

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 3RD JUNE 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 3rd June 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Lindsey Aston (Chairman)

Martin Ashcroft, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Richard Burchell, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Phil Hawkins, Andy Hill, Richard Hutchinson, Sharon Hutchinson, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl 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. Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the public in attendance.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Tony Armstrong, Jackie McFadden Lewis and Kyle Robinson.

8. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Chris Clement declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9, as he has a family member in the 1407 Air Cadets.

10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

11. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead, and seconded by Councillor Luke Ellis and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 15th April 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. **AUDIT, RISK AND G.D.P.R. SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Luke Ellis, and seconded by Councillor Chris Clement, and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Audit, Risk and G.D.P.R Sub Committee, held on the 5th May 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. **PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Luke Ellis, and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead, and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee, held on the 26th May 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. **ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS**

Account Control Sheets for the 8th April, 23rd April and 7th May and the General Bank Accounts for April were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 8th April, 23rd April and 7th May and the General Bank Account for April be received.

The Chairman requested moving Agenda Item 10 - 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budget Year End Outturn Report ahead of the Grants and Donations Report as any decisions made would have a bearing on the grants and donations funds currently available. This was agreed.

15. **2025/26 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET YEAR END OUTTURN**

The Finance Manager provided a report for Member's with details of the year-end outturn position on the Council's approved Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year.

The report also outlined the year-end position on the Council's balances and reserves, loans, investments and debtors.

Councillor Michael Stead advised that he recognised and appreciated the work that was carried out by the officers in managing the Council's budgets but added that he felt there was a pattern of underspending developing over the previous five years amounting to approximately 20% of the Council Precept. He suggested that the way in which the Revenue Budget is constructed should be looked at in the forthcoming update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, with a view to being more open and transparent on the need for the Council to make a contribution to its capital reserves and include this in the budget rather than showing underspends across all service areas.

Councillor Arun Chandran advised that the funding of the Council's ten-year Asset Management Plan requires a prudent level of balances and reserves to fund it and this necessitates a top up of balances and reserves from the Revenue Budget each year, but stressed that the Council's budget setting process was fully transparent, and that the Council does not hold an excessive level of balances and reserves.

Councillor Chris Clement requested the Revenue and Capital Budget outturn figures over the previous five years.

The Finance Manager advised that the budget setting reports already include the previous three years outturn figures, but this could be expanded, adding that there are a series of meetings to discuss the budget setting and there are detailed reports for each showing the process is very robust and transparent.

She further clarified that whilst prudent assumptions need to be made in setting the budget, all service managers are challenged on their budgets, line by line, and stressed that the budget is set six months ahead of the financial year, and a lot can change relating to the assumptions made.

The Town Clerk added that if the Council had not made the savings on the Revenue Budget over the last five years, balances and reserves would be £1.7 million lower than they are now, at around £600,000. This would have left the Council in a very difficult financial situation and well on the road to bankruptcy. He further added that the Town Council has an asset base of more than £10m and that £4m of investment will be needed over the next ten years to maintain or replace these assets, highlighting the essential need to replenish balances each year from the Revenue Budget.

Councillor Tony Beddard thanked the Finance Manager for the detailed report and the traceability and methodology used.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- (i) The year-end financial position on the Council's 2025/26 Revenue Budgets be received;
- (ii) The year-end financial position on the Council's 2025/26 Capital Programme Budgets be received;
- (iii) The year-end position on the Council's Balances and Reserves and the proposed allocation of those balances be received;
- (iv) The Revenue Budget Reserve carry forward requests totalling £24,969 be approved
- (v) The Community Support Fund carry forward requests totalling £32,280 be approved with £7,180 to be added to the Grants and Donations Budget;
- (vi) The Capital Programme carry forward requests totalling £690,050 be approved;
- (vii) The Committee continues to receive quarterly budgetary reports during the 2026/27 financial year, detailing the financial position and expected outturn on the Council's 2026/27 Revenue and Capital Budgets.

