At a meeting of the North Northumberland Local Area Council held in Northumberland Hall, Market Place, Alnwick, NE66 1TN on Thursday, 21 September 2017 at 3.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor T Thorne
(Vice-chair (Planning), in the Chair for agenda items 1 - 10)

Councillor S Bridgett
(Vice-chair, in the Chair for items 11 - 19)

MEMBERS

G Hill
R Lawrie
W Pattison
G Renner-Thompson
G Roughhead

OFFICERS

A Agnew
M Bird
V Cartmell
N Easton
G Fairs
U Filby
K Francis
B Hodgson
M Jeffrey
M Ketley
T Lowe
R Sittambalam
C Smith
Democratic Services Assistant
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Principal Planning Officer
Senior Policy Officer
Highways Development Manager
Solicitor
Principal Policy Officer
Area Manager, Neighbourhood Services
Green Spaces and Countryside Manager
Head of Planning Services
Senior Planning Officer
Planning Officer
Environmental Protection Officer

Two members of the press, members of the public (15 for planning section, (12 for other Local Area Council business section)
45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Castle, Clark, Moore, Murray, Seymour and Watson.

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday, 24 August 2017 at 4pm, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

- attendance details on page 1 to be corrected to read G Roughead
- page 13, minute 42, third paragraph, be amended to read “Councillor S. Bridgett moved the officer recommendation to grant the application be approved subject to the prior submission of a S.106 agreement requiring that, when sold, 20% of the gross sale price of the dwelling be paid to the council as an off site affordable housing contribution to be spent in the Rothbury electoral division.”

47. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

Councillors Lawrie, Pattison, Renner-Thompson, Roughead and Thorne all declared a personal but non-pecuniary interest in relation to application 15/03531/FUL as applicant Mr Ruff was a senior member of the Conservative Party.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

48. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The attached report explained how the Local Area Council was asked to decide the planning applications attached to the agenda using the powers delegated to it, and included details of the public speaking arrangements. (Report attached to the official minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

49. 17/02302/FUL

Proposed erection of nine linked holiday units (Re-submission) (as amended 02/08/17)

Land West of Link House Farm, Newton-By-The-Sea, Northumberland, NE66 3DF

Planning Officer Ragu Sittambalam introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

Agent for the application Robin Wood then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:
it was a minor rather than a major development and was acceptable as it would not cause harm to the area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). It was in an extremely well screened landscape and was consistent with other beach developments elsewhere along the Northumberland coast.

rather than a new development, it would extend existing tourism; the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) acknowledged the role of tourism in rural economic development. It was sustainable as it was located on the St. Oswald’s footpath.

there were no objections from the ecologist, county highways or on any flooding grounds. A contribution would be made to wildlife measures. The beach also had a long standing no dogs policy.

some objections had been received, but none were sustainable nor warranted the application’s refusal.

Members then asked questions to officers of which the key points from responses were:

letters of objection were not attached to agenda papers but a summary of responses was included in section 5 of the report.

no comments had been made about the height of the buildings; work had been undertaken to assess the impact of the proposal on the landscape.

as with all applications a main condition was for the development to be built in accordance with the agreed plans. It would be subject to enforcement if it didn’t. A revised application would be sought if it was not built in accordance.

the £5400 contribution to coastal mitigation would be used for coastal warden services in the local area, which was considered necessary by Natural England.

the Northumberland Tourism AONB were entitled to their own assessment, which considered it was an unsustainable location. Planning Services however considered the balance between any harm to the AONB and principle of development. The site visit had demonstrated there would not be a substantial impact on the landscape, so the application was considered acceptable.

Councillor Bridgett then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Pattison.

The Vice-chair (Planning) referred to the site visit undertaken and supported the case officer’s view. The existing buildings were attractive and housed a thriving business, and this application would form an extension to that and fill a gap. It would suit small families/couples and was well screened to reduce any harm. He looked forward to the S106 agreement being signed and agreed, and supported the recommendation.

