

## **FULL COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023 – 7.00 p.m.**

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023 at 7.00 p.m.**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman)**

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### **OFFICERS**

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable, Durham Police  
Joy Allen, Durham Police and Crime Commissioner  
Steve Helps, Chief Fire Officer, County Durham and Darlington,  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Gary Ridley, Assistant Chief Officer, Durham Police  
Andrea Petty, PCC Chief of Staff

24 Members of public.

*A minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect for the passing of Councillor Bob Fleming.*

#### **44. NOTICE OF MEETING**

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

#### **45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Martin Ashcroft, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Neil Collinson, Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins and Sandra Kirby.

#### **46. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

There had been no requests for dispensations under disclosable or non-disclosable interests.

#### **47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 48. GUEST SPEAKER

Durham Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen, Steve Helps, Chief Fire Officer for Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, Deputy Chief Constable Ciaron Irvine, and Gary Ridley Assistant Chief Officer for Durham Police, were in attendance to discuss concerns regarding future policing in Newton Aycliffe following Newton Aycliffe Police having been given notice to vacate their premises at Newton Aycliffe Fire Station.

Chief Fire Officer, Steve Helps opened the discussion by providing the background to the ten-year lease agreement allowing the police to use part of the fire station premises, which is due to come to an end in December 2023. He advised of the agreement to allow the neighbourhood policing team to remain at the premises beyond December if necessary and stated that there are no plans to extend the fire station due to a lack of space.

Councillors were then given the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the Mr Helps for attending and asked how long the extended period of lease would be.

Mr Helps advised that the lease is open ended beyond December 2023.

Joy Allen (PCC) then gave an update on the search for new premises for both the neighbourhood policing team and response teams following the previous meeting. She explained that they are still looking at possible venues in Newton Aycliffe that are fit for purpose and that they are looking to buy rather than lease. She also gave an update regarding the previous decline in police numbers and the recruitment drive for more staff and added that the work achieved can be noted in the PCC Annual Report.

Councillor Michael Stead thanked Mrs Allen for attending and asked if she had considered reducing staffing costs.

Councillor Ken Robson had previously submitted questions on behalf of residents he also asked why it has taken ten years to find another building, when previously available sites such as the library and Cubby had been missed.

Councillor Tony Armstrong asked about the custody suite at Spennymoor which had been built and asked why Newton Aycliffe had not been considered.

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable outlined the reasons for choosing that location, including size of the footprint, availability of land and room for the custody suite and various departments. He added that the footprint available at Newton Aycliffe is not enough. He added he is committed to having a response service in Newton Aycliffe and they are tirelessly looking for suitable buildings and hopeful a solution will be found before the end of the year.

Councillor Tony Armstrong asked if there was money to build a brand-new building. He later suggested the T.A. Centre could be approached.

Gary Ridley, Assistant Chief Finance Officer explained that the costs involved in a new build would be very expensive and that there is no money from the Government so it would need to be funded through Council Tax funds.

Councillor Jed Hillary asked how fast the response times are from Bishop Auckland to Newton Aycliffe if there was an emergency, stressing that there needs to be a response team in Newton Aycliffe by December.

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable Durham Police confirmed that there will be a response team in Newton Aycliffe from now until December.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran then asked about the failed levelling up bid regarding the demolition of the multi storey car park, and why that land could not have been used and referred to the promises made by the previous PCC. He further asked if the plans had ever had a police station included.

Councillor Eddy Adam raised a Point of Order under Standing Orders 6 and 7, asking that as a courtesy to the PCC, questions should be focussed on the current situation and not the past.

The Town Clerk clarified that there had not been a breach of Standing Orders but it would be useful if issues relating to the previous PCC were not conducive to the present conversation.

The PCC responded that meetings had been held with the MP and that Levelling Up bids are still possible and they are looking for opportunities if they are coming.

Councillor Simon Hocking added the response team must not move from Newton Aycliffe.

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable Durham Police stated that realistically they cannot give any absolute guarantee that the response team will be based in Newton Aycliffe but reiterated that the primary goal over the next six months is for both the Neighbourhood and Response teams to be in the town.

