

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

AREA COMMITTEE - CENTRAL

At a meeting of the **Area Committee - Central** held at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, Ponteland, NE20 9NX on **Thursday 17 November 2016 at 6:00 pm**

PRESENT

Councillor Dodd
(Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

E Armstrong
E Burt
V Jones

P Kelly
A Sambrook
G Sanderson (part)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

H Bowers
G Davies
G Gavin
M King
S Wardle

Democratic Services Officer
Engagement Manager
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Area Highways Manager (Central)
Area Manager, Neighbourhood Services
(Central)

ALSO PRESENT

1 member of the public

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bawn, Jackson, Reid and Tebbutt.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Area Committee - Central held on Thursday, 15 September 2016, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

11. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair explained that this item provided an opportunity for members of the public to have their say, although if they had questions in relation to other agenda items, they would be allowed to speak on those later in the meeting.

Written questions had been received from Heddon on the Wall Parish Council and forwarded to Councillor Jackson and Martin King, Highways Delivery Manager Central, a written response would be provided in due course.

Councillor Christine Caisley, Ponteland Town Council referred to recent youth disorder and anti-social behaviour in Ponteland from people from other areas, including Newcastle. She was aware that this had been a problem in Prudhoe and asked what engagement had been put in place to tackle this. Councillor Eileen Burt advised of a youth forum led by Prudhoe Town Council, the community and schools. She would pass on her contact details to Councillor Caisley.

The Chair referred to the amount of roadworks being carried out in the area. The Highways Delivery Manager would look into this and report back.

12. PETITIONS

a) To receive any new petitions:

There were no new petitions.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

Parking outside the Co-op store, Pegswood

A petition had previously been received regarding parking outside the Co-op, Pegswood.

Councillor Alan Sambrook, Ward Councillor informed members on the situation regarding parking outside of Pegswood Co-op. The Parish Council and Councillor Sambrook had been working with highways officers to resolve the road safety and illegal parking concerns. Any illegal parking of the double yellow lines would continue to be monitored. A solution had been suggested by the Design Team and Councillor Sambrook had agreed to fund the design from his member's Local Improvement Scheme. Costings would be discussed with the Parish Council on Monday and a report would be brought back to Area Committee Central in January.

RESOLVED That the information be noted and a report be brought back to the Committee January.

c) To consider any updates on petitions previously considered:

20 mph speed limit at Ingoe

Councillor Jones advised that the scheme for the speed limit at Ingoe had finally been agreed and would shortly go ahead.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

13. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

To raise any issues about services provided by the Local Services Group with the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services presently The Area Managers have principal responsibility for highway services and environmental services, such as refuse collection, street cleansing and grounds maintenance, within the geographic boundaries of the Area Committee.

(i) Review of Summer Grounds Maintenance Programme

Greg Gavin, Acting Head of Neighbourhood Services summarised the above report which had been presented to the Local Services Cabinet Advisory Groups for information. The report reviewed the performance of the summer grounds maintenance programme undertaken during 2016/17 in order to seek continuous improvement to service delivery and ensure that the best possible outcomes be achieved for communities from the resources available within the context of the Council having to meet further on-going budget reductions up to 2020.

The key points from members in response were:

- Was there a machine that could pick up grass after it was cut? the costs of cutting and collecting grass was several times greater than cutting. Parish and Town Councils paid for any extra cuts;
- Wall Parish Council not happy about having to pay for next year's cuts; meetings had been held with Wall Parish Council to discuss the cutting but as the land belonged to Wall Parish Council, they were responsible for maintaining. The County Council had actually charged less than it cost to cut the grass.
- Verge cutting, it was accepted that the Council hadn't done as well as it wanted to last year and a decision had been made this year to re-invest some of the savings back into contracting some of the strategic routes out this year;
- It was difficult to define a strategic road and some small C class/rural roads were just as important, strategic cutting needed to be reviewed. Councillor Sanderson stated that he thought Councillor Swithenbank had informed him that Neighbourhood Services were going all the way back to the way cutting used to be done (contracting all the work out) for next year.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services stated that the current plans were to continue with the improvements made this year and try to increase those by further improving how the in house team delivered the service, but that the plan was not to go back to what was previously done as the financial resources were no longer available. The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised that he would take this back to Councillor Swithenbank.

- It was important that verges were cut, especially in rural areas;
- What were the plans for this year? this year the management of in-house teams had been improved and the service had been improved over the previous year, it was hoped that this would continue into next year and result in the work being carried out quicker;
- Had external operatives been considered to carry out flailing ? it was advised that a mixed model had been considered in order to achieve better value;
- Weed spraying; it was difficult to use certain types of chemicals due to European directives;
- The cutting of amenity grass; there had been a problem in the Central area due to steep bank side cutting and health and safety. Some remote controlled equipment had been used earlier in the year to see if it had been cost effective. There was no plan to invest any more money in that;
- The use of Glypho Sulphate; although it could be used for domestic purposes, the Council was not allowed to use it on the public highway because of EU legislation;
- The removal of branches on rural roads; if trees on the highway were considered dangerous they would be dealt with under priority 1 or 2, and visual inspections would be carried out as part of the winter regime;
- Could the Council consider paying someone to cut branches ? It was advised that the idea could be taken back to Mike Jeffrey, Green Spaces and Countryside Manager
- Could the Council consider allowing someone to cut branches for free who could then sell the wood? The Head of Neighbourhood Services wasn't sure how feasible this would be but he would speak to the Countryside Manager and discuss the idea;
- Tree complaints from Councillors, if Councillors had any concerns they should speak to John Alderson;
- Traffic management issues needed to be factored in whilst cutting took place in accordance with different policies and Health & Safety issues

(ii) Winter Preparedness and Resilience

The report provided an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services period. The key points from members/officers in response were:

- Was there plenty of stock? stock was checked by the manager and a weekly audit carried out in advance;
- The problem of schools shutting; the Council was prepared as best as it could be. The Council's main priority was primary roads and adopted network. It would be the school's responsibility to ensure access roads

and carparks were safe to use; The Chair advised he would raise this with Family and Children's Services;

- It was advised that Newcastle City Council were looking to the Authority to take over their winter programme;
- The Head of Neighbourhood Services noted there had been a significant investment in new gritters this year;

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

14. MYSTREET APP

Gareth Davies, Engagement Manager provided a short presentation (copy attached to the official minutes) providing a full overview of the Mystreet App.

Key points from members were:-

- Stannington Parish Council had been using the application and thought it was fantastic;
- Could the application be adapted to include Farmwatch? The application was customer focused and could be adapted;
- Members of the public were often unaware where to report a problem and any reports would be sent to the correct contact.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

15. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was suggested that the meeting in January take place at a venue in Pegwood, the Chair noted the request and advised that could be possible if a suitable venue could be found, if not the meeting would be held at Morpeth Town Hall, as scheduled.

CHAIRMAN

DATE