It was then put to the vote, and with five votes in favour, none against and two abstentions it was:

RESOLVED that the Head of Service be authorised to GRANT conditional permission subject to addressing the outstanding objection from the Environment Agency, the agreement of an S.106 obligation and the conditions in the report.
50. 15/03531/FUL
Demolition of 1960s extension, construction of replacement extension, and construction of three new build holiday let/staff accommodation units
Lemmington Hall, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 2BH

Senior Planning Officer Tony Lowe introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

In introducing the application Mr Lowe provided two updates. Condition 9 on car parking was intended to control the provision of car parking arrangements for the new cottages. Following discussion with a neighbour of the development and the Highway Authority it was proposed to amend the condition to remove any ambiguity which might be caused regarding the car parking spaces. The new condition would read:

The development shall not be occupied until the car parking areas, including visitor car parking, provided for the new cottages, has been implemented in accordance with the approved plans. Thereafter, the car parking areas shall be retained in accordance with the approved plans and shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking of vehicles associated with the development.

The reason for the condition remained the same and the amendment now formed part of the recommendation.

Mr Lowe then provided a further update; the original application also included a change of use at the site for a wedding venue and works to the quarry and summerhouse; these parts of the application had now been withdrawn. The application now sought the removal of the 1960s extension and the construction of a new extension with a glazed link from the rear of the hall, the reinstatement of a window on the gable hall and the construction of three cottages within the listed walled garden for holiday/staff use.

The main issues were addressed through the assessment of the application: principle of development; design and heritage impacts, amenity, highway safety and ecology. There were no objections from consultees, subject to conditions. A number of objections had been received from members of the public, as set out in the report.

Helen Ruff (applicant) and Dominic Waugh (agent) then spoke in support of the application, of which their key points were:

Mrs Ruff:
● she and her husband had submitted the plans for sustaining and maintaining the listed building, which was part of Northumberland’s heritage. They had bought it 13 years ago when it was semi derelict. The previous owner wanted to convert it into apartments and buildings in the grounds, but they wanted to turn it into a family home, in which they lived full time
● the three holiday properties were proposed to generate required additional income
● the previous use as a care home had generated much traffic over 40 years
the 1960s extension was an unattractive addition that detracted from the elegance of the hall
in these uncertain economic times, it would attract visitors who would spend money locally.

Mr Waugh:

the new building work would enhance this heritage asset; Historic England were supportive of the proposal
no objections had been received from either Building Control, Highways or the Environment Agency
the proposal had already been granted listed building consent.

Members then asked questions to officers of which the key points from responses were:

regarding any noise nuisance issues, any functions and activities would have to relate to the existing use. Anything additionally applied for would require consent at a later date. It was classified as a residential dwelling, and if any change of use was applied for at a later date, Public Protection would consider it then. Any licence for functions would have conditions, and there were powers available to take action when needed under the Environmental Protection Act. No complaints had been received about any activities at the hall

Eglingham Parish Council were supportive of the principle of the extension, but had been critical of the holiday cottages and previously proposed change of use. They had raised some concerns but were generally in support

financial information was not usually included in the committee reports, but the income from the holiday lets would help sustain the hall

the Conservation Officer had provided general support, but requested some further information on the impact of the cottages on the listed building. Further listed building consent was required; previously acoustic insulation was proposed. Further information would be received in the next application

the Alnwick Core Strategy sought to avoid isolated developments in the countryside, but also supported accommodation in rural locations, and this application supported tourism

a dual use was proposed for the properties - staff and visitor accommodation

there was nothing to stop the applicant from applying for a permanent residential use for the cottages in the future, but a condition restricting this in the meantime was appropriate

it would not be reasonable to insist on a financial contribution for what was currently proposed as a holiday development.

Councillor Bridgett then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Lawrie.

Debate followed during which the key points from members were:

it was important that financial information was provided with applications when required. Some had been provided for another application recently, and such information could be important in swaying some applications and might assist members in reaching fully informed decisions
• if a future application for a change of use was presented, this Local Area Council would consider it and the applicant would have to demonstrate a strong case. In the meantime the condition for its use should be enforced
• members stressed the need to record their concerns about any possible ‘mission creep’ in applications being granted for one use then changed to another in future applications.

Members were advised that their points about including financial information where appropriate would be followed up for other future applications considered.

On being put to the vote, it was agreed unanimously that it be:

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report and the amended condition 9.