#### **49. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public asked if the many empty shops in the Town Centre could be used.

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable Durham Police said that there are strict Home Office rules which need to be adhered to in relation to police station premises including adequate showers, reception area, car parking and disabled access. They had looked at empty shops, houses and business park units with no success.

Another member of the public strongly disagreed with the situated outlined by the guest speakers and added that the policing numbers are not enough in Newton Aycliffe.

Another suggested that the Magistrates Court be used as it closes at 5pm and later suggested that the work be transferred to Peterlee Magistrates Court and the station relocate to Newton Aycliffe's empty one.

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable Durham Police said he would take away the suggestion but added that it is Ministry of Justice land. He reiterated that there will be a presence in Newton Aycliffe until December and that response will be supplemented from other stations.

Another, who owns a shop in Newton Aycliffe strongly advocated the need for a police presence on the town as anti-social behaviour, speeding and drugs is increasing.

David Sutton - Lloyd (Durham County Councillor) asked when this issue was flagged up and added that Newton Aycliffe is being left out, adding that they are now on notice for the future.

Joy Allen (PCC) added that fairer funding is needed and that they are asking MP's for more funding for County Durham for more warranted officers in the community, and reiterating that Durham Police is one of the best performing forces despite the lack of funding.

Another member of the public said that sights should not be set too low and that a town the size of Newton Aycliffe should have adequate facilities and police numbers.

A member of the public stated that she had not seen a reduction in anti-social behaviour, and residents are paying more precept for less service and asked where the money from the land sale had gone.

Joy Allen (PCC) added that the approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour was as part of a new initiative for which significant Government funding had been confirmed, adding that she wants more investment in CCTV.

Ciaron Irvine, Deputy Chief Constable Durham Police added that the threats now are different, criminality has changed, including more use of drones and motorbikes, hate crime and online crime. He clarified that there are not just four staff members in Newton Aycliffe and that more staff can be pulled in from elsewhere.

Gary Ridley Assistant Chief Finance Officer did not have the exact information to hand regarding the land sale but would find out, adding that the sale money would have gone to a general fund and used towards replacement vehicles and technology. The money was not ring-fenced.

A reporter from the Northern Echo asked directly, on behalf of the residents, how does it feel to know that you have let the community down?

Joy Allen (PCC) reiterated that residents will have heard that there is a firm commitment to a police station staying in Newton Aycliffe and that they are looking for somewhere for the Response team to go, adding that they are here to listen and want the same thing as the public do.

***The Chairman then closed the discussion, and the meeting was adjourned at 9.25pm.***

*Councillors John Clark and Simon Hocking left the meeting at this point.*

***The meeting resumed at 9.35pm.***

## **50. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 51. NOTICE OF MOTION

Members considered the following motion from Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Michael Stead:-

*“That Great Aycliffe Town Council is concerned at the threat to the level of policing in Newton Aycliffe. In particular, we believe a town of this size should have a Police Station based in the Town Centre, suitable to facilitate all policing needs, including Police Response Teams, as well as Neighbourhood Policing, in order to ensure that the Police have adequate facilities to do their job and respond immediately to any given situation in the Great Aycliffe area, we call upon the Police and Crime Commissioner to work with the Chief Constable, Durham County Council and our local Member of Parliament to look at securing a site in the Town Centre to facilitate this”.*

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed an amendment that the reference in the motion “town centre” is changed to “our town”.

There then followed a lengthy discussion on the proposed amendment.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran requested a named vote on both the motion and the amendment.

A named vote was taken on the amendment with the following results:

For:	Against:
Cllr Eddy Adam	Cllr Lindsey Aston
Cllr Tony Armstrong	Cllr Arun Chandran
Cllr Jim Atkinson	Cllr George Gray
Cllr Ian Gray	Cllr Brian Haigh
	Cllr Andy Hill
	Cllr Wendy Hillary
	Cllr Joanne Jones
	Cllr Neville Jones
	Cllr John Moore
	Cllr Carl Robinson
	Cllr Ken Robson
	Cllr Anita Sparrow
	Cllr Michael Stead
	Cllr Anne Woodward
	Cllr John Woodward

The result of the vote was 4 votes for, 15 votes against.

