

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 11 January 2012 at 7 pm at the St Bartholomew's Church Centre Newbiggin by-the-Sea.

PRESENT:

Councillors: R McCready (Mayor)
M Boon M Cholerton M Kirkup
W Rogers A Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE: members of the public and 1 member of the press.

OPEN SESSION

The following questions were raised by members of the public:

- A question was asked on behalf of County Councillor Lang whether there had been any progress on the public toilets project, as no public planning consultation had been received. It was noted that there had been a slight delay at County Council Planning but the application should now be visible online.
- It was noted that the agenda for this meeting had been fixed to the outside window of St Bartholomew's Church Centre, and whilst the Church was happy to display the agenda, it was not appropriate for this to happen. An apology was given and it was agreed that the dates of meeting for the year would be displayed permanently, and an agenda should also be provided to the Church Warden.
- It was queried whether the Town Council had formally responded to the Boundary Commission review. It was noted that this had been fully discussed in a previous meeting and a formal request had been submitted for a Local Governance Review of the Ward arrangements for the Town Council in time for the 2013 elections. This would be conducted through the County Council and verification was awaited.
- Northumbria Police were represented by Nathan Brown and Julie Jameson. Crime figures overall were static, while shed burglaries and the theft of pedal cycles had increased slightly and scrap metal activities were being watched. They urged that valuables be secured with more than a cheap padlock. Minor issues with security of the closed school sites were being working on with NCC. There had been some successful drugs raids and searches recently, mainly regarding cannabis. Off road motorcycles and horses were still a problem, although the latter was greatly reduced because of seasonal changes. Work was ongoing with NCC to improve lighting at the skate park to encourage children to congregate there rather than at the band stand. Councillor Kirkup praised the police for the follow-up to an incident he reported and the representatives were advised of a number of community issues.

C075/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Anderson and M Peden and the Town Clerk.

C076/11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2011 were agreed and after amending apologies and attendance in respect of Councillors Boon and Peden were signed by the Chairperson as a correct record. Reference was made to issues previously raised regarding Holmwood Avenue; bus timetable replacement; bus shelters and thanks were expressed to the News Post Leader Reporter Christine Harle regarding the Olympic Torch event.

C077/11 FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

The minutes of the Finance Committee held on 03 January 2012 were received and agreed with budget matters being considered later on the agenda.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 03 January 2011 be received and the recommendations regarding the Town Clerk adopted.

C078/11 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillors Anderson and McCready declared personal interests being members of Newbiggin in Bloom Association; Councillors Anderson Boon and Rogers as members of the Newbiggin Allotment Association; Councillor Thompson as a member of the County Council Executive, Ashington Leisure Centre Trust and Newbiggin by-the-Sea Partnership; Councillors Thompson and Peden as members of Newbiggin Royal British Legion Association.

C079/11 2012/2013 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Following several meetings of the Finance Committee, and in response to a range of information received from Northumberland County Council, the Chairperson proposed the budget and precept for 2012/13 on behalf of the Finance Committee.

She outlined the background from the ongoing discussions throughout the last year with the County Council regarding the transfer of certain services from County to Town Council responsibility in addition to those already being delivered for allotments and seasonal lighting. From April 2012 the Town Council would also be responsible for the delivery of the Play Areas; all public seats; the provision of new litter bins; War Memorials; 'In Bloom' competitions; all Bus Shelters as agreed in December. This would ensure local control over these areas, to prevent special charges from being levied on Council Tax bills, and to prevent these services from disappearing altogether when there was such a strong local need.

The two previous budgets had successfully enabled the Town Council to deliver services and support a wide range of projects throughout Newbiggin by the Sea and much of what was set out in the Town Plan ratified in December 2010 had been achieved. The focus for the next budget was on supporting the delivery of services as they transfer and a great deal of time had been spent obtaining the best cost : quality ratio possible.

The key message was that the precept would remain unaltered from the previous two years at £113,110. The Finance Committee had recommended no change to the previous years' precepts because:

1. The Town Council had been able to merge repairs and replacements budgets to provide realistic funds to cover the management of the services for which the Town Council would become responsible;
2. It was able to realise budget underspends from the last two years to deliver on some projects that had one-off costs;
3. It acknowledged the difficult economic situation including the uncertain future of Alcan;
4. It reflected the spirit of the request the request made by Central Government to County Councils to not increase the precept this year.

