenge across the county and in the region.
- The application of chemical treatments was even more dependent on weather conditions than grass cutting. Excessive wet weather conditions, and weather forecasts had to be considered, as windy conditions could affect treatments as the treatment could be ineffective or even drift into / onto areas that should not be treated.
- The respective teams had been treating their areas and deploying mechanical removal methods to remove weed growth.
- Four additional agency workers had been recruited to support across the LAC area. The agency workers had been deployed to work with existing teams to physically remove weeds.

Street Sweeping

- Mechanical sweepers continued to be deployed across their respective areas. As they become older, a number of mechanical challenges were faced in keeping them on the road.
- Working with colleagues in the transport section.
- Please bring any areas in need of sweeping to our attention.

Bereavement Services

- The dedicated team in BS were working well.
- The crematorium was working well, and any programmed maintenance had been undertaken and any unexpected maintenance arranged as soon as possible.

WASTE SERVICES

- Other than a few minor vehicle breakdowns, staffing shortages, residual, recycling, and garden waste collection services were all operating well.
- Garden Waste collections had resumed and were also operating well.
- Teams would continue to review existing collection rounds to cope with ongoing housing growth as well as continued growth in take up of the garden waste service.

Members to email Tony Gribbin with any issues.

Russell Mason, Area Highways Manager provided the following updates:

- Highways Inspectors and response gangs continued inspecting and fixing carriageway/footway defects, with all planned routine inspections currently up to date.
- The Gully emptier had been fully deployed and was dealing with reactive maintenance. Support was hired in when needed.

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

- Dudley Lane, Cramlington
- Cornhill Road, Cramlington
- Westmorland Way, Cramlington
- Palace Road, Bedlington
- Fontburn Road, S. Delaval (flag to flex)
- Westlands, S. Sluice (flag to flex)
- Front Street, Seghill
- Ancroft Road, S. Delaval
- Park Road, S. Delaval
- Western Avenue, S. Delaval
- Debdon Place, Cramlington (flag to flex)
- Weldon Road, Cramlington
- Briardale, Bedlington
- Double Row, New Hartley
- Burt Road, Bedlington

Drainage Improvements:

- A1068 Portland Terrace (drainage- Clearing/ Surveying lines)
- A1171 Station Road- Hubbway (renew gullies/ clear lines)
- A1171 Azure Garden Centre (renew gullies/ install new line)
- B1505 Cramlington Shankhouse Community Centre (renew gully/ install new catchpit)
- Newburgh Av, Seaton Delaval (install Acos)
- Alexandra Park, Cramlington (verge works/ drainage)
- B1505 near sea view villas (footpath scrape back)
- A192 Keel Row (ditching work)
- Palace Road, Bedlington (carriageway depression)
- Sheldon Grove, Cramlington (install Acos/ new gullies)
- Wheatridge, Seaton Delaval (install new field drain)

Upcoming Drainage

- Arcot Lane, Cramlington (trial pits ongoing. Drainage work in the programme following trial pits)
- Deneside, Seghill (drainage- flooding issues)
- Portland Gardens, Cramlington (drainage- flooding issues)
- A1147 Bedlington – (Gully to renew)

LTP - Carriageway Resurfacing

LTP Carriageway Resurfacing schemes had been carried out in the following locations:

- Church Avenue, Sleekburn. - Completed
- Avon Court, New Hartley. - Completed
- Elwin Close, Seaton Sluice – Completed

Upcoming LTP Resurfacing works

- A192 Holywell – Programmed for 29th July for 6 consecutive nights, 20:00 – 06:00
- Seghill Level Crossing – Programmed for 8th August for 5 consecutive nights, 20:00 – 06:00
- A1068 Snowy Owl – Programmed for 19th August for 2 nights, 20:00 – 06:00
- A1068 Fisher Lane – Programmed for 2nd August for 5 consecutive nights, 20:00 – 06:00
- Low Main Place, civils work programmed for 21st August for 2 weeks, day shift closure working in small areas between the hours of 09:00 and 15:00, bus hub to be moved to Station Road. Resurfacing will then take place on 16th September for 6 consecutive nights, 20:00 – 06:00

Other work/Schemes/Micro.

Micro surfacing preparation:

- Works completed at Ringwood Drive, Cramlington.
- Preparation work at Kendal Drive starts 01/08/24 for 4 days.

Micro Surfacing contractors were expected to start early September.

Members raised the following:

- Flooding at Deneside, Seghill – further investigation would be carried out with the contractor.
- Surfacing on Dudley Lane, similar to Westmoreland Way – this would be looked at.
- Low Main Place and Station Road, speed humps, LTP - this would be investigated
- The bus stop at Barns Park and road surfacing.

Thanks were conveyed to the team.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and issues set out in the bullet points in members' comments be followed up.

16. SAMANTHA'S LEGACY

Alison Madigan and Donna Beattie were in attendance and explained the story behind Samantha's Legacy.