The amendment failed.

A named vote then took place on the original motion with the following results:

For:	Against:
Cllr Eddy Adam	
Cllr Tony Armstrong	
Cllr Lindsey Aston	

Cllr Jim Atkinson  
Cllr Arun M. Chandran  
Cllr George Gray  
Cllr Ian Gray  
Cllr Brian Haigh  
Cllr Andy Hill  
Cllr Jed Hillary  
Cllr Wendy Hillary  
Cllr Joanne Jones  
Cllr Neville Jones  
Cllr John Moore  
Cllr Carl Robinson  
Cllr Ken Robson  
Cllr Anita Sparrow  
Cllr Michael Stead  
Cllr Anne Woodward  
Cllr John Woodward

The motion was carried.

**RESOLVED – as follows:**

- i) that the following motion be agreed;

*“That Great Aycliffe Town Council is concerned at the threat to the level of policing in Newton Aycliffe. In particular, we believe a town of this size should have a Police Station based in the Town Centre, suitable to facilitate all policing needs, including Police Response Teams, as well as Neighbourhood Policing, in order to ensure that the Police have adequate facilities to do their job and respond immediately to any given situation in the Great Aycliffe area, we call upon the Police and Crime Commissioner to work with the Chief Constable, Durham County Council and our local Member of Parliament to look at securing a site in the Town Centre to facilitate this”.*

**52. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor listed his appointments from the 14<sup>th</sup> June to the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

The Town Clerk reminded members about Councillor Bob Fleming’s funeral arrangements for Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be received.

**53. COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**(a) Recreation Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, and seconded by Councillor George Gray; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be received, and  
ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

**(b) Environment Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

**(c) Policy and Resources Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

**54. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX CAPITAL EXPENDITURE – EXTERNAL DECORATION**

The Sports Complex Manager submitted a report relating to external decoration works at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

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

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the report be received;
- ii) that the quotes to complete the external decoration be accepted and the officer's recommendation to award the contract to Braddec Ltd be agreed;
- iii) that an additional Capital Budget of £4,460 be approved.

**55. USE OF MOORE LANE ECO CENTRE BY GREEN ARTS – DRAFT LICENCE**

The Town Clerk submitted a report in providing an update in relation to the request from Green Arts to use Moore Lane Environment Centre, and to set out for approval the draft contracted-out tenancy agreement for the use of the building, as reviewed by the Council's solicitors.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the updated report be received;
- ii) that the draft Contracted-Out Tenancy Agreement for use of the Council's land be approved; subject to the Council's solicitor finalising the supporting paperwork (statutory declaration and warning notice) for a contracted-out tenancy;
- iii) that the Contracted-Out Tenancy Agreement is signed by both parties at such a time that officers are satisfied that the various outstanding assurances and paperwork have been provided and checked.

## **56. EXTERNAL EVENT APPLICATION**

Members were asked to consider an application received in relation to an event being organised by an external organisation that requires the use of Council land.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the report and event application be received; and
- ii) that approval be granted for the Cyclocross event to take place at the Sports Complex playing fields on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the cost of the Works Section overtime to be recharged to Community Events Budget.

## **57. OUTSIDE BODIES**

Reports were given by representatives on the undermentioned Outside Bodies:-

- (a) **Youth Council**  
There had been no meeting.
- (b) **County Durham Association of Local Councils**  
Councillor Arun Chandran advised that minutes and reports were available from the Town Clerk if required.
- (c) **Aycliffe Village Community Association**  
There is no Council representative on this organisation at the present time.
- (d) **Woodham Village Community Association**  
There had been no meeting.
- (e) **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee**  
There had been no meeting.
- (f) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**  
Councillor Arun Chandran and the Town Clerk had attended a meeting where the cuts to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant were discussed. The Town Clerk provided a brief overview of the discussions. The minutes and reports were available from the Town Clerk if required.
- (g) **Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society**  
Councillor Ian Gray gave a verbal update.
- (h) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**  
Councillor Jim Atkinson advised members that he had not been able to attend the last meeting.
- (i) **Western Area Partnership**  
There had been no meeting.

**CHAIRMAN.**