51. 17/01123/FUL
Demolition of First School and erection of residential development comprising seven town houses and six bungalows (as amended 31/07/17)
St Cuthberts RC First School, Links Avenue, Amble, Northumberland, NE65 0SA

Planning Officer Ragu Sittambalam introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

On there being no public speakers, officers responded to members’ questions of which the key details were:

• the Highways Authority’s concerns were to be addressed by conditions. Work would take place with the applicant. Highways Development Management were happy their concerns could be addressed without substantial changes - these included driveway widths, junctions and visitor parking
• offsite affordable housing was proposed; a 20% reduction would not make the properties affordable, so a financial contribution was instead sought. The applicant had agreed to the contribution, which would either be spent within Amble electoral division within five years before being offered countywide
• the Affordable Housing Officer’s comments were not included. The offsite contribution would be £65,000
• it was considered that a considerable amount of affordable housing had already been granted in other recently approved applications in Amble. This application was targeting the executive housing market
• Sport England had responded with no objection and did not consider that any encroachment onto the fields would damage the capability of the site. A contribution towards sport and play was thus not required
• consultation had taken place with the education department
• it was not within the scope of this application to consider what might happen to the remainder of the playing field in the future.

Councillor Bridgett moved deferral of the application for clarification about affordable housing and for an assessment of this application against council policy for the delivery of affordable housing. He added that he would wish to hear directly from the Housing Enabling Officer about why an off site contribution was acceptable in this

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case and why having no affordable housing on this site was considered acceptable. This was seconded by Councillor Hill.

Councillor Bridgett stressed that in making a decision, members needed as much information as possible to be provided. It was then put to the vote, Councillor Bridgett’s motion was unanimously supported as it was thus:

**RESOLVED** that the application be DEFERRED to the next meeting pending the receipt of additional information about the stipulations on affordable housing in relation to this site from the Housing Enabling Officer.

52. **17/02378/FUL**

Demolition of existing single storey dwelling with the erection of a new two storey dwelling with single storey utility link, greenhouse and garage

1 Laverock Law, Lowick, Berwick-Upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 2UL

Planning Officer Ragu Sittambalam introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

Dr Charles Dean then spoke in support, of which his key points were:

- he and his wife were retiring but were unable to develop their current property due to the costs of required changes exceeding the price of a new build
- the Forestry Commission had granted a felling and replanting licence
- the design had been changed following discussions with Planning Services
- local materials would be used: stone and roof slates. A renewable heat system and photovoltaic panels were also included. It would be highly energy efficient and reflect local building practices
- it would not increase the size of the building to any nearer to neighbours than currently.

In response to questions from members, officers provided the following key points:

- neighbours had been consulted on this application, a site notice had been put up, and no tree survey was required. No TPO existed and a felling licence had been granted
- the NPPF did not seek to stifle originality; the proposal was a departure from the local vernacular, but included a rural aesthetic. The links in the building were designed to be of agricultural appearance
- the Head of Planning Services met with the Planning Chairs weekly about applications received and decided which applications with objections raised by town/parish councils justified applications being presented to the Local Area Council.

Councillor Bridgett moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Lawrie.

Members debated the application, of which their key points were:
• three of the four issues raised by the local parish council were not considerations
• the NPPF did not wish to stifle good design, and Planning Services were developing a design team to consider such matters. It was modern design and would conserve energy
• the design and materials were very good and the application should be granted
• the application could have been dealt with under delegated powers
• a local county councillor could refer an application to the Local Area Council with strong planning reasons; a town/parish council could ask the local member to refer an application when they felt strongly about it.

It was then put to the vote, the motion was supported by a vote of five for and one against and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

53. **17/02126/FUL**

Proposals to reconfigure existing accommodation and single storey extensions to the south-east and north-west elevations

The Grange, Church Road, Rennington, Northumberland, NE66 3RR

Principal Planning Officer Vivienne Cartmell introduced the application with the assistance of a Slides presentation.

