

ASSET MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 24TH JUNE 2026

Minutes of a meeting of the **ASSET MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 24TH JUNE 2026** at **7.00p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Richard Burchell (Chairman) and:
Councillors: Tunde Akinsanya, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston,
Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement,
Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, Sharon Hutchinson and Kyle Robinson.

OFFICERS

Mr Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs Vikki Anderson (Corporate Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Vijaya Kotur
One member of the public

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston, that Councillor Richard Burchell be appointed Chairman of the Asset Management Sub Committee for the municipal year 2026/27.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Richard Burchell be appointed Chairman of the Asset Management Member Working Group for the municipal year 2026/27.

Councillor Richard Burchell took the chair for the meeting.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, that Councillor Chris Clement be appointed Vice Chairman of the Asset Management Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2026/27.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Chris Clement be appointed Vice Chairman of the Asset Management Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2026/27.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Phil Hawkins, Carl Robinson and Michael Stead.

4. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

7. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Richard Burchell and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Asset Management Sub-Committee, held on the 6th October 2025, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE

An update report, together with appropriate appendices, was presented by the Town Clerk for consideration, highlighting progress in delivering the Council's Asset Management Plan.

The Town Clerk explained for the benefit of newer Councillors, that the Asset Management Plan is an important, high level, strategic document used to inform the process of asset planning, including building maintenance and the maintenance and replacement of buildings, bus shelters, vehicles, machinery and equipment. The Plan is crucial in helping members and officers to manage and monitor Council assets and in guiding planned capital investment via the annual budget setting and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

It was explained that this particular report looks in detail at the outturn for last financial year (2025/26) as well as the plans for the new financial year (2026/27) as well as providing details of financial outturn and budgets, and information from the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan schedules.

It was agreed to move to consideration of the individual appendices and consider these in turn.

Appendix 1 - 2025/26 Land and Building Works Close Out Report

The Town Clerk explained that this appendix sets out the close-out report for the various land and building works planned for last year as part of the 2025/26 Capital Budget, highlighting the categorisation of the various capital projects between those completed in 2025/26, provisional sums, projects deferred to a future year and deleted projects, as agreed at the previous meeting.

The Town Clerk asked if members would prefer to consider the report line by line or page by page or move straight to member questions and comments on each appendix.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft suggested that members would have read all documents so comments and questions per appendix would be appropriate.

Replacement of Bowls Hall Roof

Councillor Arun M Chandran commented that when the bowls roof is considered for replacement, there is a need to ensure the new roof is fit for the installation of solar panels. The Town Clerk agreed, adding that there is an ongoing project to install solar panels in the depot yard to serve the Sports Complex, but a further roof mounted system could also be considered further down the line.

Appendix 2 - 2025/26 Other Capital Works Close Out Report

The Town Clerk explained that this appendix set out the close-out report for the various other capital works planned for last year as part of the 2024/25 Capital Budget, again highlighting the categorisation of the various capital projects between those completed in 2025/26, provisional sums, projects deferred to a future year and deleted projects, as agreed at the previous meeting.

No questions were received from members.

Before moving to the consideration of the planned capital works for the new 2026/27 financial year, the Town Clerk made the observation that a large number of projects from last year's capital programme had not gone ahead and therefore been carried forward to 2026/27. Last year's capital programme was a substantial one, with a backlog of projects having built up since the Covid pandemic. The total capital programme for 2025/26 was just short of £1.1 million made up of nearly 80 projects, compared to a normal pre-Covid year of around £200,000 to £300,000 for around 30 projects. Officers are working through this backlog but have limited capacity to deliver this volume of projects. It was also highlighted that there are a large number of provisional sums included in budget which would only be spent if needed. These factors have therefore resulted in a significant carry forward of projects to 2026/27.

Appendix 3 – Planned Land and Building Works for 2026/27

The Town Clerk explained that this appendix set out the planned land and building works planned for the new financial year as part of the 2026/27 Capital Budget, along with all those projects carried forward from 2025/26 and any additional capital budget approvals since April.

The schedule highlights the officers' proposed categorisation of the various capital projects between those to be completed in 2026/27, provisional sums, projects to be deferred to a future year and deleted projects, and highlights any progress to date on those projects already agreed by the Council.

The Asset Management Sub Committee was requested to agree the officers' proposed categorisation of the programme of works.

Solar Panel System

Councillor Tony Beddard commented on the possibility of increased costs for the sports complex solar panels system. The Town Clerk advised that the budget for the project had a contingency allowance and, coupled with undertaking a competitive tender process, it was hoped that the project could be delivered within the approved budget.

