

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 23rd FEBRUARY 2022 at 7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Martin Ashcroft (Chairman) and

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Kate Hopper, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead and John Woodward

OFFICERS

Mr D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Miss A. Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)

Mr S. Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)

Mr L. Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)

85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Neil Collinson, Mrs Sandra Haigh, Wendy Hillary, John Moore and Maureen Shelton.

86. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

88. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

89. 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 12th January 2022, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

90. PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Councillor Eddy Adam informed members of a planning application to convert the current garage block site at Bruce Road into three bungalows. It was advised that this application would be considered by a forthcoming meeting of the Planning Sub-Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Ian Gray, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Sub-Committee, held on 10th January 2022, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

91. PARKING ISSUES WORKING GROUP NOTES

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that the notes of the meeting of the Parking Issues Working Group, held on 15th February 2022, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was further proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and

RESOLVED – that the Parking Issues Working Group be deleted from the Council's list of Committees and Working Groups at the Annual General Meeting.

92. 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 13th February 2022.

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

93. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to update members on issues relating to the environment for the six-week period ended 13th February 2022.

Members were verbally informed of an incident in which a tree which had fallen on a car at the rail halt during high winds that afternoon. No injuries had been sustained. Two neighbouring trees were felled by Council staff for safety reasons. Responsibility for the land on which the trees were situated was yet to be established.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Staff be thanked for their prompt action in dealing with the tree incident.

94. CEMETERIES REPORT

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report giving information regarding burials and grants of grave space and providing an update on issues relating to the cemeteries for the seven-week period ended 2nd January 2022.

Members discussed a request to donate a bench in the cemetery in memory of a family member. Unfortunately, the bench design did not meet the Council's criteria for memorial benches. In addition, it was noted that a missing apostrophe in the inscription would cause the message to be mis-read and lead to further distress.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The request for this particular bench be refused but that officers liaise sympathetically with the family of the deceased.

95. WOODHAM BURN DOG WALKING ROUTE

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report updating members regarding the provision of dog walking routes through Woodham Burn.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, that:

- i) A site visit be held for members to familiarise themselves with the area in question before any decision is taken.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, seconded by Councillor Peter Bergg, that:

- i) No action be taken to reinstate the original footpath.
- ii) The area be kept as a walking area and additional dog bins be installed.

A vote was taken on the first proposal and resulted in a tie. The Chairman used his casting vote, and the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that a site visit be held for members to familiarise themselves with the area in question before any decision is taken.

96. FESTIVE LIGHTING PROJECT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report requesting members to consider a project to utilise the existing funding in the forthcoming 2022/23 Capital Budget to replenish the street column festive lights via a bespoke 'design your own' project.

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) The Blanchere bespoke lighting design project be implemented this year using the 2022/23 Capital Budget.

97. UNAUTHORISED ACCESS GATES ONTO COUNCIL LAND

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report requesting members' consideration of the approach to the issue of residents creating unauthorised access from their property onto Council land or facilities.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor John Clark, that

- i) The report be received.
- ii) A standard letter be sent out to all those properties who have created unauthorised access points onto Town Council land.

It was further proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, seconded by Councillor John Clark, that

- i) A standard letter also be sent out to properties who have created unauthorised footpaths or placed household items or rubbish onto Town Council land.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) A standard letter be sent out to all those properties who have created unauthorised access points onto Town Council land.
- iii) A standard letter also be sent out to properties who have created unauthorised footpaths or placed household items or rubbish onto Town Council land.

98. AYCLIFFE VILLAGE FOOTPATH ENCROACHMENT

The Town Clerk submitted a report providing an update on the encroachment onto one of the registered village greens at Aycliffe Village, following the installation of a footpath by Durham County Council.

The Town Clerk confirmed verbally that a letter had been received on the evening of the meeting from Durham County Council confirming the encroachment and apologising for not having contacted the Town Council in the first instance before carrying out the work.

Members thanked officers for their work on the issue and expressed disappointment at the way the matter had been handled by Durham County Council.

It was advised that a report regarding the installation of a handrail would be brought to a future committee.

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) No further action be taken regarding the encroachment.
- iii) A report regarding the installation of a handrail would be brought to a future meeting.

99. WOODLAND BURIAL SITE UPDATE

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report, for information only, updating members on the results of two test digs undertaken within the proposed woodland burial site.

Councillor Jed Hillary queried the health and safety aspects of the test digs and wished to have his concerns recorded. It was confirmed that the test digs had been undertaken following all required precautions and under the advice of the Council's Health and Safety Advisor.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

Chairman