Councillor Kevin Burdett then spoke on behalf of Rennington Parish Council, of which his key points were:

• there were problems with traffic generated by The Grange, including service vehicles, residents and other Church Road users. Vehicles regularly filled up car parking spaces the full length of Church Road
• service vehicles often had to reverse out due to access problems. A fire engine recently struggled to pass through at 9.30am, and 30 minutes later would not have been able to
• Rennington Parish Council also objected on the grounds of car parking; why allow an application when car parking facilities were already insufficient?
• there should be no further development without car parking being provided by the applicant on site to ensure access down Church Road.

Members asked questions to which officers responded, of which the key points were:

• there were parking issues but it would not be reasonable for this small application to require mitigation for existing issues or to justify refusal on these grounds. There was no evidence that this application would materially affect those existing conditions
• no detailed parking surveys had been undertaken locally
• there could be options to try to alleviate the situation, including potential waiting restriction schemes, but this was likely to impact on residents and just transfer parking issues elsewhere locally
• discussions could take place about possible mitigation, but inputting an informative was not an option.
Members discussed of which their key points were:

- it would be an option to defer and hear from the Chief Fire Officer
- there was no easy solution in such a small village
- yellow lines might be a possible option
- people could instead park on the village green
- it was important not to deter the nursing homes; a resource like this in Rennington should not be lost.

Councillor Pattison moved acceptance of the officer recommendation to grant; she acknowledged objections received but stressed that it was important that elderly people continued to be able to stay locally. Councillor Bridgett seconded this.

It was also agreed that further discussions about possible mitigatory measures should take place involving Councillors Pattison and Thorne and Highways Development Management, and an update be provided for the Local Area Council in due course.

It was then put to the vote, and agreed by a vote of five in favour and one abstention that it be:

**RESOLVED** that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

### 54. Tree Preservation Order

Land at ‘The Goodie Patch’ to the south-east of Dock Road, Spittal, Northumberland, TD15 2BE

Principal Planning Officer Vivienne Cartmell introduced the application with reference to the seven objections received, how the woodland had been assessed as of poor quality and so the risk to its amenity was low. It was thus not practical to confirm a TPO as the area was being transferred to a woodland trust.

Councillor Hill considered that nobody could visit the woodland and say that it did not enhance the amenity of the area; it had a real sense of place. The receipt of seven objections and one letter of support was not representative of local residents’ views, who supported it. Overall, any damage from not protecting the trees was a greater threat. The local residents’ association supported the confirmation of the TPO to protect the area. She would support the order being made.

In response to questions from members, officers responded that:

- if the TPO was confirmed, the trees would come under the County Council’s control; people would have to apply to the County Council to undertake any tree work
- the Trees and Woodland Officer had advised that the trees were in a bad physical condition
- if a TPO was confirmed, an application could be submitted to undertake work on the Goodie Patch as a whole rather than repeat applications being required.
Members considered the matter further of which their key points were:

- the environment created there was special
- in previous years the trees looked more like shrubs and the area needed to be thinned out
- local residents confirmed at the site visit that the area was well used by dog walkers and ramblers
- the Goodie Patch was important for Berwick
- it would be expedient to make the order.

Councillor Hill moved that the TPO be confirmed, which was seconded by Councillor Thorne, who acknowledged points made but was concerned that trees could be felled, whereas a TPO would provide an extra loop in the process. The area should be protected.

It was then put to the vote, unanimously agreed and therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the Tree Preservation Order be CONFIRMED without modification.

**On the conclusion of the development control business, Councillor Thorne vacated the Chair and the meeting adjourned at 4.52pm. Councillor Bridgett chaired the remainder of the meeting on its resumption at 6pm.**

**OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS**

55. **ANNUAL POLICING UPDATE**

The Vice-chair firstly explained that the order of the agenda was being changed, to accommodate Neighbourhood Inspector Liz Hall who needed to attend another meeting in Hexham afterwards.

Inspector Hall firstly provided an update about police station front office opening hours. Consultation had taken place over three years about how residents could contact the police. There was still a front office presence in Alnwick. Some residents wanted to speak face to face, but with increasing technology many people were keen to text or email, and there was no longer the same footfall through police stations. No problems had been reported as a result of the changes.

In response to a request about seeing officers ‘on the beat’, members were advised that Neighbourhood Officers were still present but it was not value for money to conduct patrols, and the message focused now on how people could contact the police and where they would be available. Auto alerts were sent out when major incidents happened, for example recently in connection with the Parsons Green attack.

