

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 15TH JULY 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 July 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Lindsey Aston (Chairman)

Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Richard Burchell, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Phil Hawkins, Andy Hill, Sharon Hutchinson, Sandra Kirby, Vijaya Kotur, Jackie McFadden Lewis, John Moore, Kyle Robinson, Brian Sowerby, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Mr. Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)

Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the public in attendance.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Dorothy Bowman, Ken Robson and Carl Robinson.

20. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Phillip Hawkins declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9, as a trustee of Lifeline Community Action.

Councillor Rich Burchell declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 as a volunteer with Lifeline Community Action.

22. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

23. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Chris Clement and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 3rd June 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. MEMBER APPEAL PANEL NOTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Member Appeals Panel Meeting held on the 9th June 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

25. ASSET MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Neil Collinson, and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Asset Management Sub Committee, held on the 24th June 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

26. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the 20th May to 17th June and the General Bank Accounts for May and June were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 20th May to 17th June and the General Bank Accounts for May and June, be received.

27. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out for consideration the current position on the Council's various Grants and Donations Budgets for the 2026/27 financial year highlighting that five requests for grants and donations had been received since the previous meeting.

It was reported that a total of £9,866 is currently available in the main Grants and Donations Budget, £9,758 in the Community Benefit Fund and £4,000 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) Solan Cancer Trust (Team Solan)

A grant application form was received requesting a grant of £5,000 from the Council towards the costs of supporting the 36 individuals or families affected by cancer in the Great Aycliffe Parish.

It was proposed by Councillor Sharon Hutchinson, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) That a grant of £1,000 be given to Solan Cancer Trust.

b) Lifeline Community Action

A grant application form was received requesting a grant of £1,300 from the Council towards the cost of a sponsored superhero walk.

It was proposed by Councillor Sharon Hutchinson, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) A grant for £1,000 be given to Lifeline Community Action.

c) Great Aycliffe Garden Guild

A grant application form was received requesting a grant of £999 towards the cost of prizes for the Allotments Competition that the Garden Guild are undertaking in partnership with the Town Council, as well as a contribution towards the Garden Guild's running costs.

It was proposed by Councillor Sharon Hutchinson, and seconded by Councillor Tony Beddard, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) A grant for £999 be given to Great Aycliffe Garden Guild.

d) Educational School Trip – Phoebe Morris

A donation request was received from a local student requesting a donation towards fundraising efforts towards an educational school trip to Sri Lanka for which students must fundraise the full cost.

It was proposed by Councillor Sharon Hutchinson and seconded by Councillor Vijaya Kotur that no donation be given as members were concerned that this request may set a precedent for other school trips to be funded this way. The Council's Grants and Donations Budget does not hold sufficient funds to support similar donations being made to other schools and students.

Councillor Lindsey Aston suggested that a standard letter be created clarifying the Council's position on funding towards school trips.

It was further proposed by Councillor Sharon Hutchinson and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the Council's Grants and Donations Policy be amended and the next update to reflect this position.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) No donation be given to the student towards their educational school trip to Sri Lanka.
- ii) The Grants and Donation Policy be updated to reflect the Council's position on donation requests relating to school trips.

e) Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band

A letter was received requesting the Town Council consider donating 30 ties with the Town Heraldic Shield (Armorial Bearings) on them for the pipe band to wear when performing and representing the town.

It was noted that if the Council was to purchase 30 additional ties, the cost would be in the region of £500.

It was proposed by Councillor Sharon Hutchinson and seconded by Councillor Chris Clement that the request be agreed.

Councillor Michael Stead expressed concern that the Pipe Band had already received 30 ties previously and suggested that there should be no more requests submitted within a 24-month period.

The Town Clerk stated that the Council's policy currently allows further grant and donation requests to be made after a period of 12 months.

Councillor Stead suggested this be changed to 18 months.

Councillor Arun M Chandran proposed that no further donations of ties be made to the Pipe Band after this donation. This was seconded by Councillor Michael Stead.

Councillor Neil Collinson proposed an amendment that any further requests be considered on the basis that the ties be purchased at cost by the Pipe Band. This was not seconded.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) A donation of 30 ties be given to the Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band;
- ii) That no further requests for ties will be considered.

Regarding the Solan Cancer Trust request, Councillor Tony Armstrong wished to have it recorded in the minutes that he was concerned about the Council donating to an already well-funded charity.

f) Letters of Thanks

No letters of thanks had been received since the last meeting; but it was noted that the Welcome Café had submitted their invoice confirming the purchase of an industrial dishwasher which will be fitted once the church hall repairs are completed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) The confirmation of purchase of the industrial dishwasher for the Welcome Café be noted.

28. REPLACEMENT WATER BOWSER

Members were asked to consider a report to request the purchase of a replacement water bowser and pump for the Works Department.

It was noted that capital budget provision of £6,000 has been allocated in the 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget to replace the water bowser.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received;
- ii) The purchase of the Western Global H440P from Thomas Sherriff, at a cost of £5,952.92 be agreed.

29. REPLACEMENT TRACTOR TRAILER

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report to request Members' consideration for the purchase of a new tractor trailer for the works department, and the bringing forward of a sum currently set aside for the 2028/29 financial year in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to the current financial year (2026/27).

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received;
- ii) The purchase of the Fleming TR6, from Kearsley Tractors at a cost of £4,950 be agreed;
- iii) The amount of £4,950 from the remaining £10,000 capital budget provision for the 2028/29 financial year, set aside in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, be brought forward to the current 2026/27 financial year.

30. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC – EXEMPT BUSINESS

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

RESOLVED – that it was in the opinion of the Council that due to the confidential nature of the following item, it was advisable to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

31. FINANCE MANAGER RECRUITMENT UPDATE

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update to advise that a successful interview for the Finance Manager post had taken place by the Shortlisting and Interview Panel.

It was advised that the successful candidate can start immediately, subject to successful references and background checks.

He asked members to agree to authorise him to make a formal job offer to the successful candidate and to approve an unbudgeted cost to cover the recruitment agency fee to release the candidate. The net fee, after savings from the vacancy was £5,000.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Rich Burchell, and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Town Clerk be authorised to make a job offer to the successful candidate with appointment subject to successful references and background checks.
- iii) The Town Clerk be authorised to pay the agency release fee.
- iv) The impact on the workload of the Town Clerk and other senior officers during the period between the current Finance Manager leaving and the new officer commencing work and settling in be noted.

32. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

CHAIRMAN