

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 10TH APRIL 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 10TH APRIL 2024 at 7.30pm.**

PRESENT

Councillor Ian Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors: Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Carl Robinson, 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 Vikki Anderson (Corporate Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the public.

79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Sandra Haigh, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Ken Robson and Anita Sparrow.

80. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest had been received.

82. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public asked about the bedding plants at West Park and why they had been shredded rather than be recycled, as observed by another member of the public.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that any bedding work that has been done in West Park, has not been done by Town Council staff and so this was likely Durham County Council, but offered to discuss the issue outside of the meeting to try and identify the areas in question.

83. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill and seconded by Councillor George Gray and:

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 28th February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

84. PLANNING SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Sub Committee held on the 14th March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

85. ALLOTMENTS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator providing an update on issues relating to the allotments.

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator gave a verbal update regarding the vacancies on St Oswald's Allotments. The first eight people on the waiting list had been contacted to arrange to be shown the available plots last weekend. Four had attended and had all chosen a plot. Two of the four who had not attended have previously been offered a plot and so this was their second and final offer. One chose to be removed from the list and the other has moved to the bottom of the list. For the remaining two this was their first offer, and not until their second refusal could they be removed from the waiting list.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft wished to record his thanks to the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator for giving up his time on a Saturday to try to get the waiting list down.

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

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

86. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

A report was submitted by the Works and Environment Manager providing an update in relation to issues relating to the environment since the last meeting.

Councillor John Moore expressed concern regarding Giant Hogweed adjacent to a well-used dog bin, next to the footpath.

Councillor Michael Stead advised that the Giant Hogweed is on Durham County Council land and has been reported.

Councillor Eddy Adam raised a concern regarding quad bikes racing through Woodham Burn and queried whether this was being monitored and reported to the police.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that it is difficult to monitor the quad bikes, which is a problem across the whole town but that any known incidents are being reported to the police.

Councillor Michael Stead suggested that officers contact the local police and ask them to attend a future Council Meeting to discuss the concerns around off road bikes and what is being done to address the problem.

A lengthy debate then followed regarding the dangers of the motorbikes/quad bikes on the town, with various suggestions and issues discussed including installing CCTV or covert cameras, having barriers installed on footpaths, whether the Council could create a dedicated area for off road bikes away from residential areas and legal liabilities and insurance implications.

Councillor Neville Jones advised that the Police now have a drone, funded via County Councillor Budgets, which can be used to follow the riders, so that the Police can identify their residence and confiscate the vehicle(s).

The Town Clerk advised that he would invite the police to attend a future meeting to discuss the issue further.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft requested feedback on how the electric vehicle is operating and asked if there had been any feedback from staff.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that staff were very impressed so far, however the vehicle still needs to be fully tested and wi-fi needs to be installed, as this is not yet fully operational.

Councillor Lindsey Aston advised that the bus shelter at the top of Stag Lane in Woodham Village has been stripped of the felt and needs repairing to avoid more costly damage occurring.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Town Clerk invite the police to attend a future meeting to discuss concerns regarding the quad/motorbike issue on the town.

87. CEMETERIES REPORT

A report was submitted by the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator providing an update on issues relating to the cemeteries since the last meeting.

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

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

CHAIRMAN