

## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024 at 8.45pm**

### PRESENT

#### **Councillor Ian Gray (Chairman) and**

Councillors: Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Arun M Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, 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 Sharna Stretch (Senior Admin. Officer)

### IN ATTENDANCE

Two members of the public.

### 62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Wendy Hillary and Joanne Jones.

### 63. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

### 64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest had been received.

### 65. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public queried which authority agrees planning decisions and what happens with decisions around wildlife corridors and greenbelt land. The Works and Environment Manager provided some clarification on the issue and Councillor Michael Stead advised that planning applications are submitted to Durham County Council and are subject to stringent checks on many items, including ecological surveys before approval.

### 66. MINUTES

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

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

## **67. ALLOTMENTS REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator updating members on issues relating to the Allotments.

It was advised that the 2024 allotment rents are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January, however, under allotment law, tenants have 40 days to pay before termination notices can be issued. It was further clarified that historically the number of terminations for non-payment of rent, is approximately 10 to 12 per annum.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft requested that officers relook at the scope for additional plots at St Oswald's Allotments.

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

## **68. ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

An update report was submitted by the Works and Environment Manager to bring Members up to date regarding issues relating to the environment.

The Works and Environment Manager gave a verbal update on the tree damaged at School Aycliffe following the recent storm. The tree was found to have been in good health, however, the root plate was alongside a quarry wall which led to the fall. It was added that another two ash trees had also been identified in the same area and, following the Town Councils' updated Tree Management Policy, the decision had been made to remove them.

It was further advised following a question from Councillor Carl Robinson that the Sycamore tree in School Aycliffe is due to be felled imminently.

Councillor Arun Chandran commented that officers should have the discretion to deal with high-risk trees linked to the changing climate in accordance with the Tree Management Policy.

Councillor Jed Hillary advised that the footpath along the Warren Plantation is now regularly under water and required attention. He further requested that the Council begin to plant living Christmas trees outside St Clare's Church and in Aycliffe Village and that officers liaise with D.C.C. to position a living Christmas tree on the roundabout at Central Avenue.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that the issue of Christmas tree planting will be reported to Council in February.

Councillor John Moore requested a site visit with the relevant officers to discuss tree management issues in Woodham Village.

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

**69. CEMETERIES REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator updating members on issues relating to the cemeteries.

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator advised that the drainage works that had started at West Cemetery should be completed this week and that members should note that burial numbers are down in comparison to previous years.

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

**Chairman**