



# Northumberland County Council

## Notes of Meeting

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**Meeting Name: Northumberland County Council (NCC) and Ponteland Town Council (PTC) re: Atkinson House**      **Meeting Location: Online Teams**

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**Date & Time: 18 October 2021 at 9:15**

**Notes By: Jacqui Pearson**

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<b>Present for NCC:</b>	<b>Initials</b>
Cath McAvoy-Carr	<b>CM-C</b>
Sue Aviston	<b>SA</b>
Lorraine Fife	<b>LF</b>
Paul Sampson	<b>PS</b>
Jacqui Pearson	<b>JP</b>

<b>Present for PTC:</b>	
Christine Greenwell	<b>CG</b>
Lyle Darwin	<b>LD</b>
Alan Hall	<b>AH</b>

### **Apologies:**

Christine Caisley of PTC due to IT connection issues

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CM-C commenced the meeting with introductions and then passed to SA for an overview of the proposals

### SA highlighted:

- The pressure for NCC to meet demands of ASD and SEMH students in Northumberland schools
- There has been a growing demand over the last 10 years, which has been incorporated into our mainstream schools, which are now at full capacity.
- We need to grow further capacity in the school system
- NCC did bid for a school in Blyth, which is a DfE run project and expected to open in September 2023.
- In the meantime, we have grown the Primary Schools and need places for September 2022.
- The proposal is to relocate Atkinson House to the former Richard Coates Middle School site.
- It is standard practice to re-use a disused building for education purposes when it is a former school.
- There are several stages of consultation, this is 6 weeks informal consultation to 01 December 2021.

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CM-C asked the Headteacher of Atkinson House to talk a little about the school and numbers of children.

The Headteacher discussed how he was a mainstream Headteacher prior to being Headteacher at Atkinson House Special School and continued to give some details of Atkinson House Special School.

- Maximum number of students on roll is 80 (PAN)
- Last year there were 83 students on roll
- Currently there are 71 students on roll.
- To meet the needs of girls attending the school, there needs to be a different curriculum model
- Historically the school was 11 – 18-year-olds
- Presently it is 11 - 16-year-olds.
- The proposal is to be co-educational and to relocate to Ponteland.
- Every student has an EHCP until the age of 25 which details specific needs
- We want to refocus from containment of students to attainment of students
- We will be working on a mainstream curriculum with SEN support
- Our students don't have any learning challenges
- We follow the Progress 8 model:
  - Bucket 1 – English and Maths
  - Bucket 2 – Science, Humanities and ICT
  - Bucket 3 – this is an open bucket
- An example of one pupil who left school last year, left with the following grades:
  - Grade 5 – English Language (equivalent of between grade B & C)
  - Grade 5 – Science (dual award)
  - Grade 5 – English Literature
  - Grade 5 – PE
  - Grade 4 – Maths (equivalent grade C)
- We want the right space and curriculum to meet the demands of educating girls
- The perception of Atkinson House is a 'naughty boys' school', which is not accurate.
- SEMH students have an EHCP therapeutic profile and support for needs on a personal level.
- We talk about perceived behaviour – it can be extreme, but it is no different to a mainstream setting.
- Students have adverse childhood experiences, and we need to create the right environment and curriculum for students to excel.

CM-C then opened the discussion up to questions.

At the end of the questions, LF asked if these could be used to form a FAQ which can be found [here](#) and will be added to the website to help inform decisions of the community. CG confirmed this was acceptable.

### **Conclusion**

A member of the Town Council raised that last Wednesday there was a local meeting and there was no idea about these proposals.

It would be nice to be told in advance and be able to alleviate some of the concerns. "We are all volunteers, and we do a good job".

This came out of the blue and caused intense panic.

We would like an update for Ponteland and feel we need another meeting – Kath Mavin and JP to liaise and arrange.

A member of the Town Council did highlight to the group that this is a 'chicken and egg' situation as cabinet need to be informed first and approve the decision. This meeting is a good starting point to alleviate concerns. Could we have another meeting towards the end of the consultation.

SA confirmed that it is difficult for timing as the Town Council member highlighted.

We can have another meeting towards the end of consultation.

SA asked the group to help members of the community to make informed decisions rather than some of the inaccurate information, which is appearing on social media.

SA thanked everyone for their time and attendance.