

AMBLE TOWN COUNCIL – March 2025

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting of Thursday 13th March 2025, 6.00pm, Town Council Offices, Fourways2, 6 Dilston Terrace, Amble.

PRESENT:

**C Weir (Chair), H Lewis, I Rackham, M Joyce, I Parks, A Hume
S Fletcher– minutes**

OPEN SESSION

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: (maximum 15 minutes)

In line with Standing Order 3d-1 members of the public may at the invitation of the Chairman ask questions, make representations, and provide information to the Council in respect of the business on the agenda or any other Town Council services.

Raven Montague – Northumberland Wildlife Trust – Raven is starting up a Wildlife Group and wanted to bring to the Council's attention areas in the Town that, with some work, would improve the overall appearance of the Town and also improve habitats for wildlife. In particular the rubbish that collects at the side of Bus Stops and Benches. This is unsightly but also poses a threat to wildlife. Raven also highlighted the beach road between Amble and Hauxley. A large number of roadkill has been noted in this area including small mammals and many types of sea birds. Whether this is due to the speed vehicles are travelling at or people not keeping an eye out for wildlife was unclear. Raven asked if the speed limit on this road could be looked at. The positioning of shrubs and hedges was also queried as this can have an effect as birds exit the cover, if it is too close to the road the exit flightpath can be straight into traffic. If bushes and shrubs are set back slightly this gives the birds a better chance of avoiding vehicles. Cllr Weir said Council could provide the equipment should Raven's group decide to hold a litterpick. He suggested that collaboration with other groups could be beneficial. Amble Town Council is aware of the issues raised and it was suggested that Amble should talk to Hauxley Council to see if any measures can be taken. There followed a discussion on the viability of 'Be Aware of Animals' sign and also the possibility of speed restrictions. Council would arrange a joint meeting with Hauxley and also bring the issues to the attention of the Neighbourhood Services team and NCC Highways Officials. Cllr Weir thanked Raven for her contribution and it was agreed that she would be welcome to come back and talk to the Council again.

Matthew Cairns – Northumberland Fire Service – unable to attend. Visit to be rescheduled for next month.

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

211 APOLOGIES

Kate Morrison, apology accepted

212 BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE

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212.1.1 Co-option for Central Ward declined. Cllr Lewis proposed that no further co-option take place as the May elections would soon be upon us. This was seconded and agreed.

213 To receive any declarations of interest from Members.

Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests in items on the agenda, as required by the Amble Town Council Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011, now or as they come up in the agenda process. Members are asked to review their completed Register of Interest forms to ensure that they are accurate and up to date.

It was noted that all new councillors sign a declaration of interest form which then gets passed to Northumberland County Council. As situations arise Councillors must bring any declarations of interest as an ongoing matter. It was agreed that after every main election, all Councillors should complete a new declaration form.

214 MINUTES: TOWN COUNCIL

214.1 To consider minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025 items 190 – 210.1

Resolved: The minutes were agreed as a true record.

215 Clerk's Report

RECOMMENDATION – That the Council notes the contents of the report and consider actions where necessary.

215.1 Clerks report attached

Resolved: The Clerks report was accepted. Cllr Weir thanked Vicki for providing the notes and agenda.

216 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS and REPORT:

To receive the communications and report of the Chairman pertaining to Council Business:

216.1 Chairman

No meetings or events attended as Chair

216.2 Vice Chairman

Reports noted by Council

217: Update from Neighbourhood Development Steering Group

The steering group met last week along with Sarah Brannigan from NCC. They have progressed well on the detailed work on the open spaces sites they have identified thanks to a good team of Luke, Maureen and Louise who have brought their talents and knowledge to the work.

They also conducted an inception meeting, supported by their planner Jo-Anne, with AECOM around the Housing Needs Assessment to give guidance and direction to their work so the outcomes are tailored and focused to the needs in Amble.

They have started to look at an overall vision statement for what they would like to see happen in Amble up to 2040. This will be pitched to meet what Luke has called his 'granny test', in other words is it presented in a way that makes it clear concise, accurate and accessible. The detail of policies is being looked at too.

