

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024**

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024 at 8.30pm**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Ian Gray (Chairman) and**

Councillors: Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Arun M. Chandran, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### **OFFICERS**

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)  
Mr. S. Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)  
Mr. L. Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)  
Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Four members of the public

#### **7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Peter Bergg, John Clark, Sandra Haigh and Sandra Kirby.

#### **8. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

No applications for dispensations had been received.

#### **9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest had been received.

#### **10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public wished to comment how happy and proud he is living in Great Aycliffe, praising in particular the standard of the various green open space, woodland and West Park, and if the overhanging trees in West Park lakes area are taken care of it would make it even better

He asked if there could be more tree planting, for example, cherry trees for the blossoms especially leading up to the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the town.

He added that the Great Aycliffe Way footpath improvements were welcome.

The Works and Environment Manager thanked the member of the public for the positive comments and added that there are tree grants available that the Council is taking advantage of, alongside support with tree planting from large businesses on the town.

Another member of the public asked if there was any way they could get involved with the distribution of wildflower seeds and also what is being done, and how they could potentially help with the litter in West Park Lakes.

The Works and Environment Manager agreed to speak to the member of the public after the meeting to discuss this issue.

## **11. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

## **12. ALLOTMENTS REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator providing an update on issues relating to the allotments for the seven weeks ended 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator gave a verbal update regarding the high number of maintenance letters that have been issued to allotment holders, following the most recent inspection, adding that if no improvement is seen, then termination notices will be served.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that report be received.

## **13. ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Works and Environment Manager to update Members with issues relating to the environment for the seven weeks ended 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

A discussion took place regarding the replacement of the height restrictor in the Council Offices visitors car park. Members suggested that the stones that are in place at the moment are difficult to see in dark conditions, and could be painted, and have reflective strips added. It was further suggested that larger stones and improved lighting could be considered.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary that the decision regarding the replacement of the height restrictor be deferred to the next Environment Committee Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, and that councillors submit any ideas or proposals to the officer.

Councillor John Moore thanked the Works and Environment Manager for his help regarding a failing tree on land owned by Woodham Golf Club. However he was concerned that the letter and email sent to them to address the issue had not been responded to and wished to have it recorded in the minutes his fear that there will be a serious accident if not addressed.

Councillor Michael Stead commented that he would contact the landowner and ask that the tree be taken down.

The Works and Environment Manager provided a verbal update that the Wildlife Trust wished to attend the next Environment meeting to discuss their plans to create a nature reserve in the area around the Cobblers Hall Plantation as it will be a great addition to the town and the Town Council's input will be key to it.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that;

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The decision on replacing the height restrictor be deferred to the next Environment Committee Meeting.

#### **14. CEMETERIES REPORT**

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator updating Members on items relating to the cemeteries for the seven weeks ended 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The report also set out for approval a new draft Management and Safety of Memorials Policy.

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that the officers continue to inspect memorials every three years as opposed to every five years as currently indicated in the policy, and that the new policy be communicated to the public.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that;

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Management and Safety of Memorials Policy be agreed, subject to the amendment that inspections are carried out every three years.

#### **15. 2024/25 WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE PLAN**

The Works and Environment Manager submitted the 2024/25 Works and Environment service plan for members' consideration and approval.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The 2024/25 Works and Environment Service Plan be approved.

**Chairman**