

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 9 November 2021 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T Cessford
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

A Dale
C Horncastle
I Hutchinson
D Kennedy
N Morphet
N Oliver

JR Riddle
A Scott
A Sharp
G Stewart
HR Waddell

OFFICERS

G Gavin
D Hunt

A Olive
S Pearson

M Taylor

N Turnbull
G Younger

Head of Neighbourhood Services
Area Manager (West),
Neighbourhood Services
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Senior Manager - Specialist
Services
Executive Director Wellbeing –
Adult Services
Democratic Services Officer
Accommodation Lead

1 member of the press and 1 member of the public were present.

52. MINUTES

Minute No. 41
21/02542/CCD

Provision of a single storey modular classroom
Corbridge Middle School. Cow Lane, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5HY

It was noted that the name of the Councillor who had seconded the proposal had been omitted from the minutes. This would be checked and circulated.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Minute No. 43
Redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth High School: Update on proposed
Highways works

The name of the scheme in the third bullet point on page 13 be amended to the 'park and stride' initiative.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Tynedale Local Area Council, held on 14 September 2021 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the above amendments.

53. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Riddle declared an interest in item 9 on Winter Services Preparedness and Resilience as he participated in ad-hoc snow clearance.

54. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

55. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

i. Allendale Road (external e-petition)

Tara Wright introduced herself as the Lead Petitioner and a resident of Allendale Road. She explained that she had started the petition as she lived on difficult section of the road where there was blind bend and vehicles regularly exceeded the speed limit. She reported that she was often verbally abused when she tried to leave her driveway. She had posted on a local social media page and had received many comments in support.

Over 2,000 children were now attending the new school and it was extremely problematic trying to cross the road. The paths were unsafe due to their narrow width, overgrown vegetation and the speeding vehicles. She acknowledged that there were also problems on the other roads used as access to the school and suggested that something needed to be done.

Since the petition had opened there had been several accidents, one of which had required the services of the air ambulance. There were also numerous reports of other incidents which had not been reported to the police involving the children stepping in front of cars due to the narrow width of the paths or due to the number of children in the area. It was a major problem, particularly for residents which had 'blind driveways'.

A new led 'slow down' sign had been erected near their house and had flashed for every car which they had monitored over a particular period.

She supported the proposals for 20 mph speed limit in Hexham but suggested that something needed to be put in place to forcibly slow vehicles down before a very serious accident occurred.

Mrs Wright added that her property had been described as unsafe following a visit from Highways earlier in the year.

Many of those signing the petition had left comments of support and copies had been supplied with the petition papers handed over. Some of these had been made by persons who had been traumatised after witnessing accidents.

The problem with the paths were mainly at the bottom end which was slower with vehicles tending to speed at the top where vehicles needed to be forcibly slowed down.

She thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address them.

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that a copy of the petition had been handed over. It would be processed and passed to the relevant officers with a report prepared for a future meeting.

ii. Community campaign to amend the use of Military Road B6318 (e-petition)

It was reported that an e-petition had recently been opened. As it related to areas within Castle Morpeth and Tynedale, a report would be requested for the Petitions Committee, if the threshold was exceeded.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

i. Wylam Right of way path closure; Stephenson Terrace to Country Park repair riverbank subsidence

The Local Area Council was requested to acknowledge and agree the Council's response to a petition which requested repairs to the riverbank, restoration of a path and reopening of a right of way. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the Lead Petitioner had been invited to attend the meeting but was not in attendance.

Greg Gavin, Head of Neighbourhood Services, provided a brief summary of the background of the right of way path closure.

He commented that the area had experienced ground instability issues for many years. As Highway Authority responsible for the management and

maintenance of the rights of way network, repairs had been carried out until the approach had no longer been viable with the advancement of the erosion. Due to safety concerns, it had been necessary to close the footpath in 2013 and divert the right of way.

Officers had held discussions with Wylam Parish Council who owned the land, the adjacent business owner and ward member, and had attempted to assist in seeking quotes from suitably qualified contractors. Unfortunately, no company has been prepared to provide a cost for undertaking site investigation and design works. These had been estimated at £70,000 with a solution possibly exceeding £500,000 in addition to an ongoing maintenance liability.

He reported that the fencing and signage had been improved and inspections were being undertaken on a more regular basis.

