

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a virtual meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held on **Thursday, 19 November 2020** at **2.00 pm**

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor G Castle  
(Chair in the Chair for items 147-150 and 156-162)

Councillor T Thorne  
(Vice-Chair (Planning) in the Chair for items 151-155)

#### **MEMBERS**

Bridget SC  
Hill GER  
Murray AH  
Pattison W

Renner-Thompson G  
Roughead GA  
Seymour C  
Watson JG

#### **OFFICERS**

Brown J  
Bucknall G  
Cartmell V  
Dixon L  
Hodgson B  
Hudson J  
Little L  
Masson N  
Sinnamon E  
Williams M

Public Health Consultant  
Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Principal Planning Officer  
Democratic Services Assistant  
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager  
Planning Officer  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Principal Solicitor  
Senior Planning Manager  
Team Leader - ICT Practitioner SIFA

#### **147. PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT A VIRTUAL LOCAL AREA COUNCIL (PLANNING)**

The Chair outlined the procedure which would be followed at the virtual meeting and of the changes to the public speaking protocol. He also advised Members that if their connection was lost during consideration of an application and it was not possible for a short recap to be provided then the Member would not be allowed to vote on the application.

#### **148. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Clark.

#### **149. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday 1 October 2020 and Thursday 22 October 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

#### **150. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Castle declared that he had a personal and prejudicial interest in item 7, Tree Preservation Order as his son was employed by Northumberland Estates who were objecting and he would leave the meeting for this item.

#### **151. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The report (attached as **Appendix A** to the signed minutes) requested the Committee 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.

#### **152. 19/04930/FUL**

**Erection of a rural workers dwelling with attached car port.  
Land South East of the Hope Farm, Longframlington, Northumberland**

J Hudson, Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the aid of a power point presentation advising that one objection had been received and this was from CPRE Northumberland.

There were no questions in respect of the Site visit videos which had previously been circulated.

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

- Any future request for the removal of the condition restricting the occupation of the resident of the proposed dwelling to the agricultural business would require an application for the variation or removal of that condition. As this was a development which would not have normally been considered in the open countryside it was not likely that this condition would be lifted.
- The Parish Council had been provided with the information regarding the agricultural worker, however they still maintained their objection.
- Whilst policies did not generally support development in the open countryside, there were some exceptions and it was considered in this instance appropriate to support essential farming need. The proposed development was an agricultural dwelling within the farmstead. The

design and massing of the proposed development was acceptable for the farmstead.

- The agricultural clause would allow a member of the farmer's family farm to live on the site enabling the functions of the farm to take place, it was on the edge of the farmstead and adjacent to other agricultural buildings.

Councillor Bridgett proposed acceptance of the officer recommendation to approve the application with the conditions outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Watson.

The Chair advised that he was fully supportive of this application within his Ward which was a genuine application from the family.

A vote was taken as follows: FOR 7; AGAINST 1; ABSTENTION 2.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

Councillor Castle left the meeting for the following item.

**153. Tree Preservation Order (TPO)  
Town and Country Planning Act 1990  
(Land in the grounds of the former Dukes Middle School, The Dunterns,  
Alnwick)  
Tree Preservation Order 2020  
(No. 4 of 2020)**

V. Cartmell, Principal Planning Officer introduced the report to the Committee with the aid of a power point presentation, advising that since publication a further letter of support had been received from Alnwick Town Council. This had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

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

- The landowner had objected to the TPO as they felt it was unnecessary as a condition had been added to the planning permission for the site to provide protection to the trees. Officers felt it was appropriate for the TPO to provide protection as the granted permission might not come forward.
- The TPO would cover all trees and whilst the planning permission had not yet been issued, it would allow for the removal of those trees previously identified as part of the application for removal.
- It was confirmed that the trees were well established.

Councillor Hill proposed acceptance of the recommendation as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Seymour.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the Tree Preservation Order be confirmed without modification for the reasons set out at paragraphs 7.1 – 7.3 in the report.

Councillor Castle re-joined the meeting at this point.

**154. S106 AGREEMENTS UPDATE REPORT**

**RESOLVED** that the information provided be noted.

**155. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information provided be noted.

**OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**156. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There had been no public questions submitted.