- Local Green Space
- Community Facilities
- Conservation
- Future Housing Need

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- Sustainable Development
- Primary Residency Policy

Advice and oversight was given by Sarah Brannigan and she now has promised further work and support for NCC officers although this is at times a little slow in delivery.

The steering group will have to complete the grant funding submission by 31 March to account for the spend of the grant so far and before applying for any new grant in April. They will be looking at a new grant for further work in April and hope by the time a new council is in place in May that we will retain the support from that new body. The Steering Group realise that ATC cannot commit ahead of any changes but would welcome Council support and guidance of any new council body.

The Steering Group would like to thank any councillors who may be departing for their service to the citizens of Amble. They know how valuable and yet largely unseen work is done by those who volunteer. They wish them well on their next projects!

218 REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

218.1 County Councillor Clark sent his apologies but submitted this report.

Update on the zebra crossing on Percy Drive. I have made further enquires with Highway Design. They have requested information from the Street Lighting Team. Once a reply has been received the scheme can be progressed.

In the matter of High Street paving, it will remain same for same.

The resurfacing of Phillip Drive and Links Avenue is going well.

In regard to Amble Library, I have received the following update from Alison Peaden, Library Services Manager.

'I have responded to the handful of customers who have expressed the concerns you reflect. The reduction in choice is a result of a combination of factors:

Staff, as part of their duties, remove from the shelves books that has not been borrowed at that site for an agreed period of time and move them to another branch whilst receiving stock from elsewhere. This maximises the range of books available to customers over time.

In recent years, we have received some capital sums that have injected new life into key sections of our collection but unfortunately, we have not been able to halt the reducing amount we are able to purchase due to a static bookfund and increased prices. Amble does receive a proportion of brand new stock in line with the allocation to other libraries.

We have a policy of free reservations that gives customers access to the whole of the bookstock across the county. Requests are then delivered to the local branch for collection.

I have asked staff to give thought to how they further encourage and support customers in their reading choices through creating displays and highlighting these new titles in branch. Some of this work is delayed due to staff sickness.

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In light of the concerns expressed, we will review our stock management in relation to Amble in a bid to improve the selection of stock.

You mention that people may not borrow books but still visit the library. We are happy to discuss ideas they may have to cultivate community activity and maximise the use of the safe, neutral environment we provide.

Thank you for your email. I will take this feedback into discussions about the next iteration of Warm Spaces provision and note the discrepancy on the library website.

I'm sure you are aware that there was council support available to individuals throughout the holiday period by phone and digitally. In trying to balance limited resources, the service ensured the hub libraries in each area were open throughout the period apart from the bank holidays. '

In regard to Barndale Acklington Rd entrance, I contacted Sue Aviston and have not received a reply. Sue may have contacted Jeff regarding all issues.

Barndale Kitchen- the school now does have an operational and functioning kitchen, there was a plethora of services involved in getting the kitchen signed off and operational including energy, building control, environmental services. So pleased that we are now there.

Fly tipping on land behind Lesley Drive / Holywell crescent. Environmental Enforcement arranging removal. This was carried out on Tuesday 11th March.

I contacted Park Leisure regarding fly tipping, Piles of burnt embers on Lord Mayor's field. At present I am awaiting them contacting Neighbourhood Services for removal.

I contacted Rights of Way to investigate overgrown trees from Sewage works (public footpath) no reply as yet.

No2 Island view- East Cemetery car park reported potholes. I made inquiries about extending the parking area and utilising more grassed area. Vehicles parking on grassed area are churning it up. Awaiting response. Strategic Estates.

Toilets = remaining funds from my small schemes budget contributing towards the refurbishment hopefully this will go towards extras which had been discussed on site. There is no final cost yet as it is still in the design stage better to put it in now then lose it completely.

If we still need to contribute more I would be willing to help if elected again.

218.2 To receive a report from County Councillor Watson

Councillor Watson offered his apologies for missing the last Amble Town Council meeting. He reported that the sums of £250 had been agreed by Northumberland County Council VE/VJ Fund to Amble Veteran's Association and Amble Development Trust to be spent on some form of celebration.

