

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 11 January 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor T Cessford  
(Chair, in the Chair)

**MEMBERS**

A Dale  
SH Fairless-Aitken  
I Hutchinson  
D Kennedy  
N Morphet  
N Oliver

JR Riddle  
A Scott  
A Sharp  
G Stewart  
HR Waddell

**OTHER MEMBERS**

G Sanderson  
R Wearmouth

Leader  
Deputy Leader and Portfolio  
Holder for Corporate Services

**OFFICERS**

G Binning  
D Brown  
  
S Daniell  
P Hedley  
D Hunt  
  
A Fisher  
N Turnbull

Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
Strategic Policy, Risk and  
Performance Officer  
Community Safety Team Leader  
Chief Fire Officer  
Area Manager (West),  
Neighbourhood Services  
Construction Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

**ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council  
Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for  
Corporate Services

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

Ch.'s Initials.....

It was noted that following the byelection in the Hexham East ward on 16 December 2021, Suzanne Fairless-Aitken had been elected and had become a member of the Tynedale Local Area Council.

The Chair reported that a number of matters due to be considered by the County Council on 5 January 2022 had been deferred, including the item on the Local Area Council review and therefore no decision had been made regarding the future structure or number of Vice-Chairs.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Horncastle.

## **3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

## **4. PETITIONS**

This item was to:

### **a) Receive any new petitions:**

There were none to consider.

### **b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:**

There were none to consider.

### **c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:**

There were none to consider.

## **5. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE**

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

### **Neighbourhood Services:**

- Following another challenging year, teams had emptied bins, kept streets clean and continued the recovery work following Storm Arwen, over the festive period. Immediately after the storm, they had assisted with clearing the road network, before moving to parks, cemeteries and other public open areas with high footfall. Plantations and urban woodlands would be

cleared in due course and everyone was thanked for their patience as it would take time before a full recovery was made.

- Essential services had not been disrupted by Covid although 3 staff were currently absent in the west area with 20 members of staff across the county in Neighbourhood Services. Messages regarding good hand cleanliness, use of face coverings and social distancing were emphasised to ensure that front line services were not affected.
- Approximately 250 additional properties had been added to the kerbside glass recycling trial in Hexham from 14 January 2022. Extra collections continued at bring sites.
- There had been some missed waste collections from higher ground the previous week due to wintry road conditions.
- Normal grounds maintenance and street cleansing work had resumed following the storm. Requests for areas requiring hedges and shrubs to be trimmed or leaves cleared should be emailed to officers.
- Additional sweepers had been deployed to help remove the large volume of detritus generated by the storm.
- The process to recruit seasonal summer staff had commenced.

He placed on record his thanks and appreciation for the huge efforts by the front-line teams over a continuing difficult period. This was supported by the Chair and members of the Local Area Council.

Responses to issues raised by Councillors included:

- Alerts regarding missed bins were placed on the Council's website and circulated via social media channels. It was agreed that ward members would also be sent an email notification. In the majority of cases, residents were advised to present their bins for collection the following day, unless the weather and road conditions meant that this would not be possible and alternative advice provided.
- Arrangements were made with developers regarding the collection of bins on new and partly constructed sites depending on the size of the development, number of houses in occupation and access. He would discuss a site in Corbridge with Councillor Oliver the following day.
- It was likely that landowners were making their own arrangements regarding fallen trees which would be difficult for the Council to ascertain and therefore removal of logs by individuals was not queried.
- Some locations required frequent checks to ensure that gulleys and drains were not blocked by leaves and other detritus.

Councillor Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Local Services reported that it had been necessary to bring forward waste collection for 40,000 households due to the days on which Christmas Day and Boxing Day had fallen in 2021. The communication messages had worked well with only a small number of missed bins.

The following issues were also raised by Councillors:

- It was suggested that a framework be established regarding fallen trees including contact information for the various departments involved to make it easier for residents who needed to make insurance claims.
- There was concern regarding drainage around the new High school site in Hexham.
- The staff were thanked for their prompt response to install physical barriers to prevent access under fallen trees resting on electricity cables after Storm Arwen. It had been surprising and worrying that drivers had ignored the road closure signs, given the precarious and potentially dangerous situation.

