

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 18th OCTOBER 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 18th OCTOBER 2023 at 7.45pm**

PRESENT

Councillor Ian Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors: Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Arun M Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mr Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)
Mr Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)
Mrs Julie Walton (Corporate and Policy Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Brian McAnaney
Two Members of the Public

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Eddy Adam, Dorothy Bowman, Sandra Haigh, Joanne Jones and Sandra Kirby.

48. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest had been received.

50. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public made a statement regarding the maintenance of School Aycliffe Wetlands and the condition of the footpaths and wildflower area and asked the following public question:

"To improve accessibility to School Aycliffe Nature Reserve and Wetland, can we have a path for less able-bodied people and small children, and can we also have can we have a maintenance plan put into place specific to this area?"

In response to this question the Chairman agreed to bring forward Item No 11 on the Agenda.

51. SCHOOL AYCLIFFE NATURE RESERVE AND WETLAND

Members considered the following proposal proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran and seconded by Councillor Ian Gray:

“That we ask officers to look at the feasibility of restoring and improving the pathways around School Aycliffe Nature Reserve and Wetland and undertaking other improvement works, including the restoration of the wildflower area via the removal of a fallen tree, so that the residents can have full access to a quality path network (not withstanding flooding when it occurs). Officers are requested to prepare an action plan with costings and investigate possible external funding opportunities and report back to a future meeting of this Committee”.

Councillor Arun M Chandran thanked the member of the public for her statement and her questions.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft requested that the member of public be invited to any future meetings where the improvement works around School Aycliffe Nature Reserve and Wetlands are to be discussed.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Ian Gray and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) That officers look at the feasibility of restoring and improving the pathways and the wildflower area around School Aycliffe Nature Reserve and Wetlands including the restoration of the wildflower area via the removal of a fallen tree, so that the residents can have full access to a quality path network (not withstanding flooding when it occurs) and prepare an action plan with costings and investigate possible external funding opportunities and report back to a future meeting of this Committee.

52. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 6th September 2023, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

53. PLANNING SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

There was a debate around school parking and drop off provision.

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

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Sub Committee, held on 31st August 2023 and 5th October 2023, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

54. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN (AND VICE CHAIRMAN IF REQUIRED)

Members considered appointing a new Chairman of the Environment Committee following the resignation of Councillor Phil Hawkins.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary that Councillor Ian Gray be appointed as Chairman.

This was agreed.

It was further proposed by Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill that Councillor Neil Collinson be appointed as Vice Chairman.

This was agreed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) Councillor Ian Gray be appointed Chairman of the Environment Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.
- ii) Councillor Neil Collinson be appointed Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

Councillor Simon Hocking left the meeting

55. ALLOTMENTS REPORT

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator providing an update on issues relating to the allotments for the six weeks ended 8th October 2023.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that officers investigate the car parking issues on the site and consider installing bollards to prevent inconsiderate parking.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received.

56. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Members considered a report from the Works and Environment Manager to update Members with issues relating to the environment for the six weeks ended 8th October 2023.

There was a detailed discussion around bus shelter seating and it was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran that should any further bus shelter seating be procured in the future; a sample be acquired prior to the decision being finalised to ensure it is fit for purpose. It was further proposed by Councillor Ian Gray that three bar seats are purchased instead of two bar seats.

A further discussion was held around parish lighting. It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary that Durham County Council be requested take on the seven lighting columns referenced in the report.

Councillor Jed Hillary also requested that officers ask why the five double lighting columns on the A167 have not been replaced with LED lights.

It was further proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran that a public consultation should take place prior to any parish lighting provision being reduced.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received.
- ii) should any further bus shelter seating be procured in future; three bar seating be considered and a sample be acquired prior to the decision being finalised to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- iii) officers approach Durham County Council and request they take on the seven lighting columns referenced in the report.
- iv) a public consultation should take place prior to any parish lighting provision being reduced.

Councillors Neville Jones and Ken Robson left the meeting

57. CEMETERIES REPORT

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator updating Members on items relating to the cemeteries for the six weeks ended 8th October 2023.

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

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

58. 2024/25 DRAFT ENVIRONMENT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

Members considered the report from the Finance Manager setting out for consideration and approval the draft 2024/25 Revenue and Capital Budgets for the Environment Committee.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received.
- ii) the draft 2024/25 Environment Revenue Budget be agreed.
- iii) the draft 2024/25 Environment Capital Budget be agreed.

Chairman