

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 14 July 2021 at 6:00 pm** in County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland

PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

MEMBERS

C Ball
D Carr
E Cartie
J Lang
K Nisbet
K Parry

W Ploszaj
M Richardson
E Simpson
A Wallace
A Watson

OFFICERS

H Bowers
P Jones
R Wealleans

Democratic Services Officer
Director – Local Services
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager

Also in attendance: Press (1)

01. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED that the Membership and Terms of Reference for the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council agreed by Council on 26 May 2021 be noted.

The Chair welcomed the new members of the local area council.

02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gallacher, Humphrey, Purvis and Reid.

03. MINUTES 10 MARCH 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 10 March 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Mr Paul Jones, Local Services Director referred to the Petition item regarding the asset transfer of public toilets to Newbiggin Town Council and informed the committee that a report had not yet been to Cabinet and would be reported in due course.

04. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions from the public had been received in advance of the meeting.

05. PETITIONS

- (a) Receive any new petitions** – no new petitions had been received.
- (b) Consider reports on petitions previously received** - no reports to consider.
- (c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered** - no updates to consider.

06. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

The Local Services Director and Local Services and Neighbourhood Services Area Manager were in attendance to provide verbal updates about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work and to respond to issues raised by members.

Highways Services

Mr P Jones, Director of Local Services introduced himself and provided an update as follows:

Risk assessment and methods of working had been reviewed due to the easing of Covid restrictions, with no significant changes in working methods, to ensure safety for employees and public.

The gully emptier was fully deployed dealing with reported issues and cyclic maintenance.

Larger tarmac patching had been carried out in the following locations:

- Amble Close, Blyth
- Cresswell Drive, Blyth
- Castledale Avenue, Blyth
- Bothal Bank
- Spencer Road
- Solingen Estate, Blyth
- Meadowfield, Ashington
- Park Road, Ashington

- Milburn Road, Ashington
- Arundel Square, Ashington

Drainage Improvements:

- Links Road, Blyth
- Avondale Avenue, Blyth
- Laverock Hall Road, Blyth
- Furness Bank, Bebside
- Curlew Way, Blyth
- Croft Road, Blyth
- Chestnut Street, Ashington
- Gattaca, Ashington
- Cheviot View, Ashington
- Rosalind Street, Ashington

Tarmac Resurfacing Work:

- Druridge Crescent, Blyth
- Renwick Road, Blyth
- Briardene roundabout, Ashington
- College Road, Ashington
- Swaledale Road, Blyth
- Laverock Hall Road, Blyth
- Simonside, Newbiggin

Microsurfacing Preparation Work:

- William Street, Blyth
- Jubilee Street, Blyth
- Woodhorn Lane, Ashington
- Bywell Road, Ashington
- Barnston, Ashington

Bridge Refurbishment

The A189 Klondyke Bridge would be undergoing concrete repairs and waterproofing during the school holidays, week commencing 19 July. Those works would be carried out under contraflow with three weeks north bound and four weeks south bounds. Advance signage and communications would be carried out in advance.

In response to questions, the following information was provided:

- In response to the query regarding the cycle path scheme and possible congestion, Mr Jones explained that he had not seen details about scheme and a formal consultation process would have to be carried out before any improvements. He added that the majority of residents were supportive of the scheme.

- The flow of traffic at the Grand corner was part of the Portland Park development works, with the highways schemes partially beginning through Portland Park. A design review would be carried out to determine the best way forward

Neighbourhood Services

Mr R Wealleans, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager provided an update as follows:

- Residual recycle waste collections continued to go well but new builds were a concern as they continued to stretch services. A review as being carried out.
- The garden waste had also stretched services with perfect growing conditions increasing the weight in grass, and more trips to the tip adding more time to the day.
- A garden waste review would be undertaken at the end of the season to look for efficiencies and make the service more manageable
- There were 569 new customers in the area this year so far and a total of 9918 customers at present in the south east.

Grass Cutting

- Now between cut 6/7.
- Grass cutting proved to be a significant challenge for the teams in the early part of the year.
- There had been a prolonged period of rain which lasted most of May, then very warm weather making the grass grow rapidly
- This presented two challenges – the first was to complete the cutting rounds efficiently to avoid having long and unmanaged grass on view. The second had been the inevitable grass arisings left following the cut of grass which was longer than usual
- It was acknowledged that for reasons beyond control, standard wasn't as high as hoped for during the month of June, but conditions has stabilised.
- Nightshift would be started soon on the A189 for grass, verge cutting and cleansing

Weeds

- Service was being delivered in house again this year
- This year had seen an unprecedented growth in grass and weed around Northumberland with issues within Ashington and Blyth areas
- The in-house approach had worked well in previous years, so the same method would be adopted this year.
- The service was slightly behind where they were last year with weather conditions affecting weed growth creating another challenge
- Blyth had 100% coverage but weeds were starting to show in the areas completed in May/June
- Teams had been out in Ashington carrying out a new trial with weed rippers to remove more stubborn areas of concern along with the pedestrian sweepers with full streel brushes on cleaning the channels

- There were some issues with Japanese knotweed which were being addressed with specialised treatment
- A second pass on weed killing would be carried out straight away

Glyphosate alternative trial

- A trial of alternative produces was under way county wide in carefully chosen locations
- Results would be analysed and products would either be considered for use of in future or excluded on the grounds of poor performance or prohibitive costs
- The following alternative methods were be trialed:
 - Walk behind weed ripper brush (mechanical with immediate results)
 - Nonanoic acid - colourless oily liquid with an unpleasant smell
 - Pelargonic acid – causes extremely rapid and non-burn down
 - Burning with lance
 - Hot foam
 - Nomix dual – glyphosate based uses less chemicals
- A formal report would be produced at the end of the trial outlining the findings.
- Testing has been carried out on memorials for safety
- Glass recycling on going in Bedlington and to date 578 tonne had been collected throughout the 4 trials areas. The trial was going really well.

In response to questions the following information was provided:

- Haworth Estates and Northern Rail had been informed of the problem of the knotweed along the railway line in Ashington. This would be followed up again when the Parks and Green Spaces Team Leader comes back from leave.
- Residents would not be able to smell those areas that had been treated with Nonanoic acid
- The issues raised by Councillor Wallace regarding excess waste were noted and would be looked into
- Operatives had tried to follow the grass cutters with a strimmer, but this had caused some difficulties. There had been any discrepancies with cuts, but this would be rectified
- A programme of works for gully cleansing was hard to operate as the programme changed with reactive work
- The issue with grass cuttings around sheltered schemes would be taken forward

Thanks were conveyed to officers for all their hard work throughout the difficult challenges.

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

07. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered a list of appointments to outside bodies for 2020/21.

RESOLVED that the following list of appointments be confirmed:

- Blyth Valley Disabled Forum – **K Nisbet**
- Briardale Community & Training Centre Community Association - **Margaret Richardson**
- Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley - **A Wallace**
- Northumberland Community Voluntary Action – To be confirmed

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

08. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2021/22

A progress report had been circulated for information.

Councillor Cartie asked that a proposal be put forward to Cabinet for an increase in the Members' Local Improvement Schemes.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and the proposal be put forward for consideration by Cabinet.

09. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting was for planning items only and, subject to there being any planning business, would take place on Wednesday, 11 August 2021, time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 6.04 pm

Chair _____

Date _____

Chair's Initials.....

Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 14 July 2021