### **Technical Services:**

- The number of actionable defects had reduced following highways inspections which were up to date in the Tynedale area. Actionable defects were being repaired within the specified timeframe.
- The gully wagon had returned to its normal rota following Storm Arwen clean-up work. Significant work had been required to clear the hierarchy of roads including the A68. Damage had been caused to gulleys with upended trees and root balls. Work continued on U and C classified roads with extra staff resources and equipment, including gully wagons, street sweepers and tree teams. It was anticipated that a further 6 weeks would be required to complete the full clear up operation
- A dedicated drainage gang continued to work renewing gully pots, cross drains, ditching etc.
- 24 of 28 highway investment schemes in the Local Transport Plan had been completed to date and an update was given on the status of outstanding schemes.
- Flags to Flex work was due to start within the next 4 – 6 weeks.
- 100,000 metres<sup>2</sup> of permanent surfacing had been completed within the current financial year to date.
- A summary of Members' schemes completed within the previous month was provided. Road markings would be renewed in the summer when durability would be longer lasting.
- They were now halfway through the winter services period; there had been a few marginal condition forecasts to deal with and a couple of snow events on the highest parts of the network.
- Operations were covid compliant with revised risk assessments and operational procedures. Managers and supervisors conducted winter services activities in the main remotely using the web-based software systems.
- Salt heaps and grit bins were replenished regularly by dedicated teams when requests were received by the area office.
- The staff had been incredibly busy with the winter services rota, storm clean up and the general day to day work.

The Chair, on behalf of all Tynedale members, thanked the Local Services staff for their hard work, particularly in inclement weather.

The following issues were discussed:

- Use of stronger, thicker paving flags and strategic placement of bollards were to be installed to stop vehicles cracking new paving when replaced in the summer holidays at Hencotes by St Cuthbert's Close.
- The design was to be amended and finalised for the Fellhouse/Woolfhill junction.
- Reports of inadequate repairs to the road network by utilities to be given to the Streetworks Team to enable inspection and the relevant contractor charged for repairs.
- Requests for the spray width of gritting to be widened, to include adjacent paths as well as roads, to be emailed with precise locations e.g. Aydon.
- Investment was required in underground pipe infrastructure given the number of gas and water leaks which impacted on highways programmes, Kevin Mavin, Network Co-ordinator, was thanked for the invaluable assistance he provided.

Updates were to be obtained for Councillor Cessford (Priestland) and Morphet (gully wagon) following the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the updates be noted.

*The meeting adjourned for a short period and resumed at 4.48 pm.*

## **6. NORTHUMBERLAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE: COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-26 CONSULTATION**

The Local Area Council received a presentation from the Chief Fire Officer on the draft Community Risk Management Plan 2022 – 2026. (A copy of the power point presentation and draft plan were enclosed with the signed minutes). He introduced his colleagues also in attendance: Graeme Binning, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Deborah Brown, Strategic Policy, Risk and Performance Officer and Simon Daniell, Community Safety Team Leader.

He explained that all fire and rescue authorities were required to produce a Community Risk Management Plan which must:

- reflect up to date risk analyses;
- demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities would best be used to prevent and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities;
- outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources;
- set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;
- cover at least a three-year time span;
- reflect effective consultation throughout its development; and

- be easily accessible and publicly available.

The plan would need to be reviewed as often was required, for example, as it had been in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. An annual update reviewed performance, changes to risk and whether this impacted on the service.

The plan set out the definition of risk as a 'combination of the likelihood and consequence of a hazardous event' and provided more information to explain the risk analysis process and the 10 most frequently attended incidents in the previous 5 years. Over 90% of attendances were attributable to these incident types and rarely changed which allowed the service to target resources effectively. Dwelling fires were highlighted as one of the top incidents and the plan set out what they did to reduce risk and what they planned to do, to further reduce risk.