Replying to queries members were advised that the 101 service had been reviewed, which included a finding that 18% of the demand for the service resulted from police officers calling it. The focus now was about directing people to correct service at the right time. Calls would be answered, and there was also a text and email services. Calls could also be made to 01661 872555. Some contact could be better by email.
than calling 101, for example a non urgent request to meet a police officer. The vast majority of people calling 101 did get connected straight away, but many used it to ask for an update on something previously reported. People now received a note with reference number, date and email address for the police officer contact.

People calling the police in areas near the England/Scotland border were asked to confirm which force they wished to speak to. Calls often got referred from Police Scotland.

Regarding concerns expressed about a crime incident being recorded factually incorrect in the press, any concerns should be reported to Inspector Hall. Her email address would be provided for the member concerned.

Inspector Hall also advised of campaigns for staying secure and safe during darker nights, including a successful poaching operation, in addition to Farm Watch. Reference was made to the importance of getting out information about incidents/thefts urgently as other people might then witness/identify perpetrators or avoid others also being burgled.

Members were advised of the launch of Your Northumbria app. Groups/areas could also establish electronic versions of Neighbourhood Watch; WhatsApp groups also existed for areas in which observations could be shared with each other including police officers. This might be an option for town/parish councils. The administration of such groups should be limited to one person.

Inspector Hall was thanked for her attendance and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

56. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Public question time provided an opportunity for members of the public to have their say. Questions could be received in writing in advance of the meeting or asked at the meeting. They needed to be about issues for which the Council had a responsibility.

**Councillor Heather Cairns, Chair of Ellingham Parish Council, NE67 5EX** referred to how the County Council was responsible for most roads within the county, but when Highways England had compulsorily purchased land and built an underpass there, who was then responsible for repairing the underpass? The underpass in question currently had problems including damp, yet neither the County Council or Highways England wished to repair it.

It was agreed that a written response be provided for Councillor Cairns.

**Councillor Heather Cairns** asked when the lighting team could come to Ellingham to recover some equipment left around a fenced off lighting column at the main junction.

This would be followed up after the meeting.
Bronwyn Perry, TD15 2AN wished to raise an issue about transparency and service delivery. She referred to the County Council intending to dispose of the Five Arches public park to Tweedmouth Football Club without public consultation. She expressed concern about trees felled, security cameras restricting access to the public and considered the park to be neglected with no benches or flower beds and felt that the County Council wished to lose responsibility for it.

The Parks and Green Spaces Manager advised members that no decision had been taken and consultation phase was ongoing. The early phases of consultation had been insufficient but a public meeting had recently taken place. Public notices posted had given notice of the possible disposal of the site, but no decision had been taken. Views submitted on the proposals were mixed.

A member referred to the split in views locally but also how there had been a lack of detail provided. Berwick Town Council were in favour in principle of the proposal subject to details. It was agreed that an update would be provided for the Local Area Council the next time it met in Berwick.

Councillor Geoffrey Stewart, North Sunderland and Seahouses Parish Council praised Local Services’ excellent communications with the parish council, but raised that the play park in Seahouses was still missing one swing due to problems with the shackles.

The Area Manager (Neighbourhood Services) advised that a replacement had been ordered but the wrong type had been delivered. He was following up progress in getting a replacement.

Councillor Geoffrey Stewart also asked if additional wire could be applied to prevent fence panels being broken off the play park fence.

The Area Manager would assess options and liaise with the parish council about this. It was clarified that the County Council continued to be responsible for the maintenance of the park through a precept.

RESOLVED that the issues raised be followed up as required including a written answer for Councillor Cairns.

57. PETITIONS

Councillor Hill submitted a petition on behalf of Councillor Seymour concerning the pavements in the Ravensdowne in the North Berwick electoral division. It was clarified that there were fewer than 50 signatures on the petition, so it did not qualify for an automatic response under the Council’s petitions protocol, but it would be raised with the Head of Technical Services in the first instance and contact made with Councillor Seymour. It was also queried whether such works might be undertaken within the following year’s Local Transport Plan programme.
The report published on the agenda responding to the petition handed in at July’s meeting requesting the rerouting of National Cycle Route 1 through Amble was agreed to be deferred to November’s meeting when the lead petitioners were able to attend.

