



**Minutes of the Partnership Working Group held via Zoom on
Tuesday 23 March 2021**

Present:

Councillors:

M Richardson (Chair), A Cartie, 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:

Ray Wealleans (Area Manager)

MINUTES

1	Apologies Stephen Wardle (NCC Divisional Manager) & Will Robson (NCC Senior Team Leader)
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 The minutes were accepted as a true record.
3	Matters Arising from the minutes (not covered by the agenda) There were no matters arising.

4 Reports

4.1 Partnership Progress Report & Financial Update

Mr Wealleans referred to his report updating the group on the progress of the NEAT Team. Currently there is one permanent full-time vacancy to fill once a decision has been made on the outcome of changes coming into place at Cramlington. Interviews are taking place this week on the latest intake of seasonal workers. 2 seasonal workers are still covering additional core staffing requirements to perform extra cleansing duties brought in by Covid19 regulations.

Currently a member of staff is on light duties due to recommendations received through occupational health reports which advises against the use of handheld machinery. Also, the enhanced weekend operative sustained an accidental injury recently whilst at work and will be off for some considerable time. All present wished a speedy recovery with many acknowledging the good work and dedication that has been shown since the post was created. NCC are also in the process of evaluating the use of ride on grass cutters and the effects that vibration is having on the operatives. Early analysis has shown that during testing and evaluation that the vibration is currently low per shift and is not a cause for concern.

Street cleansing is ongoing with a full squad in place carrying out all duties whilst adhering to social distancing guidance with screens fitted in all service vehicles. Many within the group expressed their disappointment with the work carried out on the Market Place by Contractors to give it a thorough deep cleans. Mr Wealleans agreed that work carried out has not been done to the level requested and has scheduled a meeting to address the matter with the Contractor in the coming weeks. Since the last PWG meeting held in January around 343 fly tips have been collected across all 3 zones with close to 75,000 kilograms of litter and rubbish removed. Ground's Maintenance work is now complete but if other requests for winter works are identified by Councillors then first contact is advised through BTC officers. Weed control is scheduled to begin in March, weather permitting. Trials have been done at Stakeford Depot with a walk behind weed ripper brush. Also weed brushes have been tested on mechanical sweepers in areas of Blyth in preparation for the weed programme ahead which will be hopefully more effective.

Mr Wealleans updated the group on the financial standing of the partnership agreement with a predicted underspend of around £6K to £8K at the end of this financial year.

This takes into effect the £10K brought forward from accounts from within the last financial year. This final underspend will be dependent on costs to be considered for training and machine repairs which will be deducted with year-end financial reports ready to be produced to BTC in April.

4.2 Partnership Update of Agreed Targets & Future Planting

Mr Wealleans referred to the Senior Team Leaders partnership report which provides operational updates of the Neighbourhood NEAT Teams. Footpath edging has been completed in Cowpen and Croft Wards which fall into Area 2. Estates within Newsham and South Blyth Wards which fall into Area 3 have seen a lot of activity this winter with foot path edging more noticeably along the roadside of South Newsham Road and Rotary Way.

Planning for this season's planting is well underway with wildflower bed preparation now completed at Broadway field and Meggie's burn. The NHS bedding plants planned to be installed on the beach links near the Bandstand have been ordered and will be delivered to the nurseries at Stakeford. Also, the team has successfully relocated the boat from Seaton Sluice harbour onto the roundabout at South Beach which was recently offered to BTC. This boat will be situated in its final location once the preparation and maintenance work commences on and around the features of the roundabout.

4.3 Decision Report

Mr Clough presented details from the report recommending the Committee resolve to agree the purchasing of additional plants for displays on the central area of Broadway circle at a cost of £1,100. A scheme has been designed by the STL at NCC with the chosen plants suited to shade and can be split in the winter to increase their numbers and the number of beds possible over time. The group agreed that this scheme would enhance the whole landscape and brighten this area up and be appreciated by all. The only concerns discussed by the group was the growing number of vehicles parking on the roundabout. Mr Wealleans stated that he would bring it to the attention of parking control within NCC to investigate having the area monitored once the suggested planting scheme begins.

Mr Clough asked the group if the regular Partnership Breakfast should be arranged for the NEAT team staff at a cost of £200. Due to the current situation a new catering firm was approached, and they can deliver direct to the depot at Cowley Road for a date and time to suit.

	<p>All the group agreed that this would be a good gesture for all the hard work done by the NEAT team throughout the year during these difficult times and that it would be a shame not to carry this proposal forward.</p> <p>The local council elections are to be held 6 May 2021 and Councillor J Potts enquired if the next Partnership Working Group scheduled for the 11 May 2021 could be moved to another date. Mr Hughes agreed to the proposal and informed the group that the next meeting of the Partnership Working Group would be rescheduled to a later date.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Date & Time of next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Partnership Working Group will now take place on <u>Tuesday 25 May 2021 at 2pm</u></p>