

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 12 January 2022 at 4:00 pm** in County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland

#### PRESENT

Councillor L Grimshaw (Chair)

#### MEMBERS

C Ball	K Parry
D Carr	W Ploszaj
E Cartie	M Purvis
B Gallagher	J Reid
C Humphrey	M Richardson
J Lang	E Simpson
K Nisbet	A Watson

#### OFFICERS

G Binning	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
J Blenkinsopp	Lawyer
D Brown	Strategic Policy, Risk and Performance Officer
M Carle	Lead Highways Delivery Manager
R Greally	Assistant Democratic Services Officer
P Hedley	Chief Fire Officer
W Laing	Consultant Planning Officer
J Murphy	Planning Area Manager – Development Manager
R Wealleans	Neighbourhood Services Area Manager

There were 2 members of the public present.

#### 01 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor A. Wallace.

#### 02 MINUTES

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

#### **04 PROCEDURE AT PLANNING**

Councillor Gallagher, Vice Chair (Planning) (in the Chair) outlined the procedure that would be followed at the meeting.

#### **05 DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The report 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.

#### **06 21/01978-FUL**

**Change of use to industrial storage.  
Land North Of Jubilee Estate, Lennep Way, Jubilee Industrial Estate,  
Ashington, Northumberland.**

W. Laing, Planning Officer, introduced the planning application with the aid of PowerPoint presentation. He advised the committee of the following updates:

- In paragraph 2.2 it stated the site was enclosed by a palisade fence, however the site was only enclosed on three sides.
- In paragraph 7.39 there was a typographical error and it should have read “and no further” and in condition 3 where it referred to sighting of industrial storage, it should have read “NO siting”.

Site videos were shown to the committee. They had been previously shared with members but to ensure all member’s had sight of the videos they were shown after the presentation.

Mr. P. Down, the nominated spokesperson for the residents, addressed the committee in opposition of the application, his comments included the following:-

- Mr. Down hoped that all members had had the opportunity to visit the site.
- The applicants hadn’t fulfilled the conditions outlined in the first application so how is it expected that they will follow the conditions outlined in the second application.
- In paragraph 7.8 of the report, it stated that the erection of the fence was subject to appropriate enforcement however no such enforcement had happened, and the fence was still yet to be erected. Concerns were raised that if the conditions

of the first application weren't completed why was the second application being considered.

- In paragraph 7.15 of the report, it states that no lighting had been proposed however the plans showed a lamppost with security cameras fitted.
- Residents had concerns regarding the management of the site from the beginning. The Enforcement Officer had to be involved in numerous occasions. There was a series of incidents that were listed that included; cutting down of protected trees, a fence was erected before planning application was submitted, containers were already moved onto the site.
- The containers that were already on site had been placed between the site and the residential area which meant the proposed fence could not be erected as per the first application. It was suggested that if the fence was not erected there could have been conflict between the residents and the applicant.
- The site was not going to be manned and there was a question over who would police the area. The area was already prone to anti-social behaviour and it was felt that this application would exacerbate this. Under the Human Rights Act residents were entitled to a peaceful life this planning application did not allow residents a peaceful life.
- It was felt that the tree under the tree protection order had more rights than the residents themselves.
- Residents had raised concerns regarding flooding on the site and these concerns had not been addressed. Also, the residents had not been told who would be responsible for any flooding that happened in the future.
- The residents recommended that the application be refused or put on hold until the first application is dealt with appropriately through the Enforcement Officer.

The following comments were made in response to member's questions:-

- Members were assured that there were enough Enforcement Officers to effectively enforce planning conditions. However, it was recognized that enforcement needed to be looked at for planning application 20/01986/FUL as varied by planning application 21/00671/VARYCO, which will be looked at regardless of this application. Discussions could also be had with the applicant to discuss the position of the fence with a push on them erecting the fence.
- The Enforcement team were aware of the fencing issue. The position of the containers could be a condition to be enforced to allow for the original fence to be erected to comply with the condition.
- The conditions in the application, including colour of containers and hours of operation, would be monitored by the enforcement team. It was explained that enforcement on an application was usually reactive rather than proactive however due to the sensitive nature of the site there could have been a more proactive stance where it could be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure it was fully compliant if needed.
- Planning legislation did not allow for planning applications to be put on hold or stopped until the fence from planning application 20/01986/FUL was erected. It was explained that the applicant cannot be stopped from carrying out work but could only be advised that they shouldn't have done anything until they had a planning permission in place. The Planning department will work with the applicant to ensure that everything is compliant.

