

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday 19 December 2012 at 7 pm at the Newbiggin by-the-Sea Sports and Community Centre.

PRESENT:

Councillors: R McCready (Chairperson)

L Anderson M Boon M Cholerton A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

Also present: Councillor M Kirkup and W Rogers.

FC08/12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Peden.

FC09/12 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 October 2012 be approved as a true record

FC10/12 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests under the Localism Act 2011 or any other interests declared in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members reiterated their registered personal interests in relation business included in the budget considerations involving Newbiggin in Bloom; Newbiggin Royal British Legion; Newbiggin Allotment Association and the County Council.

The Town Clerk referred to the repeal of legislation resulting in special attention being paid to interests of members relating to the setting of the Precept and would report on granting dispensations at the Council Meeting.

FC11/12 PAYMENTS OVER £500

The Town Clerk had circulated for members' information updated details of payments over £500 for publication in accordance with the Governments scheme. The document would be placed on the Town Councils' web site for public information.

FC12/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the Agenda as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act relating to financial and business affairs.

FC13/12 LOCAL SERVICES – ESTIMATES FOR SERVICE PROVISION FOLLOWING TRANSFER

The Town Clerk had reported on the position of the County Council regarding the intended transfer of further local services to Town and Parish Councils. The County Council intended that the Town Council should take over responsibility for the parks and playing fields at Memorial Park; Milburn Park including the bowling green and pavilion; playing fields including the football pitches at the Sports Centre and Central Park otherwise it would be likely to levy a Special Charge for Newbiggin Council Tax Payers.

The Chairperson outlined the various discussions that had taken place and the financial implications for the budget and the local Precept if these substantial services were accepted. New charges for the county council to continue to undertake existing work on behalf of the Town Council would increase for 2013/14 but other options were not yet viable.

Members were particularly keen for the Town Council to take responsibility for Memorial Park but felt that the other facilities were expensive to maintain through the Precept which would have to be increased considerably with negligible income from users.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) The information regarding the transfer of local services be noted;**
- 2) The transfer of responsibility for Memorial Park be accepted from 1st April 2013 with the property being transferred to Town Council ownership;**
- 3) Responsibility for the other parks and playing fields is not accepted.**

FC14/12 2012/13 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Income and expenditure to date were considered by the Members together with projections in budget expenditure for the financial year.

The budget for office costs would be significantly overspent as a result of the heating costs as previously reported and to be met from balances even though these had been retrospectively reduced by over thirty per cent. The budget for grants was almost fully committed and a number of applications were awaiting decision. Members felt that a further allocation should be made from balances and any subsequent applications be deferred to the next financial year.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) the report be received;**
- 2) the budget for grants be increased by £1,000 for 2012-13.**

FC15/12 PROJECT DECISIONS

Members were updated on various projects and the final costs for the bus shelters already completed. Estimates had been obtained to complete the identified repairs painting and glazing where necessary which could be achieved from the Repair and Renewals budget. It was felt that the bus shelter at St Mark's should be replaced rather than repaired as a first commitment for next financial year and that all of the others be brought up to a reasonable standard.

A proposal to replace the former Bernicia shrub beds on Woodhorn Road adjacent to the new development were considered with estimates from the county council to improve the area and reduce future maintenance costs. To provide parking spaces was beyond the scope of the budget so members preferred that the area be grassed preferably with turf.

Arrangements for an overflow temporary car park had been investigated and the site owned by the county council was suitable following ground condition surveys. However the overall cost of the scheme was too high for the Town Council alone and would have to be pursued jointly with the County Councillor and the Portas Project as an infrastructure scheme for the regeneration of the town.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the programme of bus shelter repair and painting be completed in the current financial year;**
- 2) a new bus shelter be installed at St. Mark's, Gibson Street;**
- 3) the Woodhorn Road shrub beds be replaced with grass and turf provided if within budget;**
- 4) a joint scheme be implemented for the temporary car park at Sea Crest Road.**

FC16/12 BUDGET PLANNING AND PRECEPT 2013-14

The Chairperson had distributed initial draft proposals for the next budget which the meeting considered. The aim was to have no increase in the overall budget requirement for the Precept for 2013-14.

Details of the Government grant support for local authorities was awaited and for the first time could impact on local council precepts as the tax base was to change as a result of the transfer of benefits arrangements to the county council.

A number of costs and estimates were examined and reductions made in the administrative expenses of the Council. Relative to the use of the office building the running costs were disproportionate and Members felt that these premises should be given up.

Proposals for youth projects had again been submitted by Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure Trust which members welcomed although it was felt the inclusion programme should be allocated

as a separate project. Support funding requests had been submitted by Wansbeck Centre for Voluntary Service to work with a number of local groups and Blyth Resource and Initiative Centre to expand training and education in the town. Members supported the activities but had to defer decisions until the overall financial position was known.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) The revised proposals set out in Appendix 1 form the basis of the budget for 2013/2014;**
- 2) The Town Council fix the amount required for the Precept for 2013/2014 at the same level as the current year at £113,110.**

Signed by the Chairperson:

Date:.....