16. 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 and two requests for grants and donations received since the previous meeting.

It was advised that following the previous decision to carry forward £7,180 in the Community Support Fund, the Grants and Donations Budget for the year now stands at £12,180.

In addition, there is a total of £9,758 set aside in the Community Benefit Fund and £4,000 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

The following grant request was considered:

a) **Little Tykes Playgroup**

A grant application form was received from newly established local playgroup, Little Tykes, requesting a grant of £400 towards the costs of running the playgroup, with a view to providing the sessions free of charge to allow access to those on low incomes.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft proposed that £400 be awarded in principle subject to the group providing key documents including insurance cover and safeguarding policy. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Hill.

Councillor Tony Beddard expressed concern about the viability of the playgroup and that it was not currently self-sustaining.

Councillor Arun Chandran suggested adding a provision that the grant was a one-off and that other sources of funding should be looked into by the playgroup to secure their long-term sustainability.

This was agreed by Councillor Ashcroft, adding that the group should be signposted to other funding sources such as the Local Network.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (i) That a 'one off' grant of £400 be made to the Little Tykes playgroup, subject to the group providing key documents including insurance cover and safeguarding policy.
- (ii) That the playgroup be signposted to other funding sources for the future.

b) **1407 (Newton Aycliffe) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC)**

A grant application form was received from 1407 (Newton Aycliffe) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets for an amount of £3,822.61, which would effectively cover the costs of providing enhanced opportunities to deliver an improved sports offer and develop the climbing capacity within the squadron. Specifically, the grant would fund climbing equipment, sports equipment and storage.

The Town Clerk advised that the grant request represented a significant proportion of the grants and donations budget and members may wish to consider funding one element of the request rather than the full amount.

It was noted that the applicant had confirmed that they would be happy with any level of grant.

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson, that the Council provides a grant for the sports equipment element of the request, to the value of £1,178.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft proposed an amendment, that the Council provides a grant for the climbing equipment element of the request to the value of £1,914, which was seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran.

Councillor Michael Stead added that the remaining balance requested could be supported from the Durham County Councillors' budgets.

Councillor Carl Robinson advised that he was happy to accept the amendment and withdrew his proposal.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (i) A grant for £1,914 be made to the 1407 (Newton Aycliffe) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets for the purchase of climbing equipment.

c) Letters of Thanks

Letters of thanks had been received from the Captain of the Oak Leaf Golf Club for donation towards fundraising for his chosen charity, Marie Cure and from the Rotary Club of Great Aycliffe thanking the Council for the donation towards the costs of running the Model Railway Exhibition.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (i) The letter from the Captain of the Oak Leaf Golf Club and the email of thanks from the Rotary Club of Great Aycliffe, be received.

17. 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME WORKS - REPLACEMENT WORKS VEHICLE TRAILER

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report to request Members' consideration for the purchase of a new 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 Carl Robinson, and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- (i) The report be received;
- (ii) The purchase of the Ifor Williams GH94BT trailer, at a cost of £3,000 be agreed;
- (iii) An amount £3,000 be brought forward from the £6,500 capital budget provision for the 2028/29 financial year, set aside in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, to the current 2026/27 financial year.
- (iv) The existing trailer be sold via sealed bids and that this is communicated to community groups in the area.

18. 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME WORKS – VERTIDRAINER MACHINE

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report for Members' consideration for the purchase of new decompaction machinery for use in improving drainage at various Council facilities.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson, and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- (i) The report be received;
- (ii) The purchase of both the Imants Shockwave 2.1m and Imants Shockwave 1.6m from Carrs Billington at a cost of £25,450 be agreed.
- (iii) The £2,700 from the £9,550 underspend on the Capital Budget be allocated to purchase the major parts and undertake the repairs to the existing verti-drainer machine
- (iv) The remaining Capital Budget underspend of £6,850, be retained to provide match funding to support a potential application for grant funding to the Football Association for additional sports turf maintenance equipment.

CHAIRMAN