Heating Systems

Councillor Tony Beddard asked whether, given the ongoing energy crisis, the provisional sum allocated for depot heating system could be used to install a heat pump system rather than a gas heating system. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Council had previously agreed that costs for alternative options, including heat pumps, would be obtained and brought back to Council for consideration on future heating system replacement projects. This would allow members to assess whether the additional initial investment would be justified, particularly considering the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

Squash Court Roof

Councillor Martin Ashcroft commented that following the torrential rain experienced recently, he had been informed that the squash court roofing was leaking and asked what was being done to address this. The Town Clerk advised the Sports Complex Manager had not reported any issues and there was currently no budget set aside for the squash court roof replacement, but the manager would seek advice from a roofing company to determine what repairs were needed and at what point the roof would need to be replaced. Councillor Arun M Chandran requested that the Town Clerk ask the Sports Complex Manager to investigate the issue and provide an update to members.

Cemeteries Drainage Improvements

Councillor Lindsey Aston asked if there was any update from Durham County Council regarding the flooding and drainage issues outside of Stephenson Way and asked for an update on the ongoing work to improve drainage within both Stephenson Way and West Cemetery, highlighting that topping up soil is not a long-term solution.

The Town Clerk responded that officers are managing the situation within the boundaries of the cemeteries and topping up of soil is making a big difference. However, Stephenson Way Cemetery still has the issue of water gathering outside the cemetery on Durham County Council land. The Works and Environment Manager has raised this with Durham County Council and will chase this up, but maybe Durham County Council councillors for Newton Aycliffe could also raise the issue.

Councillor Lindsey Aston asked the Town Clerk to bring a report to update members on cemeteries drainage and try to urge Durham County Council to undertake the works soon, before we have more torrential rain and the cemetery floods.

The Town Clerk agreed to ask the Grounds Services Maintenance Coordinator to build an update into the next Environment Committee Cemeteries Report.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft requested that Durham County Council councillors be copied into any request for action and that officers request their assistance.

Appendix 4 – Planned Other Capital Works 2026/27

The Town Clerk explained that this appendix set out the planned other capital works planned for the new financial year as part of the 2026/27 Capital Budget, along with all those projects carried forward from 2025/26 and any additional capital budget approvals since April.

The schedule highlights the officers' proposed categorisation of the various capital projects between those to be completed in 2026/27, provisional sums, projects to be deferred to a future year and deleted projects, and highlights any progress to date on those projects already agreed by the Council.

The Asset Management Sub Committee was again requested to agree the officers' proposed categorisation of the programme of works.

Computer Replacements

Councillor Tony Beddard asked that officers be mindful of being prudent in any computer upgrades this year, ideally delaying them until the end of the financial year, as they are currently at a premium cost.

Driving Range Machinery

Councillor Martin Ashcroft asked when the new ball washing machine and ball dispenser was expected to be installed. The Town Clerk confirmed that the order had been placed and was awaiting installation. He would ask the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator for an update and circulate this to members once received.

Woodland Burial Site

Councillor Lindsey Aston queried the inclusion of the Woodland Burial Site as she recalled it was previously removed from the programme. The Town Clerk clarified that the woodland burial site was ruled out, but the Council had asked officers to explore a memory walk as a project for a future year. He highlighted that the land would need considerable clearance and replanting and the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator was liaising with the North East Community Forest to try to access grant funding for this, similar to the golf course tree replanting. Councillor Lindsey Aston requested that the project heading be updated to avoid confusion. The Town Clerk agreed to change the title to 'Memory Walk'.

Appendix 5 – 2025/26 Capital Programme Outturn

The Town Clerk advised that this appendix set out the 2025/26 outturn position for capital spending during the previous financial year, effectively providing the financial figures to all of the completed projects from Appendix 1 and 2.

He advised that total capital investment last year amounted to approximately £400,000, representing around 40% of the total capital budget. A significant number of projects and budget sums, totalling approximately £690,000, had been carried forward into the current financial year. The carried-forward sums were largely allocated to the solar panels project and a large number of provisional sums.

Appendix 6 – Adjusted Capital Programme Budget 2026/27

The Town Clerk advised that this appendix set out the adjusted 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget, effectively providing the financial figures to all of the projects set out in Appendix 3 and 4.