- It was suggested that the Planning Officers could take contact details from the public speaker to have a direct liaison with him to ensure he feels engaged about what was going on and give him feedback and give him updates.
- There was an Enforcement Officer assigned to the site. They were waiting for the determination of the application before starting enforcement proceedings but regardless of the determination of this application there would be enforcement in regard to the planning application 20/01986/FUL and the failure to erect the fence.
- It was confirmed that there was no ability to control anything outside of the red line boundary in reference to parking outside of the site. The matter would have had to be raised with Highways.
- The application does not meet the thresholds to invite any section 106 contributions, members had asked whether coastal service mitigation was applicable and planning officers confirmed it was not.
- There was a suggestion that condition 4 was amended in the application to explicitly prevent the double stacking of containers within the site. There was a suggestion that the wording was amended to include any other type of storage on top of the shipping containers. It was suggested that the wording be delegated to the Director of Planning on consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee.

Councillor K. Parry proposed acceptance of the Officer's recommendations with the conditions as listed with one condition amended as per the update, with a further amendment to condition 4 in relation to restricting further that no objects shall be stacked or placed upon the top of the shipping containers with wording to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee, which was seconded by Councillor M. Purvis.

Members acknowledged the resident's concerns as the planning application was retrospective and the applicant had already undertaken a number of actions before the application was submitted. It was reiterated that planning legislation does not allow a planning application not to be considered until conditions relating to a different planning application had been complied with. Members stressed the importance of monitoring the site to ensure all conditions were met and if not then enforcement action was taken.

A vote was taken on Officer's recommendation to grant the planning application with the conditions outlined in the report and the amendment outlined by the officer, as well as a further amendment to condition 4 with the wording delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, as follows; FOR; 8, AGAINST; 5, ABSTENTIONS; 2.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED**

## **07. APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

A short break was held at this point and the meeting resumed at 4:58 pm.

## **08. PETITIONS**

The committee were informed of a new e-petition that had been opened on the Council's website on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021. It was due to close on 25<sup>th</sup> January and 78 signatures at the time. The committee were informed that a report would be presented to them in due course.

## **09. 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.

*Chair's Initials.....*

- 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 comments were made in response to member's questions:

- It was suggested that the feedback received from the public could also be shared with members.
- There was a public consultation on the Council website and there were over 200 responses. It was acknowledged that face-to-face consultations couldn't take place due to Covid restrictions but there was a hope in the future that they would return as it was acknowledged how invaluable they were and it was acknowledged the importance of reaching a wider audience.
- It was suggested in the Croft ward there needed to be a way to mitigate private landlords as it was felt that until this problem was resolved unemployment would continue. It was acknowledged that the problem needed to be looked at and it was suggested that this would be looked at in the Blyth Town deal and through the Blyth forum.
- Members noted that to help with unemployment there had to be motivation and a stimulus to want to work as well as providing good jobs throughout the area.
- There were concerns about the services that were already struggling. It was acknowledged that the Council were not losing any frontline staff, however it was felt that in some frontline services more staff were needed. It was confirmed that there would be no compulsory redundancies and there were no plans for reductions in services.
- Members noted that on a service-by-service basis if there were posts that were no longer necessary then the service would not fill the vacancies but it would be the Service Manager who agreed this.
- It was noted that all questions asked during the Facebook live Q&A session would be collated by the Communications team and all questions would be answered.
- Members were assured that there were no plans to introduce fees for carparking near the train stations and the parking situation was to be monitored. It was important to regulate carparks to ensure they do what they're supposed to do.
- Members noted that the Council were investing millions into the local services fleet including more powerful gully emptiers with advanced technology and tarmac technology that would allow for full pothole patching.
- The utility bill increase should not have as big of an effect on the budget as expected past and present administrations had implemented work including electricity generation, solar panels etc that had insulated the Authority to some extent. It was acknowledged that there still would be pressures on the budget. The leader had written to Government requesting additional support for schools which should hopefully be achieved.
- Members noted that there were no plans to charge parking on beach front carparks. There would be an announcement in the future regarding the funding for the green spaces. It was stated that there were three key areas where there was going to be investment around; supporting industry, encouraging new industry and looking after people. The investment into the green spaces

were not going to be at the expense of parking charges. It was noted that public conveniences were also being invested in.