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In regard to Coble Quay he was able to formally confirm that a final offer had been made to the interested parties to bring the matter to an end. He is waiting for further information. County Council has carried out a full technical appraisal of the new School including new crossings etc. Barriers will not be installed on the whole route as previously thought. Where pupils walk through car parking areas barriers and bollards will be placed on site between the cars and pathways.

The cycle way is to be postponed as work needs to be carried out on the unregistered land at the back of the Old Middle School. This has become very overgrown and also suffers from encroachment from the new houses. Lighting in this area is also an issue. Cllr Weir commented that it would probably be next year before the Acklington Rd - South Avenue cycle path could be looked at. Cllr Lewis asked if there had been any progress with the entrance to the school in regard to pupils and cars using the same access. Cllr Watson believed that it had been sorted sufficiently as professional designers had been used to create the scheme. However members were still concerned about cyclists having to cross the vehicular road with no designated cyclepath.

A discussion took place about the Toilet refurbishments. County has decided to upgrade the Harbour Toilets in the first instance. Portacabin toilets are to be put in place whilst the refurbishment is taking place. Harbour Commissioners have given permission for the Portacabins to remain in place as long as necessary. All additional costs are to be borne by Northumberland County Council. A notice will be placed on the doors of the old Toilets to explain what is happening. This could possibly start in July. Plans are now out to tender. Cllr Weir advised that ATC need to see the plans before a contribution from the Council can take place. Cllr Lewis queried whether the money allocated by Cllr Clark would still be available due to year end timing. Cllr Weir suggested that along with looking at the plans, visiting other areas with similar facilities may be beneficial.

The precept for Council Tax 2025/6 has now been published.

A Band D house in Amble will pay £2491 Ashington £2402 and Warkworth £2434.

The position of a Chatty Bench was discussed with the decision that the Braid may be the best location.

Work on James Calvert Spence buildings starts next week.

219 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES & REPORTS OF MEETING ATTENDED BY MEMBERS AS PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

219.1 Cllr Weir reported that he had met with the Memorial Garden contractor.

Cllr Parks reported that he had attended a meeting with the contractor in regard to the Cemetery Tarmac works. This is covered in the Amenities Management Committee.

220 FINANCIAL REPORT

220.1 To consider voucher numbers 278-295 for payment and 70-74 for receipt.

Resolved: Payments and receipts approved.

220.2 Bank Reconciliation

Resolved: Bank reconciliation noted

220.3 Year to Date Figures

Noted

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220.4 Grant Requests

None

220.5 To receive additional costs / options available of IT SLA NCC; to discuss and agree detail of same.

Additional costs have been received. Office requirements: SLA will be £6084 and on top of that we need:

LAPTOPS 2x £627.67= £1255.34

DESKTOPS 3x£552.62= £1657.86

MONITORS 3x227= £681

BASIC TABLETS 9x £167.75= £1509.75

TOTAL £11,187.95

To that we need to add the Annual Software Costs:

Anti-virus 14 (3 desktops, 2 laptops, 9 tablets) x £42.24

total: £591.36

Plus Intune 9 tablets x £22.18

Total: £199.62

FIRST YEAR TOTAL: £11,187.95 + £591.36 + £199.62:

£11,978.93

FOLLOWING YEAR: £6084.00 + £591.36 +£199.62

6874.98

Annual cover for laptops and desktops (2 x £209.22 + 3x £184.21= £971.07)

then FIRST YEAR= £12,810.50

NEXT YEARS= £7846.05

It was agreed to proceed with inbuilt webcams in monitors.

It was felt vital that all I.T. was as secure as possible with support as and when needed. It was deemed this was the best option available.

Proposal – Cllr Weir We accept with the assurance of training.

Seconded Cllr Parks

Resolved: To proceed with an order of 3 desktops, two laptops and 9 tablets for May 2025.

220.6 To note appointment of Internal Auditor

The appointment of Claire Miller was noted.

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221 Amenities Management Committee:

221.1 To receive an update on bus shelter installation on Percy Drive

Cllr Lewis reported that the item was now with the planners. Persimmon homes felt they have no requirement to erect a Bus Shelter as the matter has been discharged by planning. Robin McCartney from Highways has been informed and is investigating. Cllr Lewis pointed out that as the same requirement is placed on the estate still to be built we can carry on pressing for a shelter to be built. Cllr Parks asked if ATC can make a formal complaint? Cllr Lewis said we are awaiting a reply before considering this action.

