

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 1st MARCH 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 1st MARCH 2023 at 8.07pm**

PRESENT

Councillor Phillip Hawkins (Chairman) and

Councillors, Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Arun M Chandran, Neil Collinson, Ian Gray, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Joanne Jones, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward 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)

Mrs J Walton (Corporate and Policy Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE

A representative from St Oswald's' Allotment Representative and Secretary of the Great Aycliffe Garden Guild.

The Chairmen wished Councillor Martin Ashcroft a full and speedy recovery following his medical emergency.

80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Martin Ashcroft, Dorothy Bowman, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Wendy Hillary and Neville Jones

81. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jed Hillary declared an interest in Item 7 as an allotment tenant.

83. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A representative from St Oswald's' Allotment Representative and Secretary of the Great Aycliffe Garden Guild made the following statement:

"As Allotment representative of St Oswald's allotment site I would like to thank the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator and the grounds staff for their response during the recent storms, where a fallen tree was removed from an allotment holders shed and a fallen fence was fixed within the hour".

The representative asked the following question:

“With regard to St Oswald’s site there has been a breach of security and it is believed that a youth has gained the code for the gate and a group are gaining access, setting fires and breaking into sheds. What is the procedure for the Park Patrol Team going into St Oswald’s site? Do the Park Patrol Service patrol the site in the winter months after dark”?

The Environment Manager responded that the Park Patrol staff still patrol the site, even in winter but that he was aware that some allotment holders are on the site after dark and would encourage them to lock the gates when leaving. The Works and Environment Manager will ensure Park Patrol visit the site later in the evening. The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator stated that now that allotment rents have been collected and terminations have been issued, once the plots are surrendered the combination of the lock will be changed and tenants informed.

84 MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 11th January 2023, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

85. 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 Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that report be received.

Councillor Jed Hillary left the meeting for the following Agenda Item.

86. REVIEW OF ALLOTMENTS TENANCY AGREEMENTS

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator requesting consideration of the update of allotments tenancy agreements to provide for tenants moving outside of the Parish.

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

RESOLVED –that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. that a non-resident fee be implemented for tenants moving house to within one mile of the Parish boundary at triple the rate of resident fees with no exemptions.
- iii. that a revised tenancy agreement be issued to all tenants, subject to the required period of notice reflecting the above changes.

Councillor Jed Hillary re-joined the meeting.

87. APPLICATION TO EXTEND ALLOTMENT

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator requesting consideration of a request from an allotment tenant at the Finchale Road site to extend their allotment.

Councillor Eddy Adam requested that officers contact Durham County Council regarding the issue of the trees bordering the site.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Peter Bergg and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. Members give permission to the allotment tenant to extend their existing plot by an area of approximately 3m by 4m to incorporate their greenhouse.
- iii. That officers contact DCC to enquire about the possibility of reducing and pruning trees bordering the allotment plots.

88. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

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

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator informed Members that a number of trees had been acquired via a free scheme, and invited members to assist staff with planting of the trees. Councillor Ian Gray requested that the Great Aycliffe Tidy Team could be involved.

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

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

89. CEMETERIES REPORT

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report giving information regarding burials and grants of grave space and providing Members with an update on issues relating to the cemeteries for the six weeks ended 17th February 2023.

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

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

90. MEMORIAL SEATING IN CEMETERIES

Members considered the report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator requesting consideration of options for memorial seating in the cemeteries.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. that officers establish a working arrangement with Memorial Benches UK for the supply of memorial benches.
- iii. Fees be made payable in advance covering the full cost of the bench and installation fee as calculated by officers based on the expected installation time and an hourly rate including on-costs.
- iv. a report be brought back to a future meeting detailing options and locations for other types of memorials.

91. GARDEN GUILD LICENSE

Members considered the report from the Town Clerk and Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator providing an update on the set-up of a Garden Guild at Clarence Chare Allotments and requesting approval of the draft Contracted Out Tenancy Agreement for use of the site.

It was proposed by Councillor Peter Bergg and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i. the update report be received.
- ii. that the draft Contracted-Out Tenancy Agreement for use of Council land be approved, subject to the Council's solicitor finalising the supporting paperwork.
- iii. that the Contracted-Out Tenancy Agreement is signed by both parties and work commences on the site, subject to the various outstanding assurances and paperwork being provided and checked by officers.

92. REVIEW OF PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) FOR DOG RELATED ISSUES

Members considered the report by the Works and Environment Manager setting out the Durham County Council consultation on the update of the Public Space Protection Order for dog related issues..

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. Cobblers Hall Park be included in the revised PSPO.

93. CONSULTATION ON THE LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL – REFORMS TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Members considered the report from the Corporate and Policy Officer requesting consideration of a proposed response to the Government consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework.

A debate was held around the Council response, and members suggested a number of additional responses around the availability of sufficient parking spaces within new housing developments, the inclusion of specialist types of housing for the elderly, the percentage of social housing and the inclusion of a Carbon Impact Assessment.

Councillor Eddy Adam had provided the Corporate and Policy Officer with a number of suggested comments regarding environment and nature interventions and carbon impact assessments and climate change mitigation ahead of the meeting which were circulated to all councillors and agreed.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. the officers proposed comments be agreed.
- iii. the additional comments circulated by Councillor Eddy Adam in relation to environment and nature interventions and carbon impact assessments be included in the consultation response.
- iv. the Corporate and Policy Officer provides additional comments on the consultation as follows
 - a) Neighbourhood Plans – The Town Council is in favour of increasing the protection afforded to neighbourhood plans under paragraph 14.
 - b) Social Housing – The Town Council is in favour of this proposal. The Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan already requires an element of affordable and social rented housing in its housing development policy and it is requested that the Government should include a minimum 20% allocation for affordable housing in the Framework.
 - c) Older People’s Housing – the Town Council is in favour of this proposal and already supports the housing requirements of older people in the Neighbourhood Plan
 - d) Environment – the Town Council would support the inclusion of a Carbon Impact Assessment to promote bio-diversity and wildlife recovery.

94. REQUEST TO SITE A MOBILE CATERING VAN IN THE TRAIN STATION CAR PARK

Members considered a report from the Works and Environment Manager requesting consideration of a request to site a mobile catering unit in the car park at the railway station.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i. the report be received.
- ii. the request to site a mobile catering van in the train station car park be refused and the following reasons be communicated to the applicant:
 - a. The site is located within close proximity of a school and therefore fast food should not be offered for sale.
 - b. There are concerns around how the litter would be managed effectively at and around the site.
 - c. There is a potential for a negative impact upon trade at the Oakleaf Sports Complex.
 - d. The unit taking up parking spaces;
 - e. The site is located next to a busy road, giving rise to concerns around road safety.

Chairman