He advised that the adjusted 2026/27 Capital Budget is made up of the original approved 2026/27 Capital Budget, the approved the carry forward of ongoing budget commitments, deferred projects and provisional sums from 2025/26, and the additional capital budget approvals for asbestos removal and kitchen replacement at the pre-school, driving range machinery and a works trailer. The total 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget currently equated to £1,033,750. It was advised that based on the classification of the programme recommended at Appendix 3 and 4, approximately 60% of that budget will go ahead this year requiring an investment in the region of £600,000 this year if all projects go ahead. The Town Clerk highlighted that this is why it is so important that the Council replenishes its balances and reserves via the Revenue Budget.

Appendix 7 - 2026/27 to 2030/31 Medium Term Financial Plan Capital Budgets

The Town Clerk advised that this appendix set out the draft five-year Capital Programme Budget schedule from the forthcoming Medium-Term Financial Plan, with the adjusted Capital Programme Budget for 2026/27 together with estimated figures for the following four years from 2027/28 to 2030/31.

The Town Clerk advised that this schedule is a very early draft and he still needs to meet with service managers to review the projects and budget estimates and hopes to bring the Medium-Term Financial Plan to the Council in the autumn.

He highlighted that this schedule highlights that if all investment goes ahead, the Council would be looking at spending £2.35 million over the next 5 years, which is more than currently available in balances and reserves, again highlighting the need to ensure the top up of these reserves to enough is set aside.

Vehicle Replacements

Councillor Richard Burchell asked when replacing vehicles, is the trade in value of the vehicles being replaced considered and factored in. The Town Clerk explained that in recent years any old vehicles and machines are sold by sealed bid auction, which tends to raise more funds than trading them in. This would come back as capital receipt and go into capital reserves.

Appendix 8 - 2026/27 to 2035/36 Asset Management Plan Schedules

The Town Clerk advised that this appendix sets out the ten-year forecast asset replacement schedules, for each category of assets, which set out the material assets held, the year that they were purchased, the purchase cost, the expected useful life, the anticipated year of replacement, and the estimated replacement cost.

The Town Clerk explained that this schedule highlights the sheer number of assets the Council is responsible for including numerous buildings (including items such as roofs, windows, doors, floors, and heating systems), vehicles, machinery, office equipment, street equipment and thirteen park and play areas sites across the town which will require a significant investment over the next ten years, as many are coming to the end of their expected life.

It was advised that the total cost of this potential investment over the 10-year period to 2035-2036 was nearly £4 million, and those values will only increase when refreshing quotes so careful planning would be needed when updating the Medium-Term Financial Plan to ensure that the Council can fund these commitments.

As it stands, if no savings were made on the Revenue Budget over that period, the Council is currently forecast to run out of balances by 2032/33, but through the budget setting exercise and Medium-Term Financial Plan and hopefully further savings on the Revenue Budget, the Town Clerk fully intends to avoid that situation going forward.

Finance Training for Members

Councillor Sharon Hutchinson asked if there was any training planned in relation to the finances of the council to assist members in making important financial decisions such as those being discussed at this meeting.

The Town Clerk advised he was hoping to undertake finance training to councillors in August or September and recommended members read the Medium-Term Financial Plan as a starting point,.

Councillor Sharon Hutchinson asked if there was any external training available, highlighting the in-house training being delivered by officers, to assist members in scrutinising those officers.

The Town Clerk identified that training was available via the County Durham Association of Local Councils training which would provide a good grounding generally around the laws and basic principles but wouldn't be bespoke to the situation here at the Town Council. It would be beneficial, but members would also need specific training of this council's situation and the challenges we face.

Councillor Arun M Chandran commented that capital investment has only been possible due to monies being set aside in the Revenue Budget and savings being made on revenue spend. He highlighted the need to budget prudently and ensure that an appropriate level of savings go into the balances and reserves and that this is sometimes misunderstood, adding that Local Government finance is completely different to business accounts.

Play Equipment Replacement

Councillor Tony Beddard outlined that over the next ten years, a quarter of planned spend is due to be spent on play equipment and continuing to build in accessibility and inclusivity may well increase those costs. He observed that other local councils have tapped into local businesses and grants for costs and sponsorship of play areas. He suggested that with Newton Aycliffe having one of largest business parks in the North East, some of those businesses may be willing to sponsor parks or make donations. He added that some works machinery could be named by local companies who may be willing to sponsor.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Neil Colklinson and agreed that the following recommendations be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and approval:

- a) That the Asset Management Update Report and appendices be received and agreed.
- b) That the 2025/26 Capital Outturn Position Report be received and agreed.
- c) That the officer review of the planned capital works for the 2026/27 financial year and classification of each project between those which are to go ahead this year, which are to be maintained as provisional sums and which should be deferred to a future year or deleted, be approved.
- d) That the minutes and decisions of this sub-committee are submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and approval.

CHAIRMAN