- Members noted that the County was in very good shape and looked after very well which is down to joint working with Parish and Town Councils also.
- It was acknowledged that there had been issues with road sweepers. Enquiries had been made to hire some and the replacement fleet was due by the end of the month. A weekly report was shared with the local town Councils which showed the distribution of the employees across the area.
- It was acknowledged that the green agenda was a big issue the planting trees initiative was to try and involve all residents and make them aware of the green agenda. There would be an update on the Climate Change Action Plan it was hoped the report would go to Cabinet, Council and the Local Area Councils.
- Members noted that there was a Government Bill coming shortly which would explain offers that were available to Local Government to increase and improve the recycling rate. The glass collection pilot was being rolled out to more homes and there was a hope to do a food waste pilot in the near future.
- Members noted the hard work that the Innovative and Improvement service was doing to help with the Green Agenda and in the future, it could be beneficial to invite the Officers to the Local Area Councils to take questions from the members.
- Members noted that a saving in a service did not necessarily mean a cut it could just be that the service had found a way to deliver their service more efficiently. In Adult Social Care this could have been people living at home for longer. It was suggested that if able to attendance at the next budget meeting would allow members to ask Officers more in-depth questions. The budget was created with Service Directors who deliver these services, and they were confident that they would be able to deliver their service without putting pressure on the frontline staff. It was acknowledged the importance of retaining staff in these services and a living wage pay had been recently agreed by Cabinet.
- Members felt that Adult Social Care was a national problem and should be dealt with and funded nationally.
- It was confirmed that Council Tax would be increased by 2% with additional 1% for Adult Social Care. The way in which it is presented can be amended as long as the breakdown was there.
- The trees for the initiative needed to be young ones to help combat the Climate Change. It was acknowledged that storm Arwen had destroyed a large amount of mature trees.
- It was confirmed that the slides from the budget meeting would be circulated to members after the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be received.

## **10. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

R. Wealleans, Neighbourhood Services Manager, gave an update to the members:

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Once again, following what has been a very long and challenging year for our front-line services – our refuse crews were out again, working across the entire Christmas period.

We also had cleansing operatives working this period to ensure litter bins were emptied and the streets remained clean and tidy in some challenging areas.

In addition to this, our tree and NEAT (Neighbourhood Environment Action Teams) teams continue to work hard as we recover from the devastation caused by Storm Arwen.

Our priority immediately after the storm was to assist with clearance of the road network, we then moved onto cemeteries and other public areas with high footfall. The tree teams will move onto our plantations and urban woodlands in due course. A full recovery will take time and we thank you for your support and patience during this period.

I'm sure you will join me in recognising and praising the huge efforts of our front-line teams over what continues to be an exceedingly difficult period.

Covid: There have been 7 positive cases within the workforce over the last 2 weeks with staff following new guidelines, currently there are only 2 staff still off and due to return next week.

#### Waste Service:

- Refuse collection service worked very well over Christmas period.
- Very few complaints from residents.
- Moving collection days etc. - comms strategy worked well with around a 95% presentation on all days.
- Dedicated refuse staff collected around 750 tonnes of residual waste over Christmas/New Year period.
- 42 tonnes more than the previous residual collection and still averaging 40/50 tonne above collections before Covid.

#### Grounds Maintenance

- Progress on winter works was initially impacted by Storm Arwen. We are confident that we can recover from this and complete the programme as planned.
- Please pass on any work requests you might have as we are now starting to plan for summer works.
- Hedges and shrubs.

- Leaf clearance has been carried out in all areas, any areas of concern that need attention please let me know.
- We have additional large mechanical sweepers deployed in the area to help remove additional detritus generated by the storm
- We have started the process of recruiting our seasonal staff for the coming summer period.