The fire and rescue service also needed to be prepared to respond to emerging risks, which although infrequent, had the potential for a high impact. This included:

- Climate change and extreme weather events.
- Pandemic.
- Future housing and commercial development.
- Ageing population and increased vulnerability.
- British Volt.
- Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Rail Line.

The aims and priorities for 2022/23 were outlined.

Consultation on the plan had commenced on 5 January 2022 and was due to close on 16 February 2022. Councillors and members of the public were encouraged to respond to the survey or provide feedback to allow the fire and rescue service to better shape and deliver their service.

Comments from the committee and responses from the Chief Fire Officer were as follows:

- An audit of clad buildings in the county had been undertaken following the Grenfell tragedy and some remedial action had been taken. There were no buildings over 18 metres high with external cladding that fell within the Grenfell review categories for recommendations and actions; it was therefore a low risk and not included within the CRMP.
- The fire and rescue service were not a statutory consultee on planning applications but did respond to surface water flooding incidents. They worked with colleagues in Local Services regarding clearance of drains or culverts or identification of areas where there were repeat flooding problems. He agreed to speak to Councillor Kennedy outside the meeting regarding flooding concerns at properties near the new high school in Hexham.

- The plan was more user friendly, however it was suggested that measurements should be in kilometres<sup>2</sup> and miles<sup>2</sup>.
- It would be more beneficial to set out the range of areas that stations covered rather than an average, as it would explain the difference in response times, particularly in rural areas. The average had been calculated as part of a national comparison.
- Recruitment of Retained Duty Service personnel was problematic across the UK. The service was reviewing how flexible, dynamic and creative it needed to be including review of contracts to remove historical requirements, realistic expectations of candidates in terms of fitness and technical capabilities, provision of support through the pre-selection and testing process, removal of the requirement to start the process over if a candidate failed assessment in one area. They had moved to a continuous recruitment process to have officers ready before they were needed and would have 30 new RDS candidates available in the first 6 months of 2022.
- The fire and rescue service did not work with Highways England on specific performance measures or outcomes when managing accidents on roads. They did however work together if there would be an impact on the road infrastructure which would affect the fire and rescue service's ability to respond to incidents. Information was also occasionally exchanged between both parties when undertaking road safety analysis and reviews.
- The youth cadet scheme was currently running at 7 fire stations in Northumberland and discussions had recently been held about the scheme starting at another. This included Hexham, Allendale and Haltwhistle. Councillor Scott requested she be involved in discussions regarding a scheme at Prudhoe.
- Information was to be checked from the Met Office in the Flooding and Water Rescue section on page 23. It was believed that more information should be included, as whilst there was expected to be fewer rainy days in summer, the amount of rain that fell would increase by approximately 14% under a 2°C warming scenario and 28% under a 4°C warming scenario.
- The service was working with Newcastle University to understand why more outdoor fires were being started by young people and if incidents were being recorded accurately. A range of preventative measures and reactive work was carried out by fire crews and the community safety section in areas where these were prevalent. They worked with communities to obtain intelligence and worked with schools to influence behaviour in the longer term. They specifically worked with young people who set fires under 'Programme Extinguish' to understand why, other risk factors and worked with partners in other organisations for referrals. This included colleagues in Northumbria Police given the success of previous anti-social behaviour work.
- Fluctuation in outdoor fires was driven by the weather with spikes being seen in spells of good weather during school holidays. A reduction in the number of fires had been seen during the pandemic lockdowns and had increased when restrictions had eased. This was believed to be due to sections of the population visiting the countryside who did not understand the countryside code, set campfires and used disposable barbeques in areas where they should not, as they did not understand the risk of

wildfires. Northumberland FRS was the national lead for wildfires and had developed the National Fire Chiefs Council education media programme for wildfire events.

Councillors expressed their admiration to officers for the commitment of those in the service, their professionalism and prompt response to incidents.

**RESOLVED** that the report and presentation be received and that the comments be noted.

*The meeting adjourned for five minutes and resumed at 5.26 pm.*

## **7. BUDGET 2022-23 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

Councillor Sanderson, Leader of the Council and Councillor Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services gave a presentation to outline the approach being taken to set the budget for the next financial year, looking at the current position, challenges and opportunities and the impact this would have on the delivery of services. The detail regarding initiatives and schemes would be presented at a separate meeting. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the signed minutes.)