**157. COVID UPDATE**

J Brown, Consultant in Public Health for the Council provided an update to Members advising that there had been a steep increase in the number of positive cases in November after a plateau at the end of September and through October. Between the 9th to the 11th November had seen the highest number of positive cases and it was thought this could be due to the half term school holidays or pre-lockdown behaviour, although these numbers were now starting to fall. Whilst the majority of positive cases had been within the South East of the County, all Wards within the County had reported positive cases with larger numbers of cases now being seen in Alnwick, Bamburgh and Berwick. The number of positive tests for the last seven days was 879 across Northumberland with 92 in the North of the County. This was still a high level compared to August/September. The age group with the highest number of positive cases in the North was 40-49 compared to the rest of the County which was within younger age groups. There was also concern with an increase in positive cases in the over 65s in all areas. The Committee was advised of the four dedicated wrap-around outbreak prevention groups for specific groups of residents. Half of the Public Health team were now dealing with outbreaks in schools and some outbreaks had also happened within care homes which unfortunately had resulted in some deaths. The local testing site in Spittal had come online the previous week which was managed by the NHS and a mobile testing site was still also operating in Berwick. The Council's care home visiting policy was in line with national guidance had been sent out the previous week and Covid champions were being recruited to help with myth busting. The Behavioural Insights and the Regional Behaviour Change Campaign was ongoing and work would be undertaken with care home staff on this. The testing of NHS staff and the use of later flow tests was highlighted with the logistics being looked at and the preparation of the NHS for a

vaccination programme. It was still important that focus was also kept on handwashing, space and the use of masks and cleaning of work areas.

The Chair thanked Dr Brown for his update and highlighted inconsistencies within the current lockdown arrangements for exercise classes to be held outdoors. Dr Brown advised that whilst it was important to get out it was important to reduce social contact and the best advice was for residents not to mix.

Councillor Bridgett advised that he stood by his comments made at a previous meeting when Councillor Hill requested greater engagement and the need for more public involvement, in that the County had moved into Tier 2 too quickly without any discussion and Councillors had not been advised of this in advance. He questioned what the outcome for the County would be after the Country came out of lockdown on 2 December. Dr Brown advised that prior to lockdown the Council had been in negotiations with the Department of Health on moving into Tier 3 and he was of the opinion that based on the current figures the Council would be in that Tier after lockdown and there would be no negotiations. Tier 2 had only enabled the figures to plateau and Tier 3 would be needed to actually reduce the number of cases.

Councillor Hill hoped that we would continue to be able to have these discussions in this forum in order to give the North Northumberland perspective but had hoped to be moving away from the Tier system. Whilst the majority of residents had welcomed the testing site at Spittal, neighbours had reported issues with noise and floodlighting of the site after it had closed for the night. She also asked that more education be provided on how the virus was spread and information provided on the bubble system and how this worked when travelling across the border into Scotland. Dr Brown would feed back issues regarding the noise and ask that this be kept to a minimum but it was difficult when having to rely on generators. He would also seek advice on the question of cross border travel. The current advice was not to spend any time within 2 metres of anyone, wear a face covering and PPE if required in a work environment. Being within 1 metre – 2 metres for 15 minutes or more significantly increased the risk of contracting Covid.

The numbers using the new testing sites had been requested from Deloittes but that information had not yet been provided, however this data was confidential so clarification would need to be sought on if this could be shared with Members. It was stressed that appointments were still required to attend these new sites and residents could not just walk in and request a test. Members asked that updates continue to be made to the Local Area Councils, and Dr Brown was thanked for his attendance.

## **158. PETITIONS**

No new petitions were received nor were there any updates on petitions previously considered.

## **159. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2020/21 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE**

North Northumberland Local Area Council – 19 November 2020

P. Jones, Service Director Local Services, introduced the report (attached as **Appendix C** to the signed minutes) highlighting the scale of the challenge in delivering this plan this year during extremely challenging circumstances. He advised that in addition to the £18.591m LTP programme which had been approved on the 2 April 2020, a further capital investment of £15m had been made for the highway maintenance of U and C roads and footways across 2020/21 and 2021/22 with an initial programme worth £10m approved for the first phase within 2020/21. The Council had also secured £11.4m in funding from the Government with an initial programme of £9m as the first phase approved on 20 August 2020. The Council was one of a few Councils who had been successful in securing a third award of DfT Challenge funds following a bid for £3.7m towards an overall £4.8m Steel Bridge Refurbishment Programme.

Covid had resulted in some delays to the delivery of the programme with the initial focus on ensuring emergency and reactive repairs could be safely undertaken. The steps taken to ensure safe working methods and adaptations to plant and equipment were outlined which had enabled the construction programme to restart in June 2020. Design and office based staff were able to successfully work remotely from home. Updates were provided in relation to the road maintenance programme with the remaining resurfacing schemes programmed to be substantially completed during the remainder of the financial year and the annual surface dressing programme completed in mid-September. The micro-surfacing programme in more urban areas had been completed. An additional £9m allocated to the maintenance programme had allowed the opportunity to extend or enhance schemes which had already been in the current year's LTP. The improvements to footway and cycling networks was highlighted and progress on bridge projects was provided. Information was provided on landslip repairs and the work being undertaken for a long-term solution to the problems on the B6344 at Todsteads, along with drainage works undertaken at Longframlington and works on the C road running past Winter's Gibbet and Harwood Forest near Elsdon.

