



**Minutes of the Partnership Working Group held via Zoom on
Tuesday 19 January 2021**

Present:

Councillors:

M Richardson (Chair), K Nesbit, JR Potts, S Stanger, W Taylor

Officers:

Joe Hughes (Town Clerk), David Clough (General Services Officer),
Steven Mitcheson (General Services Assistant)

Northumberland County Council:

Stephen Wardle (Divisional Manager)

Ray Wealleans (Area Manager)

Will Robson (Senior Team Leader)

MINUTES

1	Apologies None
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 The minutes were accepted as a true record.

3	<p>Matters Arising from the minutes (not covered by the agenda)</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>
4	<p>Reports</p> <p>4.1 Partnership Progress Report & Financial Update</p> <p>Mr Wealleans referred to his report updating the group on the progress of the NEAT Team with no issues to report but commented that the whole area is showing improvement in all aspects of services being provided.</p> <p>The high-pressure cleansing programme planned for the Market Place and surrounding streets will take place in February and will be undertaken by contractors. Also, the mechanical sweepers will trial using metal brushes for street cleansing purposes after taking advice from the machine manufacturers.</p> <p>The financial reports are showing that there will be another underspend at the end of the financial year with all finances at an excellent standing. Councillor JR Potts queried why there was a significant underspend on fuel costs and with vehicle charges. Mr Wealleans stated that fuel costs were calculated in August 2019 when the fuel prices were around 20 pence per litre more. The service level agreement charges for the vehicles would level off at the end of the financial year once all maintenance and repair costs were added. Councillor JR Potts enquired if electrical service vehicles were being considered in the future. Mr Robson explained that a trial vehicle has been transferred around departments with NCC for feedback but was restricted to its use due to the lack of charge points across depots. Mr Wealleans added that steps were also being taken to introduce battery operated machinery & hand tools to reduce future costs. Agency staff costs and the extension of seasonal staff contracts were used to cover an empty team vacancy with this post to be filled in time by restructuring from other staffing pools across the authority.</p> <p>Councillor W Taylor opened a discussion on the current issues of fly tipping being reported across Blyth. Mr Wealleans added high volumes of fly tipping were also being faced across South-East Northumberland as a whole. Many problems were discussed with suggestions on how to reduce the problem by encouraging more intervention from the Enforcement team within NCC.</p>

Mr Wardle updated the group with the procedure changes and how enforcement was now investigating evidence provided by the NEAT Teams to gain prosecutions. Also, it was explained that waste site restrictions earlier in the pandemic contributed to the fly tipping issues. Mr Wardle added that information gathered showed that these individuals who fly tip will travel further to dispose of their waste rather than visit a waste disposal site close to hand. Councillor K Nesbit commented that it is well known that vans, especially builders, were regularly coming into the Town to fly tip and leave rubbish in residential areas.

4.2 Partnership Update of Agreed Targets & Future Planting

Mr Robson referred to his partnership report which provides operational updates of the Neighbourhood NEAT Teams. The large volume of plants for the 2021 season are due to be delivered any day and will be pricked and planted in preparation. A proposal for the carpet bedding on the Blyth Links to celebrate the work done by the NHS during the recent pandemic has been suggested by BTC and had been well received by the horticultural team at NCC.

Councillor JR Potts questioned the decision to remove the shrubs and bushes to the boundary of Broadway playing field. Mr Robson explained that the overgrowth was becoming a constant litter trap and many of the shrubs within the undergrowth were dead and the bushes were impacting on the path and green space.

Councillor W Taylor praised Mr Robson and his NEAT Teams for their response to issues highlighted in reports submitted on Total Mobile by BTC Officers.

4.3 Decision Report

Mr Clough presented details from the report recommending that the Committee go with the suggestion this year for the NHS mural carpet bedding on the Blyth Links. Also, it was proposed for additional planters to be considered for Broadway and the Quayside. All agreed that it would be well received in all locations suggested and would be a fitting tribute to all the efforts of the staff at the NHS.

Mr Hughes commented on how well the seasonal planting looked in 2020 across all areas of the Town. Councillor JR Potts enquired if any decision had been made yet if the "In Bloom" competitions would be held this year. Mr Robson indicated that a meeting had been held but no decision had been made due to the current Covid19 restrictions.

	<p>Mr Wardle offered to contact the RHS for an update with any further information made available to the group by the next partnership group meeting.</p> <p>Councillor S Stanger asked if any contact details were available to liaise with Blyth Spartans Football Club to work together to improve and brighten up grassed areas to their perimeter. Councillor W Taylor added his support to rectify the issues on Crofton Mill Field to remove the overgrown bushes to the perimeter fence which was impacting on the public using the path on Plessey Road. Mr Wealleans explained that a complaint had been received for works that had been done recently at this location and on Broadway field by the NCC. Mr Wealleans added he was in the process of dealing with the complainant and was awaiting feedback. Councillor K Nesbit stated that she was aware that a group was being set up by Officers within NCC to involve volunteers to see what could be done to tackle the problems and manage the area more effectively.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Date & Time of next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Partnership Working Group will take place on Tuesday 23rd March 2021 at 2pm.</p>