

**COUNCIL 11 JANUARY 2012****1. Coal Tub Monument**

- 1.1 The Coal Tub that commemorates the former Newbiggin Colliery is currently remotely located and rarely seen by most residents and visitors. It has suffered from vandalism and graffiti.
- 1.2 The Newbiggin Colliery Residents Association wishes to see the Coal Tub moved from its present site to a more auspicious place as it is part of the history of the Newbiggin Coal Mining Community.
- 1.3 It has suggested that it is worthy of a better site and has suggested it be moved close to the former Colliery Manager's House on Woodhorn Road to show respect for miner's past and present and the families of those miners.
- 1.4 The land in this location is open to the public and in fact the part of the former rail line used by the tubs to transport coal from the pit head to the screens so is a very appropriate site and highly visible.
- 1.5 Approval has been sought from the county council Highways and Environmental Service Managers and it has been confirmed that planning consent is not required.
- 1.6 It is likely that the Coal Tub will have to be removed from the existing site for refurbishment then installed on a plinth at the Woodhorn Road location. The overall cost will be in the region of £2,000.

**Recommended that the Town Council arrange for the relocation of the Coal Tub Monument to Woodhorn Road and agree a financial contribution.**

**2. Northumberland County Council Consultation – Ashington Project**

- 2.1 The county council has now issued a formal consultation on its web site regarding what it calls the Ashington Project to create a new leisure and community facility in Ashington. This would be a replacement for the existing Leisure Centre in Ashington where many facilities are provided on a Wansbeck-wide basis and therefore of interest to the Town Council.
- 2.2 The plan is to build a new, high quality, inspirational centre for those who live, work or study in Ashington and surrounding areas at an estimated cost of £20 million. The facility will also attract new investment and increased visits to the town and increase activity for existing businesses - placing it at the heart of Ashington's future prosperity.
- 2.3 Certain core services and activities are proposed:
  - Sports facilities, including a pool, gym and studio spaces
  - Library services
  - Cafe, social and meeting spaces
  - Access to information, advice and county council services
  - A registrar's office
- 2.4 Additional services and/or activities might be provided (other ideas also welcomed):
  - Learning and skills development opportunities
  - A range of healthcare information/services eg. doctor's surgery, pharmacy etc.
  - Arts performances and participation activities

- A wider range of sporting activities

- 2.5 The proposal is to relocate, not duplicate, services and it is stated also offers an opportunity - through the sharing of facilities - for a greater range of services, and longer opening hours. This sharing would also make life easier for customers. For example you could visit the library, get some advice on Council services, attend a fitness class and have a coffee with a friend - perhaps while the children are at the pool - all under the same roof, and in brand new, pleasant surroundings.
- 2.6 Two possible sites for the new centre are being considered because they are the closest to most households, as well as being best placed to contribute to town centre revitalisation:
- The former Asda site in the centre of town
  - The former hospital site on West View

The county council advises that it conducted a careful appraisal of all of the potential sites in Ashington to arrive at this shortlist, taking into account factors such as:

- How easy is it to get to the site for all forms of transport, and how many households are within easy walking distance
  - Will the location allow the facility to draw users from other areas who would also spend on other services or in shops in the town, and could the site attract additional investment from other sources
  - Is the site big enough to accommodate the facilities and services planned
- 2.7 This first phase consultation will take place throughout December and January on location and additional activities and services with feedback and more concrete proposals for further consultation in February and March through a touring exhibition. The final decision will be taken following a report on detailed proposals and costs by the County Council's Executive Committee with a view to commencing design and build in the summer for completion in 2014.
- 2.8 Three examples of the type of development being proposed are cited at East End Pool and library at Newcastle; Blaydon Leisure & Primary Care Centre; the Grove Wellbeing Centre at Belfast.
- 2.9 The on-line consultation response document provides a non exhaustive wish list of some 42 possible other services with respondents encouraged to select six in order of preference and this can be considered by members at the meeting.
- 2.10 Whichever site is chosen the final package of services and activities will be closer to all residents of Newbiggin by-the-Sea some of whom will currently make use the swimming pool; indoor bowls green etc. and the council facilities at Wansbeck Square.