

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 22ND JANUARY 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 22nd January 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, George Gray, Ian Gray, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, 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)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

Two members of the public.

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Neil Collinson, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Joanne Jones and Neville Jones.

70. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor George Gray declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 relating to the consideration of the football pitch fees.

72. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

73. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 4th December 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

74. ACCOUNTS CONTROL SHEETS

The Accounts Control Sheets for the period 4th December to 8th January 2025 and the General Bank Accounts for November and December 2024 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the period 4th December to 8th January 2025 and the General Bank Accounts for November and December 2024, be received.

75. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the current position on the Council's Grants and Donations Budgets and setting out any grant and donation requests which had been received since the last meeting.

It was reported that a total of £1,375 is currently available in the Grants and Donations Budget, £7,156 in the Community Benefit Fund and £1,550 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

It was advised that since the last meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, no further grant or donation requests had been received.

a) Letter of Thanks / Post Grant Questionnaire

An email of thanks was received from Husqvarna in relation to the donation of a raffle prize at the last meeting. A post grant questionnaire was received from Glow Church following the grant issued towards their Christmas performance.

Councillor John Clark commented that he had attended the performance and said it was very good, and money well spent, with the Council's support well acknowledged.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) The email of thanks from Husqvarna and the Post Grant questionnaire from Glow Church be received.

76. CEMETERIES AND FOOTBALL PITCH FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2025/26

The Finance Manager submitted a report for members to support the reconsideration of the fees and charges levied for the cemeteries and football pitches services for the 2025/26 financial year as requested at the Full Council Meeting.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft proposed a 7.5% increase on the cemetery fees, and the removal of the 2nd and subsequent burial fees. He further proposed that option 2 for both adult and junior football pitch fees be agreed, which is a 5.5% increase, and that the casual hire of pitches be charged at the non-member rate for five a side football at the sports complex. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson.

Councillor Eddy Adam suggested that the Council should support the officers' recommendations as they have the expertise and knowledge about these services. He then proposed an amendment which was to agree the officers' recommendations of a 10% increase on the cemeteries fees and proposed that option 1 for both adult and junior football pitch fees be agreed, which is a 3% increase. This was seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson.

Councillor Eddy Adam asked for clarification on what increase had been included in the 2025/26 for cemeteries fees and whether agreeing a lower increase of 7.5% would leave a shortfall in the budget.

The Finance Manager clarified that an increase of 10% had been included in the Revenue Budget which would create a small shortfall of £700.

A vote then took place on the amendment with the following results:

For: 6

Against: 8

The amendment failed and a vote then took place on the original proposal with the following results:

For: 9

Against: 5

The original proposal was carried.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The cemeteries fees for 2025/26, be increased by 7.5%.
- iii) The second and subsequent burial fee be removed and therefore have only one adult grave burial fee from 2025/26.
- iv) Option 2 be agreed and an increase of 5.5% be implemented for both adult and junior football pitches fees for 2025/26.
- v) The casual hire of the pitches is fixed at the non-member rate for a game of five a side football at the sports complex, which is currently £47.50, with a proposed increase to £50.00 for 2025/26.

77. SETTING OF THE 2025/26 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

The Finance Manager submitted a report to seek members' approval for the setting of the Council's 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budget.

This will enable the 2025/26 Precept and Town Council Tax to be set at the Council meeting on the 29th January 2025 and will be communicated to and confirmed with Durham County Council following that meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill that the recommendations of the report are agreed and that the Council agrees to set the 2025/26 Precept at £2,075,350 which equates to a 4.95% increase to the Town Council Tax.

A vote was held with the following results:

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstentions: 7

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The final 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budget proposals be received and the changes made to the draft budget be noted.
- ii) The feedback from the 2025/26 Budget Survey be received.
- iii) The Council's 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budget as set out in the report and the attached appendices be approved.
- iv) The 2025/26 Precept at £2,075,350 and agree the proposed increase of 4.95% to the Town Council Tax be approved.

78. SETTING OF THE 2025/26 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PLAY AREA SAFETY SURFACING WORKS

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report for Members to consider the proposed priority works for the improvement of the safety surfacing within the Council's play areas this year, as part of the approved 2024/25 Capital Programme Budget. Members were asked to consider the priority works, quotes received and agree the award of the contract.

Councillor Michael Stead queried the timescale for the replacement of the rope climber unit at the Town Park. The Chairman advised that this issue was not on the agenda and would be best discussed at the Recreation Committee.

Councillor Andy Hill asked about progress with the planned Simpasture Park redevelopment project and whether funding would be available from the developer of the new housing estate off Pease Way.

The Works and Environment Manager confirmed that Section 106 Agreement monies would likely be available and that officers would seek to secure these and use them, alongside the Council's play area surfacing capital budget to develop a refurbishment scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The priority safety surfacing improvement works identified in the report be agreed.
- iii) The contract be awarded to DCM at a total cost of £33,148.
- iv) The remaining resources in the play area safety surfacing budget are retained and carried forward to support the replacement of the safety surfacing in Simpasture Park at such a time as external funding can be obtained for the refurbishment of the play areas in this park.

79. FOOTPATH REPAIRS

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report for Members to consider three quotations to resurface / repair various footpaths and tarmac surfaces in the Parish, following the annual inspection of Council footpaths and surfaces.

Members asked a number of questions about the process of seeking quotes for the work and the reasons for the selection of the preferred contractor which were addressed by the Works and Environment Manager.

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 priority footpath repair works identified in the report be agreed.
- iii) The contract be awarded to Lineside at a total cost of £9,899;
- iv) The remaining budget be used, as required, to undertake ad-hoc tarmac repairs around the parish, as required, using the selected contractor, on a day rate basis.

80. AYCLIFFE VILLAGE ALLOTMENTS FENCE

A report was submitted from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator to ask Members to consider the replacement of the boundary fence of Aycliffe Village Allotments.

Members asked a number of questions about the preferred option of roll top mesh fencing which were addressed by the Works and Environment Manager.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Martin Ashcroft and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report and appendix be received.
- ii) The officer's preferred option of roll top mesh be agreed.
- iii) The quote of £9,846.96 from Deerness Fencing and Landscaping be agreed.

CHAIRMAN