The presentation highlighted:

- The work of frontline services during the pandemic, and following Storm Arwen, was appreciated and acknowledged with no budget cuts being proposed.
- Health inequalities to be addressed across the county with a summit planned in March 2022 to make meaningful change with partner organisations.
- Unexpectedly, employment rates were largely comparable with pre-pandemic rates at 4.1% which was lower than regional and national figures and the economic performance of the county was quite strong. Targeted interventions hoped to address areas where unemployment figures were higher, including those within the 18–24-year-olds, areas where there were job vacancies and the necessity of introducing a real living wage in adult social care to retain staff who were leaving for jobs in other sectors.
- The vision and aims of the Corporate Plan identified 48 key priorities with targeted actions to enable their delivery. Examples included strengthening relationships with town and parish councils, welcoming new businesses, free town centre car parks etc.
- The overall funding context for the 2022/23 budget was set out; the increase in Council Tax precept remained at 2% without holding a referendum with an additional 1% for Adult Social Care for the next three years.
- Areas were outlined where the Council intended to invest in the future of the county.



- A review of the Budget for 2022-23 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan required savings of £9.704 million to balance the budget. A provisional savings requirement of £28 million had also been calculated for the following two financial years. The approach to identifying spend and savings within the budget were outlined with proposed savings by Portfolio Holder, although some of these included opportunities for income generation.
- The consultation was due to close on 21 January 2022. Over 200 responses had been received to date which was helpful when assessing areas which operated well and those that didn't, as well as suggestions where more funds should be allocated, before the budget was finalised and published ahead of scrutiny and consideration by Full Council on 23 February 2022.

The following issues were discussed:

- How unemployment was to be addressed, welcoming new industries and their supply chain, investment in further education and skills at Northumberland College and the Energy Central Learning Hub for vocational skills. Borderlands funding was available for projects in Haltwhistle and Bellingham and the Heritage Action Zone in Hexham and exploration of opportunities for sustainable jobs in farming and climate change in rural areas.
- Details of career support via advisors, the Kick Start programme and apprenticeships would be provided outside the meeting.
- Investment in public toilet provision would be welcomed in Hexham.
- Partnership working with Northumberland County Council on tourism would be welcomed by Hexham Town Council.
- Dualling of the A1 was required at the earliest opportunity and should be supported by all. Delays had been due to environmental audit work and an announcement on funding was expected in June 2022, subject to the aforementioned.
- Concern regarding the increase in the RPI and inequalities of those individuals on short term contracts and using foodbanks. A paper written by Alan Milburn, the former Secretary of State for Health, on tackling health inequalities was commended as a useful document.
- Progress on improving broadband and mobile telephone reception in rural areas had stalled and was required to enable individuals to work from home and operate businesses. A procurement exercise was believed to be underway to improve broadband speeds for the hardest to reach homes. Northumberland was included within the first group and it was expected that progress would be seen in the near future. It would be beneficial to receive an update from the Broadband Team.
- It would be more helpful to receive a longer-term financial settlement from the government. A thorough analysis was required of all areas across the Council to drive efficiencies and transformation, scrutiny of this was encouraged. There was concern that the Council's balances would be used to balance the budget and significant savings would be required in the next few years. The only certainties with regard to income related to

Council Tax and business rates and there was shared frustration regarding the notification system of local government financing. However it was expected that different elements of funding from national government would reduce the amount required to be saved in the future.

- Representatives from the administration sat on the Local Enterprise Partnership and North of Tyne Combined Authority to support businesses and promote local interests. Whilst funding streams had switched from European to Shared Prosperity, the latter would be used to replace projects in the rural economy.
- Once the public consultation ended, all members would be invited to attend and review the budget proposals when it was considered by scrutiny.

The Chair thanked the Councillors Sanderson and Wearmouth for their presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be received.

## **9. 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.

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

- Broadband Update
- Outside Bodies
- Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plans

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 15 February 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

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

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_