**RESOLVED** that

(1) the report be deferred until the North Local Area Council meeting on 23 November 2017; and
(2) the next steps for the petition about the condition of pavements in Ravensdowne be followed up after the meeting.

### 58. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

The Chair explained that this item enabled members to raise issues about services provided by the Local Services group with the area managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services.

The following matters were raised/discussed:

- a request for addressing the large number of potholes on Church Lane in Felton
- weeding required on the two bridges up to Longframlington
- the ineffectiveness of recent weed spraying during rainy conditions, with particular reference to requirements in some back streets in Belford
- clarification about whether members’ local improvement scheme funding would be required for a street needing a full new top dressing rather than just addressing individual potholes

During consideration of this item, it was proposed by Councillor S. Bridgett and seconded then **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue beyond a total of three hours duration (for the combined two parts of the meeting).

- concern about noise from loud machinery involved in a development between Embleton to the bottom road by Christon Bank, which might require enforcement action as notifications needed to be submitted if such work took place on a Sunday. It could also be raised with the Highways Inspector
- a request for trimming greenery away from the signs by Tesco in west Berwick
- work required to a hedge at Cornhill Road, East Ord, and concerns about the standard of recent grass cutting: members were informed that there had been problems with the equipment but this would be followed up
- work required to maintain grass at the cemetery by the village green in Longframlington (for which Councillor Thorne also declared a personal interest)
- general concerns about roads in Norham and Islandshires electoral division the Area Manager would be contacted during the following week to discuss
- a request for sanitising treatment for Seahouses’ public toilets - the Area Manager would follow up
- a request for additional weed spraying at Seahouses cemetery.

**RESOLVED** that the items identified be followed up by Local Services.
DISCUSSION ITEMS - LOCAL

59. BERWICK CASTLE PARKS SCULPTURE TRAIL

The report updated the members regarding a new project in the Berwick Parks. (Attached to the official minutes as Appendix C.)

The Parks and Countryside Manager introduced the report by explaining that a successful bid was made to the SUEZ Communities Trust to create a new sculpture trail in Coronation and Castle Vale Parks. The bid was made and idea envisioned by the Berwick Parks Development Officer. Eight hard wood sculptures depicting the wildlife of the parks would be created in Coronation Park, and a Berwick Bear sculpture would be created in Castle Vale Park.

Members welcomed the work and effort put in and the investment made in Berwick, and it was:

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

60. BUS SERVICES BETWEEN WOOLER AND BERWICK

A verbal update was received from Principal Policy Officer Kirsten Francis and Senior Policy Officer Neil Easton, following queries received about changes to subsidised services in the Wooler area and the public meeting that took place on 11 September 2017.

Following the award of the contracts to deliver the Wooler services (464, 267, 470, 473), a briefing was sent to all town and parish councils and affected county councillors on 26 June 2017, outlining the results of the tender exercise and enclosing copies of the proposed timetables.

A well attended public meeting then took place on 11 September 2017 in order to question Ms Francis and Mr Easton, a member of our Community Transport Team, and Peter Cowell the owner of PCL Travel. Unfortunately Border Buses were unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict. Residents were upset at changes to their bus services. A number of issues were discussed but the recurring theme of the meeting centred around four main issues:

Issue 1: The local operator Glen Valley Tours losing the contracts to deliver a number of these services.

Typically Northumberland County Council re-tendered for supported bus services every five years. This was delayed for Wooler by 18 months to allow for the completion of the school reorganisation as the home to school transport element was a key component of the supported services. After going out to tender in June 2017 and the submitted tenders being evaluated, the successful bidders were Border Buses for the Wooler to Berwick services and PCL Travel for the Wooler to Alnwick services.
This meant the long term local operator Glen Valley Tours (GVT) based in Wooler lost these services. Local residents and bus users felt that as the incumbent and a local operator Glen Valley Tours should have been given priority when retendering, but this was not allowed under EU procurement law and County Council procurement regulations to prevent any bias being built into the procurement of good and services.