#### Street Cleansing

- Business as usual on cleansing within all areas.
- Brock Lane West Sleekburn traffic management arranged to carry out a litter pick and sweep.
- We have assisted the local volunteer groups with collections after their litter pick activities and will continue to support them going forward, lately collections have taken place around the West Bedlington/Cambois area.

The following response was made to member's questions:

- Members thanked the Service for their response to Storm Arwen. It was noted that there were still a number of trees lying around but the Officers confirmed that they were aware of them and would provide members with a timescale for collection.
- Blyth Town Council Ridley Park run events around Easter, but the fountains were never switched on at that time, the team were looking into the partnership with the Town Council.
- Members raised concerns that in some areas members of the public had been collecting wood and wondered whether it had been agreed. R. Wealleans confirmed he would check and share the information with the members.
- Members asked for Officers thoughts on controlling weeds in the area. It was suggested that a policy be created to outlines when the weeds are sprayed they are removed. It was hoped that improvements were made this year.
- Members thanked the team for sorting the issue with the bandstand. The issue regarding street lighting would be passed on to the necessary department.

M. Carle, Lead Highways Delivery Manager gave the following update to members:

All Highways Inspectors and maintenance crews continue to work Inspecting, fixing carriageway defects, making repairs and making safe category one defects across the Southeast area.

The NCC Gully emptier is fully deployed dealing with reported issues and cyclic maintenance. A replacement NCC gully emptier is due next month (four across the county) as part of the Fleet replacement programme. This is a higher specified more powerful emptier. This will give it more capacity to carryout required works.

An additional Gully Emptier is being deployed next week targeting whole road sections. This work will be starting in the Ashington Wards.

### **Larger Tarmac Patching**

Larger Tarmac Patching has been carried out in the following locations:

- Delaval Gardens, Blyth
- Beatrice Street, Blyth
- Coronation Street, Blyth

### **Drainage Improvements:**

Drainage Improvements have been carried out in the following areas:  
The area teams are continuously looking at and programming future works both patching and drainage improvements.

### **LTP - Carriageway Resurfacing**

Footway and Carriageway LTP Resurfacing have been carried out the following areas:

- Newsham Road, Blyth (Due to be topped this week NCC1)
- Norham Road, Ashington (Due to be topped this week NCC1)

### **Regeneration Scheme**

- Bowes Street, Blyth – Started Monday 10/01/22 (48 Weeks)

### **Winter Maintenance**

Winter Services continue. Omricon has had no effect on the delivery of the services as we use the rest shift to cover the small number of missing drivers. This is well within pre planned arrangements.

We have had an average winter so far in both snow and precautionary gritting. We are currently having a small restock of salt across the county. This will ensure we have sufficient resilience levels for the remainder of the winter period.

This includes a 5000-Tonne strategic store located in Powburn.

The following comments were made in response to member's questions:

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- Members noted that Disraeli street had been put forward to an LTP scheme again. A suggestion to make temporary repairs to the road would be looked into.
- Officers suggested the best way to report issues would be to ring in or report online so it was recorded on the main line system. Reports were then run from the system to identify areas that had reoccurring issues. There was a set response that was followed when an issue was logged.
- Officers asked that if they contacted them regarding the specific location of the requested grit bin outside South Beach Academy they would look into it.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **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. He introduced his colleagues also in attendance: Graeme Binning, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, and Deborah Brown, Strategic Policy, Risk and Performance Officer

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. It was agreed that the link to the consultation be shared with members after the meeting.

The following comments were made in response to member's questions:

- Members congratulated the Chief Officer and his team for an excellent report. Thanks was also given to Northumberland Fire & Rescue for their continued hard work.
- It was confirmed that the PowerPoint and links to the consultation would be shared with the members after the meeting.
- The end date of the consultation was confirmed as Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
- Members noted that the reduced use of jargon in the report and Risk Management Plan meant the document was more accessible to the public.
- Members noted the statistics included in the report were current and the plan was implemented for four years but were advised that there would be yearly updates.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be received.

## **LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated.

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

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 16th February 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_