

## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 12<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2023 at 7.15pm**

### PRESENT

#### **Councillor Philip Hawkins (Chairman) and**

Councillors, Eddy Adam, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Jed Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### OFFICERS

Mr Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Mr Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)

Mr Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)

Mrs Julie Walton (Corporate Assistant)

### IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Stuart Priestley, Principal Ecologist, Durham County Council

Member of the Public (St Oswald's' Allotment Representative and Secretary of the Great Aycliffe Garden Guild).

### 95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Andy Hill and Wendy Hillary.

### 96. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

### 97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest had been received.

### 98. GUEST SPEAKER

Stuart Priestley, Principal Ecologist from Durham County Council gave a brief presentation to Members about Biodiversity Net Gain Legislation, discussing the potential impact and benefits this could bring and how this can be monetised by the Council through the identification of parcels of land suitable to deliver biodiversity enhancements. These parcels, known as Biodiversity Units, can be maintained on behalf of housing developers for a set period of thirty years at a pre-determined price per unit.

A lengthy discussion then took place with Members asking a number of questions of the Principal Ecologist.

*The Chairman then agreed to bring forward Agenda Item 11 on Biodiversity Net Gain to be discussed with the guest speaker in attendance.*

## 99. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN – NEW LEGISLATION

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report providing Members with information regarding new planning policy legislation whereby developers must deliver Biodiversity Net Gains and to explain the potential opportunities, implications and benefits for the Council arising from this new legislation.

Following a lengthy debate and further questions to officers, it was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Arun M Chandran and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. officers further explore the feasibility and financial implications of offering Council land to developers and identify suitable areas to be improved for biodiversity and bring a further report to the Environment Committee.
- iii. the registration or logging of any sites with Durham County Council be subject to a report to and approval of the Environment Committee.
- iv. the Council does not pursue a BNG agreement at Horndale, as part of the Copelaw development, at this time.

## 100. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public asked the following question in his capacity as secretary for St Oswald's allotment site:

*“With regard to the ongoing issue with St Oswald's allotment site with flooding, could there be money available in the Council's budget for next year to have remedial work undertaken?”*

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator provided the following response.

*“There is a drain in place and this has been working. However this winter has been exceptionally wet. Over the last few months there has been 104% to 140% average rainfall. Officers have taken on board the concerns previously raised undertaken investigations to make sure there was no water leak. If any identified remedial works can be done in house without incurring costs, the work will go ahead. If there are any costs for remedial works, a report will come back to this Committee for approval”.*

## 101. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

## **102. ALLOTMENTS UPDATE**

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator providing an update on issues relating to the allotments.

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

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

## **103. ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Works and Environment Manager to update Members with issues relating to the Environment.

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

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

## **104. CEMETERIES REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator updating Members on items relating to the Cemeteries.

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

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

## **105. CEMETERIES DRAINAGE ISSUES**

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report updating Members on the drainage issues within Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery including details of a complaint received from the owner of a plot at the West Cemetery.

Councillor Arun M Chandran thanked the officer for his report, stating that the situation should be monitored and problem areas mapped on an ongoing basis and a programme of drainage works and costings prepared to inform future financial planning in order to ensure the cemeteries are fit for purpose.

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

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. officers communicate effectively with the individual concerned, detailing the actions taken to resolve the situation.
- iii. officers continue to monitor the condition of both cemeteries, putting measures in place to prevent further occurrences of standing water, map the problem areas, and a prepare a programme of works and costings to inform future financial planning and ensure the cemeteries are fit for purpose.

**106. LETTER FROM ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL ECO WARRIORS**

Members considered a letter from St Joseph's Primary School Eco Warriors regarding bin provision around the school.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i. the information be received.
- ii. the Eco Warriors be thanked for bringing the issue to the attention of the Council.
- iii. the Works and Environment Manager be thanked for his response to the issue.

**107. THE COUNTY RESTAURANT – REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF LICENCE TO USE A SECTION OF VILLAGE GREEN AS A BEER GARDEN**

Members considered the report from the Town Clerk detailing a request by the operators of The County Restaurant and Public house for an extension of the licence to allow continued use of a section of Aycliffe Village Green, immediately to the front of the establishment, as a beer garden.

Councillor Peter Bergg pointed out that the issue put forward for consideration was in fact a further licence and not an extension of the existing licence which had lapsed.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that feedback was sought this year from neighbouring residents as to their views on the use of this section of the village green as a beer garden.

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson and seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. Members agree to grant a new one-year licence to be reviewed annually in line with feedback from villagers.
- iii. feedback be sought from neighbouring residents living around the village green to ascertain their views on the use of the village green as a beer garden.

**Chairman**