The overall budget for 2011/12 would be set at £113,110 with balances used to cover additional project costs and contingency funds. The Chairperson then outlined a reduction in administrative expenses based on actual costs relating to salary, training budgets, room and building hire and office costs, insurance covering public and employer's liability, money for publicity, publications, audit and professional subscriptions, another 50% reduction in the budget for members' expenses, and general civic expenses.

A budget for service delivery, of £25,000, had been merged to cover a wider range of services for Play area safety inspections and replacement equipment; public toilets service enhancement; War Memorial maintenance; Bus Shelters maintenance and provision; Public seating maintenance; co-funding the Newbiggin Nipper service with the County Council; Christmas lighting; Floral displays and annual bedding; Allotments would continue to be very successfully managed by the Allotments Association.

A Special Events budget would provide funding for particular activities that bring prestige, pride and visitors to Newbiggin by the Sea. Project funding would cover areas of expense that will enable continued progress in other areas of the Town Plan. In particular, a focus on youth and horticulture schemes, the delivery of the town calendar and continuation of the small grants scheme again which had proven immensely popular in the last year, the establishment of a music bursary, and a flexible budget to cater for other projects.

Contingencies made up of balances remaining from the previous financial year would cover a repairs and replacements cycle for bus shelters, public seats, litter bins and play areas, and other maintenance commitments and include monies for possible legal and election costs,

maintain balances for the staff pension fund plus a working balance set at £10,000.

RESOLVED that the Town Council:

- i) Agree the budget for 2012 – 2013 as set out Appendix 1;**
- ii) Agree the contribution of Balances amounting to £44,000; and**
- iii) Maintain a contingency in Balances of £34,000;**
- iv) Set the Precept for 2012 – 2013 at £113,110.**

C080/11 COAL TUB MONUMENT

This item had been deferred from the previous meeting to clarify the contribution sought from the Town Council.

Councillors McCreedy and Thompson outlined the project to relocate the Coal tub Monument to a more suitable location and the meeting was advised that the current project cost was estimated at £3800. It was noted that Newbiggin by-the-Sea Partnership was also seeking funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the NCC Heritage Fund and the Town Council. As the Heritage Lottery Fund had requested a meeting which would not take place until 24th February, to discuss expansion of the project to include an educational element, the final project cost could not be finalized so an actual budget contribution could not be agreed yet.

Members agreed to support the project and to consider a financial contribution once the HLF funding had been agreed.

RESOLVED that the Town Council support the project of relocating the Coal Tub Monument to Woodhorn Road and defer to a future meeting the amount of the contribution to be made to Newbiggin by-the-Sea Partnership towards the cost.

Councillor A Thompson declared a personal interest in the following item as a Trustee of the Ashington Leisure Centre Trust and took no part in the decision.

C081/11 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION – ASHINGTON PROJECT – PROPOSED LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITY

The formal consultation proposals regarding the project to create a new leisure and community facility in Ashington published by the County Council had been considered by the members.

The replacement facility would be multi-purpose to be located in the centre of Ashington and there was much discussion about whether the Town Council should respond to this consultation, given that it is an Ashington Project, and about whether the project should be

sited in either one of the two listed locations. Various opinions were put forward and Members considered there was a viable third option of refurbishment of the existing sports centre site with relocation of council services, library etc to a more central, high street location.

RESOLVED that the Town Council respond to the consultation expressing its preference for the third option outlined above.

C082/11 ALCAN

The situation at the Alcan aluminium smelter plant regarding its future remained uncertain as the period of workforce consultation continued and had been extended to end of February.

It was understood that Alcan were working with the County Council and other agencies to arrange social, employment and welfare support for staff who faced potential redundancy or relocation. This was well in hand and the Town Council was unlikely to be able to add anything of significance to that work, other than to support the efforts of all involved and the local Members of Parliament were looking at employment matters.

Members were concerned with any potential negative environmental implications that a possible site closure or change of use may have. It was suggested, on behalf of Councillor Peden who originally raised the issue, that the environmental consequences of plant closure or change of use should be investigated. The area needed to be safeguarded against any environmental issues which should be handled sensitively once the fate of the site was known in March.

RESOLVED that the Town Council should work collaboratively with Ashington Town Council and Lynemouth Parish Council to investigate the possible environmental consequences with Alcan.

C083/11 TRAVELLERS' SITES

A member raised the current issue regarding Travellers' Sites being discussed between Ashington Town Council and the County Council and felt that Newbiggin Town Council should be included in any future discussions.

RESOLVED that the Town Council request it be included in any discussions concerning Travellers' sites.

Signed by the Chairperson:

Date: