

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 15TH JANUARY 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 15TH JANUARY 2025 at 7.23pm**

PRESENT

Councillor Ian Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors: Eddy Adam, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Ken Robson, Michael Stead and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Mr Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)

Mr Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)

Mrs Vikki Anderson (Corporate Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE

Three members of the public were in attendance.

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Armstrong, Peter Bergg, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Carl Robinson and Anne Woodward.

60. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

62. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public raised concerns that there were not enough dog bins around the town, some are broken, and some are unable to open at all.

Councillor Ian Gray clarified that dog bags can be placed in any bin.

Councillor Lindsey Aston further explained that the area in which the member of the public was referring to, there are no bins at all.

Councillor Michael Stead said he will discuss the concerns with the member of the public, find out exact locations and investigate the issue.

The Works and Environment Manager also offered to meet with the member of the public to look at the issue.

Councillor Jed Hillary added that the responsibility lies with the landowner of the footpath where the bin is located.

Councillor Brian McAnaney said the dog bins in general were not being maintained and one was due to be replaced at Aycliffe Nature Park but had not been.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that dog bins are held in stock so can be easily replaced if on Council land.

Councillor Ken Robson asked if contact details could be put on the front of each bin so members of the public can easily identify who is responsible. It was agreed that this would be considered by officers.

63. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, seconded by Councillor John Clark and:

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 27th November 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64. ALLOTMENTS REPORT

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator for the seven weeks ended the 5th January 2025.

Councillor Jed Hillary asked if officers could look at the St Oswald's Allotments site as the new drainage doesn't seem to be working effectively.

The Grounds Services Maintenance Coordinator agreed to investigate the issue.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

65. ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Members considered a report from the Works and Environment Manager for the seven weeks ended the 5th January 2025.

The Works and Environment Manager verbally updated that another delivery of trees had arrived from the Conservation Volunteer Trust, so a planting session would soon be arranged with the local Girl Guides and Brownies clubs.

Councillor John Moore identified a situation in Woodham where land owned by Woodham Golf Club at North Agnew Plantation has trees that have died or that are emersed in water and at risk of falling, with risk of a serious or potentially fatal accident. A Tree Prevention Order is in place, which may cause issues but proposed that a letter from the Town Council be sent to the land owners, identifying the risks and urgency of the situation.

The Works and Environment Manager said he had previously expressed concerns over these trees and the Council had written to Woodham Golf Club once, with no rectifications to the concerns.

He agreed that another, more strongly worded letter should be sent to them and to Durham County Council in relation to the Tree Preservation Order, clearly stating that as this is not our property, we have no control but that urgent remedial action needs to be taken due to the risk to the general public.

Councillor Arun M Chandran seconded Councillor John Moore's proposal that letters be sent to both Durham County Council and Woodham Golf Club, highlighting the urgency of the matter and the potential consequences if the works are not carried out, which they would be legally liable for.

Councillor Ken Robson commented the winter maintenance update and advised that he had read recently that Durham County Council had upgraded their mini tractors and asked if the Town Council also needed a replacement.

The Works and Environment Manager explained that Durham County Council had agreed to replace the Council's winter maintenance machinery two years ago under the Service Level Agreement between the two councils. However, they had refused at that time to provide a compact tractor with gritting unit.

Councillor Ken Robson requested that officers enquire with Durham County Council regarding the possibility of securing a compact tractor.

Councillor Michael Stead explained the 12 tractors were grant funded but would ask if one can be used by the Town Council, given the number of residents on the town.

Councillor Wendy Hillary asked the Works and Environment Manager if something can be done to repair the grass between 21 and 22 Ross Walk as an ambulance had got bogged down over Christmas leaving two large divots.

The Works and Environment Manager advised he had passed this onto Durham County Council as it is their land, and will chase this up.

RESOLVED – it was agreed:

- i) That the report be received.
- ii) That a letter be sent to Durham County Council and Woodham Golf Club highlighting the dangerous state of the trees in North Agnew Plantation and the potential consequences if the works are not carried out as a matter of urgency.

66. CEMETERIES REPORT

Members considered a report from the Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator for the seven weeks ended the 5th January 2025.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

Chairman