The key points included:

- Samantha's story and the background of the attack
- Prevention and awareness of knife crime
- Support, education and engagement of people and victims of knife crime
- Educational anti-knife crime workshops; 1:1 anti-knife crime sessions
- They hoped to work with councillors to ban machete knives
- The launch of the Knife Angel to Gateshead
- Funding via Crowdfunding had been raised for Wild Rose Theatre Group
- A victim retreat was opened in 2022 for families affected by knife crime
- It was hoped a Bleed Kit scheme would be adopted similar to the defibrillator scheme.

The presentation would be circulated via email to members of the committee.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

18. ENERGISE SE NORTHUMBERLAND

Carol Ashworth and Alison Fellows, Northumberland CAB were in attendance and shared presentations on the work of the Energy Team at Citizen's Advice Northumberland and on the new collaborative project EnergiSE Northumberland.

Key points from the presentations: -

Energy Project

- The Specialist Energy Project had been established 6 years ago
- Current funders and partners - Energy Redress Scheme, Northern Powergrid, Northern Gas Networks
- Referral routes included self-referral, NCT and other departments of CAB
- Provision of a holistic service – identifying issues and help with applying for benefits
- Caseworkers help clients to investigate issues, complaints, and customer service
- Advice was free and based on individual needs
- On going work with caseworkers dealing with complaints and supporting clients with applications to energy trusts
- Members were informed of energy impact stories and the outcomes

EnergiSE Project

- A new project running from April 2024 to March 2026 funded by Northern Gasworks

- Energy caseworker support included energy efficiency survey and advice. Applications to emergency fuel voucher scheme. Support to help set up payment arrangements
- Welfare Benefit Advisor support with benefit checks, benefit application forms, support with appeals and tribunals
- Money caseworker support to understand problems with debt, income, and expenditure forms. A specialised debt adviser would identify debt and create a budget based on income and find a debt solution.

Members were invited to visit the service.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

19. LIBRARY AREA PROSPECTUS

Members received a presentation on the development of the Library Area Prospectus - how the service was applying the Universal Library Offers to the local area priorities. A Peaden, Library Services Manager and L Bewick, Library Supervisor were in attendance.

A copy of the presentation would be circulated to members and uploaded with the minutes to the website. The committee was advised that the Library Local Area Prospectus was aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives specifically in relation to tackling inequalities and to positively impact health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. This would be delivered by four Universal Library Offers:

Health and wellbeing: Healthier, Happier, Connected

Information and Digital: Inform, Inspire, Innovate

Reading: Engage Imagine, Discover

Culture and Creativity: Explore, Create, Participate

There were five library locations in the area: The Hub library was situated within the Community Hub building in Cramlington; Bedlington library; Bedlington Station (within East Bedlington Community Centre; Seaton Sluice (within Seaton Sluice Community Centre) and Seaton Valley Library (within Astley High School).

Libraries, depending on the demographics of users, offered a range of activities for residents, for example Bedlington library offered health walks, and a bereavement group along with reading groups and a story session.

Cramlington and Bedlington populations had a spread of population with the majority being 60 years old and below in contrast to the rest of the country.

The Children's Promise – in the Cramlington area, 502 children had taken part in last year's Summer Reading Challenge, with 337 children completing. Library staff visited 13 schools out of 28 in the area to promote the challenge and engaged children in talking about the library.

ASCEL Children’s Library Journeys Report - the report stated that libraries were vital in the development of children’s early learning and cultural development, speaking, listening, literacy and social and emotional skills.

In addition to services offered to children and young people, it was proposed to prioritise engagement with families of newborns and address the drop in borrowing by 10+ by establishing stronger links with schools and family hubs. Staff training and engagement would be prioritised as would improving public awareness of study facilities available and piloting the ‘Study Happy’ initiative.

The digital inclusion work across the community supports ageing well and can improve older people’s way of lives, including help with online shopping and banking. Currently a digital reading offer via Borrowbox and Pressreader was provided in addition to free access to online resources, e.g. Ancestry, Find My Past. STEM workshops had been delivered including LEGO Spike coding workshops and tech crafts. Volunteer Digital Champions helped on a 1-2-1 basis with technical queries and support.

To improve the Library Service offer for older people, promotion would continue with customers and partners asking what they wanted; prioritisation of Home Library service, recruitment of volunteers and other forms of community engagement leading to an increase in the range of events and activities offered.

This year marked the centenary of Northumberland Libraries and would be celebrated by a poetry competition for adults; birthday cards from children and the sharing of stories and memories of what the library service had meant to people in the county over the years. Updates could be found on the Northumberland Libraries social media and website.

Members were asked for any ideas or suggestions to continue to improve the service.

Member suggestions included Will writing; local history groups with speakers; ‘Quiet Time’ or silent pods; hoarding advertisements; jigsaws of each town in relative libraries; help with online GP appointments; linking with NCC to assist with online services.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and the information provided.

20. WORK PROGRAMME:

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

21. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 21 August (Planning)
Wednesday 25 September.

CHAIR

DATE