It was noted that the regression of the riverside bank continued and had accelerated over the previous year. Without remedial action, it was likely that the access road would be lost and that the nursery business and residential properties would also be adversely affected.

The Local Area Council were informed that there were at least 11 other locations which were affected by landslips affecting public rights of way in the county. Any decision would set a precedent regarding capital works in the future.

Members of the Local Area Council were extremely sympathetic with the situation. However, they were in agreement that it would not be a responsible use of tax payers money given that the Council was not legally of financially responsible.

The following information was given in response to questions from Members:

- Officers had agreed to review and offer informal technical advice on a temporary solution proposed by a local builder. However, they were unable to offer formal assistance.
- If no action were taken, it was likely that the access road would be lost and possibly also the nearby nursery business and residential properties. It was not possible to determine the timeframe, although the erosion had accelerated in the previous 18 months.
- The location of the access road prevented relocation of the business.
- A short 700-meter diversion of the public right of way on to the adjacent Wagonway provided good access to all existing public open spaces.

The Local Area Council unanimously agreed with the recommendations contained in the report.

RESOLVED that

1. The approach taken to respond on the matter, be noted and supported.

2. It be noted that the County Council was not the land owner and therefore had no legal or financial responsibility for the land. Taking any responsibility for this private land would set precedent for how the Council responded to other similar land stability issues elsewhere in the county which would create significant long-term financial liabilities for the Council.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none to consider.

56. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

Members received the following updates from the Area Managers from Neighbourhood Services and Technical Services:

Neighbourhood Services:

- Grass cutting had been completed as the surface was now too wet and damage would be caused by the machines if there were any further cuts. There had been some challenging warm and wet conditions, but the correct number of cuts and standard had been achieved.
- Winter maintenance of shrubs and hedges was underway.
- Street cleansing would be concentrated around war memorials ahead of Remembrance Sunday. Leaf clearance was a priority until the end of the year and they were working through a list of known hot spot locations, but would also respond to reported areas of concern.
- The number of incidents of fly tipping in the Tynedale area had fallen from 97 to 68 for the period April to October when compared with the same period in the previous year. Over 90% of these had been removed within the 3 working day target.
- The grounds and cleansing teams supported the winter gritting rota of roads and town centre footpaths.
- Residual, recycling and garden waste collection services were mainly operating well.
- Access problems due to road works or parked cars had resulted in a few missed waste collections which were normally revisited the following day.
- Income from garden waste and bulky waste collection services had exceeded targets. An annual review of garden collection rounds would be undertaken to assess capacity of the service. The kerbside glass collection trial was proposed to be extended until March 2023 to gather more data. A small number of additional households were also to be included.
- Green Flag status had been awarded to 11 of the Council's parks including Hexham and Eastwood Park, Prudhoe.

Responses to issues raised by Councillors included:

- Mild weather late in the growing season had resulted in some weed regrowth; areas of concern to be reported.
- Demand for the garden waste collection service had been very high which had meant that the income target had been exceeded.
- The kerbside glass collection trial was to be extended to provide more robust data. It was likely that legislative changes would require a broader range of materials to be collected at the kerbside, including food waste, proposals were being developed for a separate food waste trial, but this would be subject to the normal budget approval process. It was understood that these changes would be funded by the Government and would therefore be rolled out when new burdens funding was received.
- They were working with the Climate Change team to determine the carbon footprint of waste collection services. As these were statutory services, the Council was obliged to provide them, but would design efficient routes to minimise the carbon impact.
- The garden waste collection service was at capacity and would require additional resource to enable it to be expanded further into additional locations. The outcome of the Government's consultation was awaited to determine whether the garden waste service would become a mandatory statutory service and whether a levy could continue to be charged.
- Officers were analysing the results of the alternative methods of weed removal and a report would be included in the Forward Plan in due course.

Technical Services:

- Highway Inspections were being carried out and were up to date in the Tynedale area with actionable defects being repaired within the specified timeframe. The number of defects had reduced in recent months.
- The gully wagon and drainage gang continued to work on routes and in areas identified following inspections or reports through CRM. 110 miles of ditching works had been undertaken in the Tynedale area in the previous 12 months.
- Work continued on the Local Transport Plan which included completion of surface dressing works at 33 locations, 22 of 28 highway investment schemes had been completed to date and included footway permanent repairs.
- Members schemes issued to date had been programmed.

