

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 13th APRIL 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 13th APRIL 2022 at 7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Martin Ashcroft (Chairman) and

Councillors Eddy Adam, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Kate Hopper, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, 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)

100. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Tony Armstrong, Peter Bergg, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary and Maureen Shelton.

101. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

103. GUEST SPEAKER – BILL STEPHENSON, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER – COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FLOOD RESILIENCE

Mr Bill Stephenson, from the Environment Agency, addressed members regarding his role, in conjunction with Durham County Council Civil Contingencies Unit, in helping communities prepare for the risk of flooding. With the prediction of wetter winters and more frequent storms, and increased pressure on current drainage systems, leading to flooding, it was considered advisable to draw up a Community Emergency Plan to assist communities in an emergency. It was emphasised that this was not intended to replace the work of the emergency services and agencies but to enable local skills, resources and knowledge to assist with this work in a co-ordinated manner.

When completed, the Community Emergency Plan would be held on a central database to be accessed by the emergency services. A number of communities already had plans in place.

After a number of questions and comments from members, it was agreed that a template for the Community Emergency Plan would be forwarded for the attention of the Town Clerk and Works and Environment Manager.

Mr Stephenson was thanked for his presentation.

104. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

105. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 23rd February 2022, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

106. 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 3rd March 2022, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

107. ALLOTMENTS REPORT

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report updating members on issues relating to the Council's allotments for the seven-week period ended 3rd April 2022.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Permission be given for Great Aycliffe Gardeners Guild to use the Sports Complex Function Room free of charge to hold a public meeting.
- iii) Permission be given for the tenant on Plot 30 at St Oswald's Allotments to extend his plot to match the fence line on the adjacent plot.

108. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to update members on issues relating to the environment for the seven-week period ended 3rd April 2022.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) The report be received.
- ii) A further report be submitted regarding options for bids for Levelling Up funding to be submitted by Durham County Council to central government to improve the infrastructure of the town, including the potential replacement of the footbridge at Kendrew Close and upgrading the Great Aycliffe Way footpaths.

109. 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 3rd April 2022.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Officers be given delegated authority to approve the installation of memorial benches in the cemeteries in line with Council policy, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee, and only brought to the Environment Committee in the event of a dispute.

110. CEMETERIES GRAVE SHORING EQUIPMENT

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report requesting members to consider the required repair of grave shoring equipment and the requirement for additional budget approval to fund this.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) An additional capital budget allocation of £2,350 for grave shoring equipment be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.
- iii) A provisional sum be added to the Asset Management Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan for grave shoring equipment replacement.

111. THERMAL HEAT TREATMENT FACILITY APPEAL UPDATE

The Corporate and Policy Officer submitted a report advising members of a letter sent from ELG to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Town Council in relation to the high temperature thermal treatment facility planning appeal. The report also updated members on budgetary implications of representation at the planning appeal.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Michael Stead, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report and letter be received.
- ii) Officers be given delegated authority to agree appropriate fees with ELG for the required attendance at the planning appeal hearing.

112. BUS SHELTER MAINTENANCE PROVISION

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report requesting members consider options for the roof maintenance of the 58 bus shelters managed by the Town Council.

It was requested by Councillor Arun M. Chandran that officers check with the Council's insurance company the liability situation surrounding concrete roofs on bus shelters.

Councillor Eddy Adam requested that environmentally friendly materials be considered wherever possible in replacing or repairing bus shelter roofs.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Officers check with the Council's insurance company the liability situation surrounding concrete roofs on bus shelters.
- ii) Officers prepare a further report and recommendations based on the different types of material available for the repair of bus shelter roofs.
- iii) The annual Capital Budget provision for bus shelter repairs be increased to £2,500 per year in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

113. INSTALLATION OF FOOTPATH HANDRAIL – AYCLIFFE VILLAGE

The Town Clerk and Works and Environment Manager submitted a report requesting members to consider the viability of installing a 12.3m long handrail to a footpath from High Street to The Wynd, Aycliffe Village.

Councillor Jim Atkinson agree to take up this matter with Durham County Council to determine if a handrail was required.

After discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Any required handrail should be installed to the left-hand side of the footpath opposite to the village green.
- iii) The handrail should be investigated by and paid for by Durham County Council, and Newton Aycliffe County Councillors will seek to progress this issue.

114. NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR BOB FLEMING

Councillor Bob Fleming submitted the following Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson.

“To request the support of the Town Council in progressing a request to Durham County Council to have a zebra crossing installed on Central Avenue between the Vane Road and Welbury Grove junctions.

It is requested that the Town Council send a letter to Durham County Council to request a pedestrian crossing, on Central Avenue, between Vane Road and Welbury Grove to enable access to and from the Washington Crescent side of Central Avenue.

This will enable schoolchildren from Woodham Academy, Vane Road Primary School and St Oswald's Pre-school to cross safely and pedestrians, including elderly and disabled, to cross safely, at all times, not just when school runs are on but also when school crossing patrols are not in operation”.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran proposed the following amendment to the Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming:

“I request that the Town Council send a letter to Durham County Council to request a pedestrian crossing, on Central Avenue, between Vane Road and Welbury Grove to enable access to and from the Washington Crescent side of Central Avenue.

This will enable schoolchildren from Woodham Academy, Vane Road Primary School and St Oswald's Pre-school to cross safely and pedestrians, including elderly and disabled, to cross safely, at all times, not just when school runs are on but also when school crossing patrols are not in operation”.

Councillor Joanne Jones pointed out that Durham County Council Highways and the Police had already been consulted about a zebra crossing and highlighted their reasons as to why a zebra crossing would not be viable. Councillor Jones also stated that all schools should be looked at regarding school crossings, not just one area, and that financially it may be better looking at improving the crossing patrol service as an alternative option.

Councillor Michael Stead also highlighted that this issue had already been raised with Durham County Council Strategic Highways and a survey had been carried out. Councillor Stead agreed to discuss this further with DCC Strategic Highways and report back to members.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the motion be deferred pending a further update from Councillor Michael Stead.

Chairman