221.2 To receive an update on west cemetery maintenance work

Cllr parks has spoken to the contractor. At present the area in front of the fountain has a large concrete slab. The contractor suggested removal of the concrete slab and replacing it a manhole cover and tarmac. The sunken sink would be replaced with a flat grill. This will promote the fountain as the visual centrepiece with a complete tarmac surround. Proposal- Cllr Parks proposed Council accept the advice and go forward with the work. Seconded – Cllr Bewley Resolved

221.3 To receive an update on the Radcliffe memorial stone plaque if available

Cllr Lewis informed Council that no new installation and maintenance prices were back yet. The positioning of the plaque was discussed with Cllr Parks expressing concern that it should be in a position where it would not be stood on. After further discussion it was agreed that the Plaque should be of an ordinary weight and plain and not an information board design. This may be approx. £40 plus fixings

Proposal: Cllr Lewis to purchase the plainer option

Seconded: Cllr Weir Resolved

221.4 To consider offer from WHC for a seat, location TBC, possibly The Braid

A brief discussion took place and it was agreed that the Amenities Committee should look at possible installation sites. The Braid was agreed as a site to consider.

222 PLANNING COMMITTEE

222.1 To note March 2025 planning update.

Noted

222.2 To note the information on Signal Cottage area and receive and update from Strategic Estates if available.

No update available yet.

222.3 To note works on land opposite Amble Inn (clearance of site for surveys)

Noted. No further information available yet.

222.4 To note response from JCSC developers regarding crossing points

Noted covered previously in the meeting.

223 AGENDA ITEMS

223.1 To receive an update on the Amble Toilet refurbishment if available

This has been covered earlier in the meeting.

223.2 To receive an update on the banking hub at NTC if available

No further information is available.

223.3 To seek retrospective approval for the Newspaper

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Council thanked Vicki for implementing the Newspage. A discussion then took place with Cllr Parks suggesting that the wording regarding Albert St parking deregulation be altered. It was decided to see if 'Bus Stop' area could be added.

223.4 To approve response to Advance Northumberland regarding land at Hollywell Crescent

Council agreed that refusal of the offer of land was the best course of action

223.5 To discuss plans for VE/VJ Day

Cllr Weir proposed that the left hand flower bed be designated with a VE/VJ plaque. Alnwick Gardens have agreed to provide 30 rose bushes at cost price. If agreed, the bed will be graduated plants including roses. This was seconded and agreed.

The Commemoration bed would be roses with a border of smaller plants to give year round colour.

223.6 To receive an update on the 100 years commemoration event and road closure response

Cllr Lewis reported that all preparations were going smoothly. She asked Cllr Parks if, at the appropriate point in the ceremony, he would lower the flag. Cllr Parks agreed to do this. The Memory Box entries from the school will be coming in soon and Cllr Lewis added that 3 councillors were required to adjudicate. It was decided that Cllr Bewley, Cllr Rackham and Cllr Lewis would perform this role. A brief discussion took place as to what should be placed in the Memory Box from ATC. Councillors were asked to consider appropriate items for inclusion.

223.7 To note disclaimer sent to Christmas Lights Committee and response if available

No response is available. Cllr Weir felt that further inquiries should be made about insurance, as the Clock Tower is a listed building. Should the clock tower prove unsuitable there are at least 2 other locations where the installation could be sited. It was agreed that a limit of £350 should be placed upon the amount ATC are willing to pay extra in insurance to cover the 2 necessary dates. Vicki to investigate the cost. Auto approval granted if under £350.

223.8 To agree 2025-26 Memorial Gardens contract and agree the proposed increase of 3%

Cllr Lewis proposed to accept the contract

Cllr Weir seconded

Resolved: Contractor to be informed.

223.9 To note the information on the culvert from ESH.

Agreed to move this to private meeting.