Winter Services Preparedness and Resilience:

The following issues were discussed:

- New larger gulley wagons with capacity for jetting and suction were due to be delivered in December. It was understood that an additional machine had been ordered. Information was currently being gathered regarding any additional resources required in advance of the budget setting process.
- Officers were requested to address surface water issues at Whiteside Bank on the A68.

- Urgent works by the utility companies resulted in LTP works being postponed and needing to be reprogrammed.
- Information on a scheme at Wall Village Green to be provided to Councillor Morphet.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

57. WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

The report provided an update on the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season.

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. For the 2021/22 season:

- A 3-weekly rota had commenced on 1 November for 105 staff from Technical and Neighbourhood services including supervisors, drivers and operatives. It would operate until April 2022.
- Existing process had been reviewed to ensure compliance with Covid-19 guidance.
- Introduction of a new IT system and vehicle hardware for specialist winter route management and automated salt spreading technology had been fitted across the gritting fleet. This would enable any driver to be deployed on any gritter on any route.
- 2 winter services managers operated a week on, week off rota to consider forecasting information and determine the appropriate course of action using the Vaisala and MeteoGroup systems. Officers should only be contacted directly in an emergency situation; other incidents should be reported through the Contact Centre.
- The fleet included 28 multi-purpose gritting vehicles. There were 28 primary gritting routes and 26 secondary gritting routes across 11 depots. 44,000 tonnes of salt were held in stock.
- Grit bins / heaps had been replenished; requests for refills could be reported to the website of Contact Centre by quoting the serial number of the bin.
- The 'Highway Services in Winter' leaflet would be available soon following a review of the information contained including details of policies, maps of the primary gritting routes and the strategic footpath network to be treated. This would also be shared with County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils.
- Daily alerts would be issued during the winter using social media.
- Contracts had been reviewed with farmers and sub-contractors who assisted with remote roads in rural Northumberland.

- Snow squads had worked well in previous years and would be utilised again. 12 snow wardens had been trained and provided with equipment in the Tynedale area.
- Cross boundary arrangements were in place with Newcastle City Council, Durham County Council, Cumbria County Council, Scottish Borders Councils, Colas and Highways England to aid each other in periods of heavy snow.
- Winter services were a priority and may impact on other work which would be completed as soon as practicable.

The winter services team were thanked for the prompt replenishment of grit bins and for the work they carried out over the winter months.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

The meeting adjourned for five minutes and resumed at 5.10 pm.

58. NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Maureen Taylor, Executive Director Wellbeing – Adult Services, was in attendance to give a presentation on the work of Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) which had been established in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. (A copy of the presentation was enclosed with the signed minutes). Unfortunately, Paul Brooks, Head of Northumberland Communities Together Hub, had been unable to attend the meeting.

She explained that the service comprised a multi-disciplinary team which worked with community groups and key partners to provide essential services to vulnerable residents in the county and tackle shared challenges.

They aimed to prevent residents becoming more vulnerable, addressing the social determinants of health which included access to healthcare, housing, transport, hunger, fuel etc. Whilst some members of the public had coped initially during the pandemic, others were now identifying themselves as requiring assistance and NCT ensured that the help was available to those that needed assistance in whatever form it was required.

The team was split across front line operational delivery and programme and project delivery. A recent collaboration with Northumbria Police to support violence reduction with a colocated worker.

The Council had been successful in funding bid from North of Tyne Combined Authority to establish community hubs the first of which had been developed in Cramlington, making use of an empty Council building. The library had relocated and was being used by many organisations in the community and was to be replicated in other localities. Discussions were ongoing with communities in the Tynedale area to ascertain natural hub locations and what would be of benefit to those communities. Feedback and ideas from members were welcomed.

The response hub could be contacted by telephone and email, between the hours of 9am – 6pm, 7 days per week, and was available to all.

Pop up activities had been held during lockdown which had enabled contact with vulnerable families, providing advice and assistance. Events had been repeated on request and some communities were now running their own events.

Statistical information included details of:

- Support provided including contacts to clinically extremely vulnerable residents including welfare visits, emergency food parcels, PPE and wellbeing parcels.
- The distribution of statutory aid.
- Community enrichment.

