

FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE 2025 – 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 11TH JUNE 2025 at 7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillors Tunde Akinsanya, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Lisa Conners, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, Jordan Gill, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Richard Hutchinson, Sandra Kirby, Jacqui Mcfadden, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Kyle Robinson, Ken Robson, Brian Sowerby, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, 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

A number of members of the public were in attendance for the Community Recognition Award ceremony before the meeting but did not stay for the Council Meeting.

A short presentation ceremony was held before the start of the meeting, at which the Mayor, Councillor Ken Robson presented local resident, Dean White with a Community Recognition Scheme Certificate and Local Hero Medal in recognition of his significant charitable work and volunteering. The Mayor made a speech highlighting Mr White's outstanding citizenship. Mr. White gave a speech in response and thanked the Council for the award.

28. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence

30. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

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

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

32. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

33. MINUTES

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

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Council held on the 14th May 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A list of the Mayor's most recent appointments was submitted for information.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the announcements be received.

35. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Recreation Committee

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

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 14th May 2025 (AGM) be received and;
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(b) Environment Committee

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

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 14th May 2025 (AGM) be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and;

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 14th May 2025 (AGM) be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(d) Recreation Committee

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 28th May 2025 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(e) Environment Committee

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

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 28th May 2025 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(f) Policy and Resources Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 4th June 2025 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

36. NOTICE OF MOTION

A Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Tony Beddard and seconded by Councillor Jaci Beddard:

“That the Town Council considers putting in place arrangements, including the required video conferencing technology, to facilitate the holding of hybrid Council Meetings, allowing councillors and members of the public who have difficulties attending meetings due to ill health, disabilities, work commitments or caring responsibilities to attend and take part in meetings remotely, and that officers are requested to investigate the feasibility and costs of implementing appropriate arrangements”.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead:

“The Council notes that this matter was previously considered at the Full Council meeting in December 2024, at which time it was agreed to await potential changes to government legislation. The Council acknowledges that any implementation may be contingent upon the outcome of those legislative developments and the availability of funding.

Subject to legislative approval, Council reaffirms its commitment to exploring funding options for the introduction of hybrid Council meetings. Council requests that officers continue to prioritise work to assess the feasibility and associated costs of implementing suitable arrangements, including the necessary video conferencing technology. These arrangements should be designed to facilitate participation by councillors and members of the public who may experience barriers to physical attendance, including those related to ill health, disability, employment obligations, or caring responsibilities.”

Councillor Tony Beddard agreed to accept and incorporate the proposed amendment to the Motion made by Councillor Lindsey Aston.

A vote was taken on the amended substantive motion and was agreed by a majority decision.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) The Council notes that this matter was previously considered at the Full Council meeting in December 2024, at which time it was agreed to await potential changes to government legislation and acknowledges that any implementation may be contingent upon the outcome of those legislative developments and the availability of funding.
- ii) Subject to legislative approval, Council reaffirms its commitment to exploring funding options for the introduction of hybrid Council meetings.
- iii) The Council requests that officers continue to prioritise work to assess the feasibility and associated costs of implementing suitable arrangements, including the necessary video conferencing technology.
- iv) These arrangements should be designed to facilitate participation by councillors and members of the public who may experience barriers to physical attendance, including those related to ill health, disability, employment obligations, or caring responsibilities.

37. APPROVAL OF THE 2024/25 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Finance Manager submitted the 2024/25 Annual Internal Audit Report for members approval.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft thanked the Finance Manager for the excellent financial governance in place.

Councillor Arun Chandran wished to send the Internal Auditor best wishes on behalf of the Town Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson; and

RESOLVED – as follows;

- i) That the report be received and;
- ii) That the annual Internal Audit Report for the 2024/25 financial year be approved.

38. APPROVAL OF THE 2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Finance Manager submitted the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement for approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson; and

RESOLVED – as follows;

- i) That the report be received and;
- ii) That the annual Governance Statement for the 2024/25 financial year be approved and signed off by the Town Clerk and Chairman of the Council.

39. APPROVAL OF THE 2024/25 ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

The Finance Manager submitted the 2024/25 Annual Accounting Statements for approval.

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

RESOLVED – as follows;

- i) That the report be received;
- ii) the 2024/25 Accounting Statements set out in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return are approved;
- iii) The supporting financial documents to be submitted to the external auditors with the Annual Governance and Accountability Return be approved;
- iv) The Annual Governance and Accountability Return and supporting documents are sent to the external auditor for their approval;
- v) The unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return is published on the Council website on Thursday 12th June;
- vi) The thirty-day public inspection period in relation to the statement of accounts commences on Friday 13th June, running until Thursday 24th July;
- vii) Notice of the publication of the accounts and the public inspection rights and period be advertised on the Council website on Thursday 12th June;
- viii) Following the completion of the external audit by Mazars LLP, and receipt of the signed audit opinion and certificate, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is published in accordance with the statutory framework.

40. REPLACEMENT WORKS VEHICLE

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to request the Council's consideration of the proposed replacement of the current 2015 Citroen Berlingo.

He highlighted an opportunity to consider purchasing an electrical vehicle at a significantly discounted price and requested that the Council confirm his recommendation that the purchase of a Citroen e-Berlingo be the preferred option.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft thanked the officer for the extensive work researching this item.

A lengthy discussion was had regarding battery life, warranties and fuel savings.

Councillor Michael Stead highlighted some potential current offers on nearly new e-vehicles,

It has highlighted by the Town Clerk that officers were restricted in how they could undertake procurement activity by the Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement.

Councillor Arun Chandran asked if officers could review Standing Orders with a view to making allowances for vehicle purchases, allowing officers more flexibility to take advantage of short-term deals.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and;

RESOLVED – as follows;

- i) that the report be received;
- ii) that the e-Berlingo from Vertu be purchased at a cost of £19,251.67, plus an estimated £500 for an additional electric charge point and an estimated £400 for signage.

41. OUTSIDE BODIES

Members received reports from representatives on the following Outside Bodies:

- (a) **County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC)**
The Town Clerk advised he will be attending the next CDALC Executive Committee Meeting as they will be discussing Council's previously submitted motion regarding the make-up of the CDALC Committee following the move from Area Action Partnerships to Local Networks.
- (b) **Aycliffe Village Community Association**
Councillor Carl Robinson gave a verbal update on the ongoing repairs and future events planning.
- (c) **Woodham Village Community Association**
There had been no meeting.
- (d) **Local Network (Aycliffe North and Middridge, Aycliffe South and Sedgefield) Committee**
The Town Clerk advised he is looking to facilitate a meeting for all councils in the new Local Network area to determine their views and intentions regarding nominations for positions on the CDALC Committee.
- (e) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**
There had been no meeting.
- (f) **Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society**
There had been no meeting.
- (g) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**
There had been no meeting.
- (h) **Western Area Partnership**
Councillors Dorothy Bowman advised she had not received notification of the next meeting which is due to take place on Friday 13th June.
- (i) **Cornforth Partnership**
There had been no meeting.
- (j) **Community Hub Development Group**
The next meeting is on Thursday 12th June at 1.30pm at the Council Offices.
- (k) **Oak Leaf Golf Club**
Councillor John Moore gave a verbal update on the recent Golf Club meeting, adding that it had been a very positive meeting and that work to encourage younger members is ongoing.

CHAIRMAN