

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 13th OCTOBER 2021 at 7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Martin Ashcroft (Chairman) and
Councillors Eddy Adam, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Barbara Clare, John Clare, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Kate Hopper, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, and Michael Stead

OFFICERS

Mr D. Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mr S Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)
Mr L. Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)
Miss A. Donald (Town Clerk's PA)

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Tony Armstrong

Members stood to observe a minute's silence at the start of the meeting in memory of the late Councillor Brian Hall and Councillor Dave Hardaker.

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Maureen Shelton.

47. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

50. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 1st September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Sub-Committee, held on 6th October 2021, be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

52. ALLOTMENTS REPORT

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report updating members on issues relating to the Council's allotments for the six-week period ended 3rd October 2021.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Five new allotment plots be created at St Oswald's, utilising available land and one vacant pigeon plot for this purpose.
- iii) The pigeon site tenancy agreement be amended from 'the Tenant agrees to use the Pigeon Loft Plot only for keeping pigeons' to 'the Tenant agrees to use the plot only for keeping pigeons or doves.'

53. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to update members on issues relating to the environment.

It was further advised that Durham County Council would be funding the upgrade of the footbridge at Woodham Burn by the new year.

Discussion took place regarding the apparent use of the lorry park by an individual for business purposes. This ongoing issue had been reported to the appropriate external agencies.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Town Clerk investigate any applicable covenants relating to the use of the lorry park and to circulate this information to all councillors.

54. CEMETERIES REPORT

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report giving information regarding burials and grants of grave space.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the report be received.

55. WOODHAM BURN FLOOD RISK

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report updating members regarding the ownership of the section of Woodham Burn between Stephenson Way and Williamfield Way with regard to flood risk management and provided a verbal update on a site meeting that had been held with Durham County Council officers regarding this issue.

Members acknowledged the seriousness and urgency of this issue and expressed the need for assurances and an updated Drainage Assessment from Durham County Council, owner of the land in question.

Following a discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Officers be requested to monitor the situation and report back to the committee on any progress.

56. WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report updating members on discussions with officers from Durham County Council regarding the future of the Service Level Agreement for winter maintenance.

It was further advised that Durham County Council had agreed to finance the purchase of the required replacement equipment, and that this would be progressed immediately.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received.
- ii) Officers liaise with Durham County Council to arrange the purchase of the replacement equipment

57. AYCLIFFE VILLAGE GREEN FOOTPATH ENCROACHMENT

The Town Clerk submitted a report updating members on the current situation with regard to the installation of a footpath in Aycliffe Village by Durham County Council which had resulted in encroachment onto one of the registered village greens.

Following considerable discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming, that:

- i) County Council members for Great Aycliffe be requested to raise the issue with appropriate County Council officers. It was noted that this was already in progress.

- ii) The Town Clerk be requested to seek legal advice regarding the Town Council's obligation to take action with reference to the encroachment in order to protect the village greens.

It was additionally proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, that:

- i) The Town Clerk be given permission to proceed with any advised legal action if this was deemed appropriate.

It was additionally proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, that:

- i) The Town Clerk be requested to write to the Director of Regeneration and Head of Legal Services at Durham County Council to highlight the delay in dealing with this issue in an endeavour to bring about an amicable resolution.

Following discussion, it was:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) County Council members for Great Aycliffe be requested to raise the issue with appropriate County Council officers. It was noted that this was already in progress.
- ii) The Town Clerk be requested to seek legal advice regarding the Town Council's obligation to take action with reference to the encroachment.
- iii) The Town Clerk be given permission to proceed with any advised legal action if this was deemed appropriate.
- iv) The Town Clerk be requested to write to the Director of Regeneration and Head of Legal Services at Durham County Council to highlight the delay in dealing with this issue in an endeavour to bring about an amicable resolution.

58. ST CLARE'S COMMEMORATIVE BENCHES

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report requesting members to consider additional themes for the two remaining commemorative benches at St Clare's Church memorial area.

Following discussion, and the request that the correct DLI motto 'Faithful' be incorporated into the design, along with an accurate depiction of a DLI cap badge, to be supplied by Councillor Jed Hillary, it was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Design 1 (DLI) and 3 (Animals in War) be used.
- iii) That the DLI design be provided by Cllr Jed Hillary.

59. 2022/23 DRAFT ENVIRONMENT BUDGETS

The Finance Manager submitted a report presented for members' consideration, comments, and approval the draft 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budgets for the Environment Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) That the draft 2022/23 Environment Revenue and Capital Budgets be approved.
- iii) The Finance Manager be thanked for her comprehensive report.

60. GARDENERS' GUILD AT CLARENCE CHARE ALLOTMENTS

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report requesting members to consider granting permission, in principle, for use of land adjacent to the car park in Clarence Chare Allotments for the purpose of setting up a Gardeners' Guild.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Permission be granted, in principle, to occupy the site within Clarence Chare Allotments, subject to the Guild securing the necessary funds and providing all necessary information to officers regarding their proposals and an appropriate licence agreement being drawn up.
- iii) The consideration of a suitable rent be referred to the Charges Working Group for consideration.

61. ST OSWALD'S ALLOTMENT FENCING

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report requesting members to consider the replacement of the north boundary of St Oswald's Allotments as well as an extension to the south fence to create five new allotment plots.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The north boundary fence be replaced, at an estimated cost of £8,650 by Rennyco Security Fencing.
- iii) The south fence be extended by Rennyco Security Fencing, at an estimated cost of £4,550, to create five new allotment plots.
- iv) An additional capital budget approval request be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee to meet the additional cost.

62. NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Dorothy Bowman left the meeting during discussion on this item.

The following Notice of Motion was submitted by Councillor Bob Fleming:

'That the Council agrees to commence work on the update of the Neighbourhood Plan and makes financial provision, via the set-up of a Neighbourhood Plan Reserve, in the 2022/23 budget setting process to engage consultancy support to assist with this process'.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran.

The importance of updating the Neighbourhood Plan was acknowledged.

Councillor Eddy Adam questioned the estimated cost of undertaking this work and the amount to be set aside in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Reserve.

Following discussion and a vote, it was

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The motion be carried.
- ii) The Town Clerk contact a suitable consultant to obtain an estimate for undertaking a review of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.
- iii) That the estimate undertaking this work be incorporated into the 2022/23 budget setting process and set aside within a Neighbourhood Plan Reserve.

CHAIRMAN.