The NCT model had been recognised nationally and was one of five local authorities chosen to develop future plans around the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

Anonymised case studies were provided of the intervention and assistance given to residents which had enabled them to maintain jobs and tenancies.

A summary was provided of the priorities and focus over the winter months, particularly keeping warm and the types of assistance available. Digital connectivity was crucial to enable participation and ensure residents weren't restricted by their location.

NCT were now embedded within the Council as a service and officers were grateful for the support from community groups who had embraced partnership working and had established good relationships. They welcomed opportunities to connect further with new groups as all played a vital role.

It was agreed that the presentation would be circulated to ensure that members had contact details for the West and Tynedale Locality Co-ordinator.

Members expressed their support for the work that had been carried out and were delighted that programmes were receiving national recognition. Thanks, were also given to a number of companies and organisations for their assistance and donations during the pandemic, these included Essity and Bernicia.

It noted that it was important to build resilience in areas of deprivation, address housing need, homelessness and levelling up.

Staff had embraced the opportunity to engage with residents and had found their roles extremely fulfilling. The Executive Director was very proud of all those involved and for the support the Council had given.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

Councillor Horncastle left the meeting.

59. YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION

Sharron Pearson, Senior Manager - Specialist Services and Ginny Younger, Accommodation Lead, were in attendance to provide Members with information on Youth Service Provision. (A copy of the power point presentation was enclosed with the signed minutes).

An overview was provided of the Northumberland Adolescent Service including the role and function of each service area. It included:

- Youth Service
- Sorted Substance Misuse Service
- Youth Justice Service / Exploitation
- 14+/18+ Teams One & Two
- Accommodation Team
- Business Administration Team

The Youth Service provided support to young people in Northumberland across three distinct strands:

- Prevention
- Participation and Advocacy
- Early Help & Missing

The provision of universal youth services were developed and delivered across the county working in partnership with the voluntary sector. Through data analysis and feedback, they determined where resources should be targeted to meet the needs of those in the most deprived areas. Advice and support was provided to smaller providers including information about funding opportunities, training, safeguarding, identification of young carers. They also worked with key partners such as Northumbria Police and Youth Justice Service.

In the Tynedale area, they worked with:

- Allendale Youth Ambition
- Haltwhistle Young and Sweet
- Prudhoe Youth Project
- Tynedale Youth Forum

The Chair thanked the officers for attending and expressed his surprise and the range of the service and how well they had adapted during the pandemic.

The following issues was discussed by Members:

- Not all local authorities continued to provide a youth service and it was appreciated that this continued in Northumberland.
- They were reassured that the provision in Tynedale was a modern service with the right level of support for young people.
- Sessions were held with students with special educational needs in schools to promote interaction. Key fund opportunities were used to develop projects around key interests. It was noted that some of these children travelled to schools outside of their local area and it was important that their views were heard.
- Resources were limited but they made the best of them and were as efficient as they could be. Gaps or shortages could be supported by other services within NAS. They worked with community-based volunteer projects to bridge gaps so that the Council's resources could be used in targeted areas where it was most needed, they were in a good position to deliver the service.
- There were 3x 16 hour part time positions currently vacant.
- Recruitment of social workers was a national issue and also problematic within the region and Northumberland. Social workers sat within the adolescent service and children's safeguarding services. It was confirmed that at times the Council was using agency staff. This was sometimes beneficial to assess their practice, whether they were passionate and worked well in the area of work particularly when considering applications for permanent posts.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

60. 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.)

Members were invited to email any requests to the Chair and / or Democratic Services Officer between meetings.

In answer to a question, the Democratic Services Officer reported that the Police and Crime Commissioner had agreed to attend the meeting in May 2022.

Items to be referred to the LAC Chairs Briefing for consideration for inclusion in the work programme:

- Tyne Valley Rail Users Group
- Ambulance Service Update

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

61. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 14 December 2021 at 4.00 p.m.

The Chair expressed his gratitude for the work the contribution made by Cath Homer as the elected member for Hexham East during the previous 9 years. More recently she had been the Vice-Chair of the Tynedale Local Area Council. He was extremely upset that due to the actions of anonymous individuals she had felt it necessary to resign.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____