

COUNCIL 13 JULY 2011

1. Bulb Planting for 2012

- 1.1 The county council has approached Town and Parish Councils to see if they want to add any areas of bulb planting for next year as orders must be placed now.
- 1.2 This fits well with the environmental aspects of the Town Plan and a display of Daffodils and mixed Crocuses can be provided for £250 covering twenty square metres. The location can be agreed by the Town Clerk with Neighbourhood Services in due course.

Recommended that an order be placed for additional bulb planting.

2. Review of Polling Arrangements

- 2.1 A review of polling places is due to be completed by the county council by the end of 2011 and this will be done in two stages with stakeholders invited to comment on existing arrangements and then any proposed change. While there is no requirement to change any of the existing arrangements with which members will be familiar any 'status quo' decision has to be fully justified.
- 2.2 One or more polling stations can be housed in the polling place for each district depending on the size of the electorate. When conducting a review the local authority must take into account the following criteria:
- 1) Ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - 2) Ensure so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled.
- 2.3 The following polling places are currently used in the constituency area:

Number	Polling Station	Persons entitled to vote
241	Newbiggin St Bartholomew's Church Centre	W52NWE 1 - 1179
242	Newbiggin Sports Centre	W53NWE 1 - 1191
243	Newbiggin Library	W54NW 1 - 1416
244	Newbiggin Elizabethan Hall	W55NW 1 - 968

- 2.4 The Town Council may make representations about the location or accessibility of any of the premises or give alternative suggestions for places to be used as polling places.
- 2.5 Members will recall that the review of the county Wards resulted in the boundary between Newbiggin East and Central Ward and Seaton with Newbiggin West being changes significantly as shown on the attached plans.

- 2.6 Representations were made but the Boundary Commission decided that it would maintain the Ward boundaries to provide approximate equality of voters to Councillors and not alter subdivisions for Town Councils. This can be looked at as a Local Governance Review by the County Council on request.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council:

- 1) Consider any representations regarding polling stations;**
- 2) Request Northumberland County Council to undertake a Local Governance Review of the arrangements for Newbiggin by-the-Sea Town Council.**

3. Public Rights of Way – Cliff top path

- 3.1 Northumberland County Council Countryside Access and Recreation Manager is seeking views on a number of proposed changes to the path network around Sandy Bay to overcome issues relating to:
1. The erosion of the cliffs and the consequent loss of the cliff top path between points marked J and K on the plan.
 2. The realignment of a cul-de-sac path through the caravan park (A to C) that is currently obstructed by buildings, to provide a through route (A to B) connecting the path up to the river Wansbeck estuary.
- 3.2 At the same time the public bridleway (E to F) will be diverted onto the route (E to G) to provide rider access to the foreshore and a new section of footpath (D to G) will be created to provide a continuous footpath link where a gap in the network previously existed.
- 3.3 Wansbeck Footpaths 71, 81, 82 and Bridleway 80 are affected as shown on the plan which will be displayed at the meeting.
- 3.4 The Countryside Access and Recreation Manager confirms that the cliff top path between (J and K) is substantially lost through coastal erosion and collapse of the cliff face. The proposed alternative (J to I) is being created with the agreement of the landowners to provide an alternative safe route that is stepped back a safe distance from the eroding cliff edge.

Recommended that the proposed alterations and improvements to the public path network be welcomed.

4. Annual Return Accounting Statements for 2010/2011 and External Audit

- 4.1 Members approved the Accounts and Accounting Statement for the financial year 2010/2011 following consideration of the Final Accounts and Balance Sheet at the Annual Meeting in May.

- 4.2 The documentation has been available for inspection by the public as required by the legislation.
- 4.3 The Annual Return was duly completed and submitted to the appointed External Auditors BDO LLP who have signed and returned the certificate and opinion. Copies of Sections 1, 2 and 3 are attached at Appendix 1. The External Auditors have confirmed that the information in the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.
- 4.4 While not affecting their opinion they have drawn attention to the following matter:

The Town Council have disclosed some of their fixed assets at a £nil value in the Annual Return. This has been raised because these assets could be undervalued.
- 4.5 Fixed assets are required to be correctly stated measured at cost value and not changed unless disposed of or scrapped. The assets in question are the items of furniture acquired free of cost from the county council on the creation of the Town Council and are therefore recorded at cost value.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council:

- i) Approves and accepts the Annual Report as audited;**
- ii) Takes no action regarding the value of assets acquired free of charge.**

5. Grounds Maintenance – Customer Satisfaction Survey

- 5.1 A Customer Satisfaction Survey is being carried out by the Business Co-ordination Officer from Northumberland County Councils' Highways and Neighbourhood Services with a view to providing the highest possible standard of service in Grounds Maintenance.
- 5.2 The public are able to complete the survey online on the county council website but they have invited Parish and Town Councils across the county to complete the questionnaire as valued end users of their service. A copy has been circulated to members so that issues can be considered individually and discussed collectively at the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that members consider a Town Council response to the survey.**6. Local Service Provision – Prospect Place Public Toilets**

- 6.1 Last summer the Town Council in line with the Town Plan arranged for the renovation of the public toilets at Prospect Place and service uplift was provided so that additional cleaning could take place and longer opening hours.
- 6.2 Members are asked to consider what service uplift is required for this summer and it is hoped to have details of any costs available for the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council consider the service requirements for the Prospect Place public toilets.

7. Tourist Signposting and Car Parks

- 7.1 The Town Plan identifies the need to work with relevant organisations and the county council a number of issues relating to tourist information signage and public parking.
- 7.2 A recent meeting with the Manager of the Newbiggin Maritime Centre regarding such matters particularly in relation to the launch of this prestige visitor centre this month has identified a range of signage required to direct visitors both to attractions in Newbiggin by-the-Sea and to appropriate car parking.
- 7.3 While the Maritime Centre will be approaching the Automobile Association for temporary road signs it is thought that the Town Council should take the lead on the overview of broader signage for Newbiggin by-the-Sea and tourist signage that might require formal applications to be submitted to the Highways Authorities.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) a Working Group be appointed to consider the requirements with local stakeholders;**
- 2) authority be given to submit all necessary applications.**

8. Review of Open Spaces, planting and shrub beds

- 8.1 Northumberland County Council Neighbourhood Services have requested that the Town Council review the planting schemes and shrub beds within the open spaces throughout the town and consider whether any changes are required to the types of display with a view to reducing maintenance requirements.
- 8.2 Members need to consider such matters as part of the overall assessment of local service provision and standards and it is suggested that this will be best achieved through a Working Group to report back to a subsequent Council meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council appoint a Working Group.