

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 15TH APRIL 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 15th April 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman),

Tunde Akinsanya, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Arun M. Chandran, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Phil Hawkins, Andy Hill, Sandra Kirby, Jacqui McFadden-Lewis, John Moore, Kyle Robinson, Michael Stead, and Tracey Williams.

OFFICIALS

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

Five members of public were in attendance.

112. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Dorothy Bowman, Richard Hutchinson, Brian Sowerby and Ken Robson, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

113. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

115. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

116. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor George Gray and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 4th March 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

117. PRE SCHOOL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

Councillor Tony Beddard asked how the late pick-up fees were managed and whether there was a policy in place covering this.

The Finance Manager clarified that this was dealt with by the Pre-School Manager, as per the agreed fees and charges policy, which had been brought to the Pre-School Sub Committee and Policy and Resources Committee for formal agreement.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Brian Haigh and;

RESOLVED - That the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Pre School Sub Committee held on the 17th March 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

118. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the 5th March and 18th March and the General Bank Accounts for February and March 2026 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 5th March and 18th March and the General Bank Accounts for February and March 2026 be received.

119. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out for consideration the year-end position of the grants and donations budgets.

It was reported that a total of £7,180 was left unspent in the Grants and Donations Budget, £8,510 in the Community Benefit Fund, and £1,899 in the Community Events Grants Budget, at the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) The report be received.

120. PRE-SCHOOL TOTS IN THE PARK BUILDING ASBESTOS REMOVAL AND FLOORING REPLACEMENT – ADDITIONAL CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to inform Members of a potential capital project to remove asbestos, and replace the flooring and kitchen within the back room of the Pre-School Tots in Park building at St Oswalds Park.

The Works and Environment Manager provided an overview of the background to the project and the need for the works, the quotes sought, and timescale, and asked Members to consider whether the work should be undertaken as a priority during the upcoming summer holidays or deferred and scheduled into the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

It was advised that the pre-school staff will empty the area prior to finishing for the summer holidays. A building contractor would then remove all shelving units, and the kitchen, prior to a licenced asbestos removal contractor securing the building, completely removing all flooring, including vinyl, ceramic and asbestos tiling, plus any contaminated adhesive, and ensuring the area is safe with a clean air certification. The building contractors will then return to complete the refitting of the kitchen, storage shelves and the new flooring with the whole project likely to take three to four weeks.

Councillor Carl Robinson advised that the decision before the Committee was one of priorities, and whether the work should go ahead now or be deferred to a future year.

Councillor Michael Stead asked what options for the flooring had been explored.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that there are two tile layers, then screed then vinyl over the top, and that the risk is that once this is lifted, the asbestos would be disturbed and therefore a long-term solution is needed.

Councillor Tony Beddard asked a number of questions about the management of the asbestos contractor and highlighted the importance of ensuring the contractor is licenced and has appropriate insurance cover.

The Works and Environment Manager provided assurances on this, stressing that the company that is recommended are licenced for asbestos removal and are registered to carry out this specialised work.

Councillor Andy Hill proposed that if the monies are available, that work should proceed as per officers' recommendations.

The Finance Manager advised that the funds have not currently been set aside in this year's capital programme budget and therefore, as set out in the report, the project would require an additional capital budget approval.

Councillor Lindsey Aston questioned the timescale for the project and whether there was a risk of an impact on the pre-school service.

The Works and Environment Manager and Town Clerk provided assurances that the timescales in the report were worst case scenario and it was planned for the works to begin in the first week of the summer holidays so that all work will be fully complete ahead of the new term.

Councillor Lindsey Aston seconded Councillor Hill's proposal.

Councillor Arun Chandran agreed that removal of the asbestos is the best policy and if this project is deferred, the costs would increase. He further suggested that a 'no detriment' clause be included for the contractors to note that if the work does overrun, they would be charged a penalty.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) In line with the Environmental Health recommendation, and to safeguard the pre-school staff, the Tots in the Park kitchen flooring be replaced.
- iii) The recommended approach to remove all asbestos flooring, fit new flooring and fit a new kitchen be agreed.
- iv) An additional capital budget provision of £17,700 be agreed.
- v) A further contingency provision of £2,300 for any unforeseen complications and possible price fluctuations before and during the renovations from Capital Contingency Fund be agreed.
- vi) The attached Standing Order Exemption Form be approved to enable officers to work with the contractors identified in the report and appendix.

121. 2026/27 FINANCE SERVICE PLAN

The Finance Manager submitted the Finance Service Plan for the 2026/27 financial year for Member's consideration and approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The 2026/27 Finance Service Plan be approved.

Chairman