Both Border Buses and PCL Travel offered better value for money. Local people were worried about the potential loss of jobs at GVT and the ability of an operator based in Prudhoe to deliver the services reliably and effectively. Following the award of the contract PCL Travel contacted GVT and offered to hire any drivers at risk of redundancy following the loss of contracts. Former drivers from GVT were now driving for both Border Buses and PCL travel. As part of the tender PCL also committed to establishing an operation centre in the area, and subsequently premises had been secured at Alnwick to depot both the 470 and 473 vehicles in addition to a spare vehicle to be used in the event of any breakdowns or required maintenance.

**Issue 2: The loss of the 0900 services departing Wooler for both Alnwick and Berwick.**

Previously, separate contracts/suppliers delivered the home to school element of these services. To support the network and safeguard the supported services both would be integrated, so each service could be delivered by a single driver and vehicle; this had the potential to realise savings and significantly increase passengers travelling on the supported service.

However as part of the new timetable all vehicles were either in Berwick or Alnwick just prior to 9am dropping off pupils at the high schools. As a result of this the earliest scheduled trip from Wooler was retimed to 10am as opposed to 9am. Bus users said this prevented them from accessing early morning medical appointments or connecting with onward rail or bus travel to places like Newcastle or Edinburgh. However, passengers could travel on the services before 9am as fare paying passengers, or concessionary travel pass holders could for free when attending a medical appointment on producing an appointment letter or card.

However given the strength of feeling of bus users, a commitment was made to look at the feasibility of re-timing the 10am services, following the meeting discussions with PCL Travel identified the opportunity to retime the 473 so that it would now depart Wooler at 9.30am rather than 10am. A revised timetable was awaited and consultation would take place with Wooler Parish Council prior to its implementation. Discussion with Border Buses was scheduled for 22 September to identify whether similar changes could be made for those services serving Berwick.

**Issue 3: A request to re-time the last services leaving both Berwick and Alnwick to allow for better connection with both the train and Berwick and the X15 from Newcastle in Alnwick.**

Bus users asked if the last bus from Alnwick to Wooler in the implemented timetable could change from 6pm to 6.15pm to connect with the X15 from Newcastle due to arrive at Alnwick at 6.04pm. PCL were happy to implement this and a revised timetable would be sent to Wooler Parish Council for consideration. Discussion with
Border Buses was scheduled for 22 September 2017 to identify whether similar changes could so the last service leaving Berwick could better connect with the train.

**Issue 4: The overloading of school service on both the 470 and 474 Wooler to Alnwick.**

During the first day of operation the 470 and 473 experienced overloading as a result of a significant increase in unentitled pupils from the Wooler catchment area transferring from Berwick High School to the Duchess Community High School. As a result an additional vehicle was deployed and no further issues had been identified. The County Council would continue to monitor the situation.

Further discussion/answers to questions followed of which the key details were:

- the summer and winter services timetables could change, but officers had not been advised of changes between Belford and Berwick: this would be raised with Arriva
- the bus stop in Seahouses had moved from the roundabout as buses could not get down, but the new bus stop was unsatisfactory. This would be raised with Arriva, but it was advised that the extra part of the previous route had added to journey time. This could be further discussed between Councillor Renner-Thompson, North Sunderland Parish Council, Arriva and NCC. It was also suggested that an increase in traffic warden attendance would help as it would stop inconsiderate parking on the route
- concerns were expressed about some buses missing some stops. This would be raised with Arriva.

Ms Francis and Mr Easton were thanked for their attendance and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**61. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. (Copy attached to the official minutes as Appendix F.)

A member asked if an update on Five Arches park and Berwick regeneration could be provided at the next meeting on 19 October. It was then clarified that the next meeting would be in Berwick but was just due to consider planning applications followed by a meeting with town/parish councils. The member expressed concern that there was not due to be a public question time and suggested that most Local Area Council meetings should include them. It was clarified that currently six meetings per year had planning business only and six were planning plus other Local Area Council business. However the concerns expressed and request made would be raised with the Chair of the Local Area Council and at the next Local Area Council Chairs Briefing meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.
62. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would include an update on Broadband during the town/parish council section of the next meeting.

CHAIR........................................

DATE........................................