The work undertaken by all staff in delivering the massive programme in challenging circumstances was recognised and he thanked staff for undertaking the additional duties and for their continuing help in keeping the County safe for its residents and visitors.

Mr Jones was thanked for his comprehensive update. He would clarify who was funding work being undertaken on Bondgate Tower in Alnwick and the position on the replacement of signs regarding Covid in areas where they were deteriorating. In response to a question regarding the funding of the long term solution for the problems at Todsteads, Members were advised that some of the additional £11.4m funding had been retained for this and the scheme would also be included in the next two years LTP as it was likely to be a multi-year scheme. Once options and costings were known these would be shared with Members.

## **160. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATES**

North Northumberland Local Area Council – 19 November 2020

G Bucknall, Highways Delivery Area Manager, provided information on several resurfacing schemes which had been completed in the North of the County, advising that two schemes in Spittal would also be completed before Christmas. Signs regarding social distancing would be checked within towns and replaced if required. Members welcomed all the work that had been undertaken on improving the roads in the North of the County and thanked Mr Bucknall and his team.

- It would be clarified if road markings on the road from Alnwick Fords to Longframlington where resurfacing works had been undertaken would be repainted, as requested by Councillor Thorne.
- An email had been received in relation to the road at Elyhaugh Farm to which Mr Bucknall would respond and he would also go out to investigate the current condition of the road. It was highlighted that this farm provided contracted winter services on behalf of the Council and the area depended on them being able to provide this service.
- The current position in relation to Rothbury Road traffic calming measures would be followed up.
- Resurfacing of Billendean Road work was about to commence and Councillor Hill questioned if residents had been consulted regarding the removal speed humps. This would be clarified with Neil Snowdon.
- The floodgate at the West End was currently being manufactured and would be ready for installation in the next few weeks. Councillor Hill would email the concerns raised by a resident that the stonewalls were now actually coming down.
- There were two further days' work scheduled on the road at Great Tossen for 14 December.
- Funding was allocated for footpath works on both Swansfield Park Road and Wagonway Road in Alnwick and the work would be completed by the end of March.

B Hodgson, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager advised of the arrangements which had to be put in place to ensure the safety of staff undertaking front line roles during the current pandemic. He also advised of the extra work undertaken to ensure the safety of residents and visitors following the relaxation of the first lockdown period.

In response to comments and questions from Members the following was noted and would be followed up if necessary:-

- The weeds at Market Cross in Belford had already been flagged up as an issue and would be dealt with.
- The issue with badgers disturbing graves had been passed to Pest Control who would be attending to look at options, however it was noted that badgers were a protected species. Mr Hodgson would meet with them on site to ascertain what information could be passed to residents.

Members congratulated and thanked both the Neighbourhood Services Area Manager and Highways Delivery Area Manager and their staff for the quality and amount of work that had been undertaken in difficult circumstances.

**RESOLVED** that the information was noted.

#### **161. WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE REPORT**

The report (attached as **Appendix B** to the signed minutes) provided an update on the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season. It was confirmed that rotas were in place and gritters had already been out on the County's road network. There were the same number of routes as in previous years with spare capacity to undertake additional work if the winter was especially severe. If Members should need to contact officers then this should be done via customer services and it was stressed by Members to use this route rather than trying to call officers directly to ensure that their issues were properly logged and addressed where possible to do so, and also to avoid disturbing staff who may not be on duty and in need of rest.

Kris Westerby would be asked to contact Councillor Renner-Thompson regarding gritting at Warrenford. In respect of Councillor Hill's concerns regarding the gritting ranger being moved from Berwick to Alnwick, Members were advised that Berwick would be provided with a better service, the vehicle to be used by the Contractor was a much better vehicle, it being able to navigate the narrow streets and also to carry more salt. It was clarified that the Contractor was purely on stand-by to carry out work on behalf of the Council. Councillor Bridgett asked that if the vehicle used in Rothbury was to be replaced that the V plough would continue to be able to be used as it was extremely useful in this type of terrain. It was further clarified that footpath clearing would be carried out under the same priorities as the previous year.

**RESOLVED** that the information was noted.

#### **162. WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was attached as **Appendix D** to the signed minutes. Members were asked to contact the Chair if there were any issues which they wanted at future meetings and these would be taken to the Local Area Council Chairs' Briefing.

Councillor Bridgett highlighted an announcement due to be made by Government on a new Broadband roll out in which Durham had been chosen to benefit from a pilot scheme but Northumberland had not. He had raised this with the Director of IT, however he asked that an update on the I-Northumberland Broadband rollout be provided at a future meeting.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_



DATE \_\_\_\_\_