

## **NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 12 September 2012  
at 7 pm at the St Bartholomew's Church Centre Newbiggin by-the-Sea.**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: R McCready (Mayor)  
L Anderson M Boon M Cholerton M Kirkup  
W Rogers A Thompson  
Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

14 members of the public and 1 member of the press were in attendance

### **OPEN SESSION**

Residents of the Colliery area were again in attendance to raise questions regarding termination of bus services and it was agreed to leave those until after the report from the Transport Working Group which would be brought forward on the agenda. There were no other issues raised by members of the public present at the meeting.

### **C047/12 BUS SERVICE OPTIONS**

A number of meetings of the Transport Working Group established at the last meeting had been held and Councillor Cholerton reported on developments with Arriva and the County Council and the Nipper Service.

The focus had been on trying to resolve the situation of lost services both around Spital and from Woodhorn Road with the withdrawal of two Arriva services. Parts of the response received only that day from Arriva were read out but contained no joy as the company was concentrating its new programme sustainable routes resulting in the new service pattern. This meant that residents of the Colliery area would have to walk up to 400 metres to the nearest bus stop at Sea Crest Road. It had considered the request to divert one service an hour from Front Street to Woodhorn Road but it declined to do so as it considered that may be confusing to other passengers.

A new service 30 had been negotiated to operate five times daily by diverting the existing service from North Seaton through Newbiggin up Woodhorn Road to the Hospital then Ashington and Linton and the reverse route. The bus would be a double-decker so could not access Spital Estate and the service would commence on 28 October.

In order to secure an increase in the in-town Watbus Nipper service to cover Wednesday travel to clinics and clubs questionnaires were being circulated through the various clubs co-ordinated by Carol O'Conner to demonstrate support for a grant application for the first year of operation. A public meeting was being held at the Sports Centre on Friday 14 September when the complex form would be explained to those attending. To secure grant support the service extension would have to be shown to be sustainable.

Councillor Thompson confirmed that a great deal of work was being carried out in connection with the bus services and while the County Council had no control over service provision by Arriva it could subsidise local services where support for the service could be shown in the community.

Residents queried the loss of service for workers and students from the Colliery area and reference was made to petitions to the Area Committee and CVS funding events that might provide support. A request would be submitted to Go North East to consider some service provision in Newbiggin to serve Woodhorn Road based on the new service 19. The Chairperson advised that the Town Team was behind the service requirement and would request the Department for Communities and Local Government to bring pressure for service provision.

**RESOLVED: that the report be noted and developments be reported to the next meeting.**

**C048/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor M Peden.

**C049/12 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 August 2012 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**C050/12 MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Chairperson outlined the issues considered at the meeting of the Finance Committee and the recommendation to continue the Gardens Competition and funding for 2013/14 so that this could be announced at the Awards Ceremony.

**Resolved that the Minutes of the Finance Committee held on 05 September 2012 be agreed.**

**C051/12 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS - No new interests were declared in relation to business to be conducted at the meeting.**

**C052/12 PUBLIC TOILETS PROJECT**

The Chairperson referred to the project for new public toilets and storage unit in the town centre and the planning application submitted to Northumberland County

Council. Despite being recommended for approval by County Planning Officers the South East Area Planning Committee had refused permission at its meeting in August.

It was recommended that the Town Council look again at what options were available for this project and report back to the October Council meeting. Support for the scheme had been indicated by the Portas Town Team 1 and further consultation would take place at the forthcoming meeting of the wider Town Team 2.

**RESOLVED: that all options be investigated and reported back to the Town Council in October.**

**C053/12 FORMER APOSTOLIC CHURCH PREMISES**

The Town Council had been consulted on an application for change of use of the ground floor of the former Apostolic Church premises in Gibson Street submitted to the county council on behalf of the Newbiggin Community Boxing Club.

Members supported the intended use of the premises for such important out of school activities which it was hoped would lead to wider youth uses.

**RESOLVED that Town Council support planning application for change of use.**

**C054/12 NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – NOMINATION TO COUNTY COMMITTEE**

The County Committee for the Northumberland Association of Local Councils was composed on a geographical basis now with members' tenure for three years on a rolling basis whereby one-third was due for election at each AGM.

The Town Council's nominee Councillor Rogers whose current tenure would expire at the Annual General Meeting in 2012 was eligible for re-election and had agreed to continue as the representative on the County Committee.

**RESOLVED: that Councillor Rogers be nominated to continue on the NALC County Committee.**

**C055/12 URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chairperson agreed to consideration of the following items of urgent business so that notice of completion of the audit could be given and comments could be submitted in time for government consultation.

**C056/12 LOCALISING SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX**

Consultation issued by the government arising from Welfare reforms intended to decentralise control over finance and reduce the deficit and that council tax support would take the form of reductions having the effect of reducing the council tax base.

The Town Clerk reported that billing authorities would have to implement local schemes for council tax reduction and reduce the administrative burden by avoiding the need to submit additional applications. The draft regulations were complex involving an assessment of chargeable dwellings omitting on a daily basis those that were exempt and would be in force by the end of November.

Of particular interest to the Town and Parish Councils was that benefit recipients would see their properties taken out of the council tax base which would in turn have implications for Precepting Authorities as annual income would be calculated on a much lower property base. That could be particularly acute in areas like Newbiggin with a high percentage of Band A properties and high support exemption so it would be essential that arrangements were in place from the outset to provide certainty of income from local precepts and clarity for local taxpayers.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (i) the Town Council note the consultation proposals and the potential impacts on local precepts; and**
- (ii) make representations to ensure the legislation includes requirements for the intended local support schemes to fully meet the compensating cost to the local precept.**

#### **C057/12 SKATEPARK UPGRADE**

An update had been provided by Blyth Valley Arts & Leisure on initial consultations carried out with users of the Skatepark for which a budget of £10,000 for match funding had been identified. The average age of those surveyed so far was eleven but as many more young people of various ages used the facility it was agreed that further feedback was required on the type of equipment that might be provided and costs needed to be explored based on that feedback.

Members referred to a number of different approaches and examples of well used facilities.

**RESOLVED: that the interim report be received and further feedback including costs be reported to a future meeting.**

#### **C058/12 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN**

The Town Clerk reported on the conclusion of the audit for 2011/12 and receipt of the External Auditor's certificate and opinion. This indicated that there were no issues to be drawn to the Council's attention and BDO had signed the certificate incorporated into the Annual Return which Members could now approve.

Notice of the conclusion of the audit would now be given as soon as possible making the Annual Return available to the public.

**RESOLVED: that the Annual Return incorporating the Auditor's certificate be approved and accepted.**

A number of announcements were made:

Members applauded the significant achievement of local young people who had undertaken a kayak circumnavigation of Great Britain under the banner of Land On Our Left for charity. It was felt that the incredible feat needed to be acknowledged by the town and that would be considered by the Grant Committee.

Friends of Woodhorn Church had arranged for the premises to be open to the public again the following weekend when a Flower Festival would be held on Saturday and Sunday followed by Songs of Praise.

Young people under Community Service Orders would shortly be carrying out community works in the town commencing with cleaning the promenade and returning sand to the beach below the tide line.

Questionnaires regarding extending the Newbiggin Nipper Service were to be returned to Carol O'Conner by Friday afternoon.

Arthritis Care had issued an invitation to the September meeting at Ashington Hospital looking at Rheumatology.

Congratulations were offered to Newbiggin in Bloom for the Silver Award; St. Andrew's and St. Mark's Church Grounds; the Church Point Caravan Park for the Silver Gilt Award from Northumbria In Bloom.

Signed by the Chairman: ..... Date:.....