223.10 To receive an update on the CCTV

No update available

223.11 To note Chairs attendance at Annual Charity Event 4th April 2025, £40

Noted

223.12 To consider contribution to North East England Field of Remembrance, Saltwell Park. Gateshead

The council felt that this was not appropriate for the Amble community.

223.13 To note update from insurance re Percy Drive fence

This has now been resolved and all monies settled.

223.14 To receive an update on memorial rose garden and plaque

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This was covered in the VE/VJ item

223.15 To discuss request from Events Committee regarding TC bunting

It was decided that erecting bunting was not appropriate for this event.

223.16 JCSC careers fair & work experience requests

It was agreed that there would be no presence at this event. It was also decided that it would be inappropriate to provide a work experience placement due to the confidential aspects of council work.

224. COMMUNICATIONS: RECOMMENDATION - *That the Council note or discuss where necessary the items.*

224.1 To note consultation for removal of footpath at Andrew Drive

Noted

224.2 To note response sent to Open Spaces consultation

Noted

224.3 To note continued contact from resident regarding private property

Noted

224.4 To note National Landscape Partnership meeting and event at Fenham Farm

Noted

224.5 Northumbria connected 26/02, 02/03,

Noted

224.6 To note request alleyway opposite Tesco be added to the LTP

Noted and agreed that this would probably take place in October.

224.7 Resident concerns re Rights of Way

The police are aware of this. Northumbria Water are to be asked clear the overhanging shrubbery. Bins need to be installed by Persimmonhomes- resident to request from them. Cllr Weir advised that the new Clerk from Hauxley Parish Council has been in correspondence. Cllr Lewis suggested that Hauxley should possibly arrange for the Police to attend a meeting.

225. INFORMATION ITEMS AND ITEMS FOR CIRCULATION:

RECOMMENDATION - *That the Council note the information items.*

225.1 The nature of the Northumberland Coast: people and place, Invitation 1 April 2025

225.2 To note changes to Barclays bank accounts

225.3 To note Chairmans attendance at Kings Garden Party

225.4 To note Councils response to MP re AI Consultation

225.5 Notes of meeting with JCSC 7 February 2025

225.6 Notes of meeting with David Barnes 25 February 2025

225.7 Notes of NCC Partnership Meeting 5 February 2025

225.8 Notes of meeting with Pre-Employment Training Opportunities Northumbria Training if available

Noted en bloc

226. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING:

226.1 10 April 2025, Amble Town Council Offices, Fourways2 at 6p.m.

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227. DATES FOR DIARIES

19th March 2025, 10.30am, Partnership Meeting with NCC- changed to 2nd April

25th March 2025, 5.30pm, Northumbria Police

27th March 2025, 6.00pm, Amenities

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC: To consider passing the following resolution: That under Section 1(2) the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the agenda due to their sensitive nature.

PRIVATE

228. EXEMPT REPORT

228.1 RECOMMENDATION – That the Council notes the contents of the report and consider actions where necessary.

Noted

229. PRIVATE REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES & REPORTS OF MEETINGS ATTENDED BY MEMBERS AS PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

229.1 To receive the private report of Councillors who represent ATC on outside bodies (Cllr Reports)

Amble Development Trust

Councillor Weir is due to attend on 19 March 2025 and will report after the meeting has taken place.

230. AGENDA ITEMS

230.1 To note outcome of land valuation research

Research of land valuations for 2023 show that urban residential development land/brownfield was either worth less or almost the same in 2023 as it was when our land was valued in 2021.

It was agreed that therefore an additional valuation was not required and Council was satisfied it was value for money and will fulfil a need in the Town.

230.2 To note the response re Coble Quay walkway and the Town Councils request for clarification

Noted

231. INFORMATION ITEMS

231.1 Banking update

The Clerk is currently investigating additional bank accounts to further reduce any financial risks. The Clerk is discussing with other parish and town councils as well as the former Financial Consultant who is already aware of this Council's financial position.

Given that two of the financial signatories were stepping down in May 2025, it was advised that more volunteers were needed to come forward as it is a known long drawn out process to get set up on the banking mandate. There were no volunteers at this time.

231.2 Staffing update

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A compassionate / Bereavement Policy is to be developed.

DRAFT