

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 14 November 2012
at 7 pm at the Sailing Club Newbiggin by-the-Sea.**

PRESENT:

Councillors: R McCready (Mayor)
L Anderson M Cholerton M Peden
W Rogers A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: 7 members of the public

OPEN SESSION

- A resident enquired about timetables for the new bus service at the new shelters on Woodhorn Road and was advised that these should be installed shortly.
- A resident stated that the web site had not been updated with the documents for the meeting. The Chairperson apologised and advised this was as a result of lack of broadband access until much later than anticipated.

C068/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Boon and M Kirkup.

C069/12 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2012 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The Arriva bus services were still causing concern but the Nipper service in the town reported carrying 2793 passengers to October and the grant application to extend it was proceeding. County Transport had requested a full review of Arriva services.

C070/12 MINUTES OF GRANT COMMITTEE

The Chairperson advised the meeting of the grants awarded to local organizations and young people at the last meeting held on 10 October. The minutes had been circulated and were received the Committee having acted under delegated powers.

C071/12 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS –In relation to business to be considered later in the meeting Councillor McCready declared her interest as one of the remaining Trustees at Newbiggin Arts Forum and Councillor Thompson as Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services for Northumberland County Council.

C072/12 LOCAL COUNCIL CHARTER FOR NORTHUMBERLAND

The Chairperson outlined the process of review and adoption of a revised version of the Local Council Charter for Northumberland following protracted discussions between Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Association of Local Councils to replace the original 2009 Charter. A copy was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Built on good practice and relationships between the county council and local councils it promoted a 'think parish' approach aiming to get the relationship right identifying the prominent role in shaping local communities; being responsive to local needs and increasing localism. There was a range of commitments for the county council and local councils under sections dealing with local democracy and community leadership; communication; consultation and engagement; finance; advice and support.

Section 2 was about delivering local services and assets and included a list of 'Parish Services' with intended transfer from the county council across the county. It also introduced the possibility of local delivery of county council services following an agreed business-case and enhancing county services. It also promoted enhancing communication through Information Communications Technology.

Members were advised that the Charter was not a contract or binding on parish councils and felt that the principles should be adopted.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council adopt the revised Charter.

C073/12 LOCAL SERVICE TRANSFER

Newbiggin by-the-Sea Town Council had already accepted responsibility for the initial phase of local services and the Chairperson referred to the inspection and maintenance of play areas; bus shelters; public seating; floral planting; provision of litter bins; cleansing of the War Memorials under Service Level Agreements currently with the county council.

Northumberland County Council had published its intentions regarding Local Service Delivery and provided a framework to explain and guide partnership working between the county council and all local councils for a further tranche of service transfer and identified responsibility for local services from April 2013. This was based on its view of equalization of services as a fair and proportionate view.

The report outlined services for Cemeteries; Parks; Playing Fields; Village Greens; Public Halls and Community Centres to become the responsibility of local councils across the county and be transferred by the county council from April 2013. For Newbiggin this would involve the transfer of responsibility for Memorial Park; Milburn Park; the playing fields including football pitches at the Sports Centre; Welfare Park and Collingwood.

The county council maintained that most of the parks and playing fields throughout the county were already maintained locally and wanted to see these essential assets continue to be maintained so if local councils did not accept the proposed transfers then the county council would charge a special expense to the residents of that parish.

Discussions with county officers had identified that the upkeep of the bowling green and pavilion and the several football pitches all of which were well used by local people was a considerable expense to place on the local community with little prospect of significantly reducing the service routines. Management and delivery of the services was important and Members felt more time was required to consider the information so far provided complicated by the financial arrangements and possible service options before deciding which services could be accepted.

RESOLVED: that consideration of the principle of the Town Council accepting a further transfer of all or any of the local services be deferred to the meeting of the Finance Committee alongside the budget recommendations.

C074/12 NEWBIGGIN ARTS CENTRE

The Town Clerk advised that following the decision at the previous meeting to safeguard the building for local use the assignment of the Arts Centre at Woodhorn Villa had been approved by the landlord Northumberland County Council.

Arrangements were in hand with the Arts Forum to complete the transfer process under license from the County Council ahead of the dissolution of the charity and the parties were working towards completion at the end of the month.

The Town Council needed to authorize the signature of the necessary legal documents. User groups would be kept informed of developments and advised of the transfer as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: that Councillors Anderson and Cholerton be authorized to sign the License and Assignment of the Lease of the Art Centre.

URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairperson agreed to consideration of the following items of urgent business

C075/12 RIO TINTO ALCAN

Following the closure of the Rio Tinto Alcan Aluminium Smelter it was understood that the sale of the power station was nearing completion and a formal announcement was expected shortly. There were significant areas of lagoons associated with both the power station and the former smelter covering several hectares on the northern edge of the town and wholly within the parish boundary.

The lagoons were likely to transfer to the new operator along with the operational licences and responsibilities.

Members considered that the area needed to be reclaimed for productive use starting with the removal of fuel ash to be recycled cleanly for use in building products without environmental inconvenience for residents in close proximity and creating local employment in the short-term. The longer term aim would be to see a restored area become an asset of the town. As well as RTA and the new power station owners the Town Council needed to know the views of the County Council; DEFRA; Environment Agency.

A further public meeting would be held by RTA on 05 December in Newbiggin and Councillors Cholerton Peden Rogers and Thompson would be registered to attend.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council arrange with appropriate agencies to meet with the owners in the New Year and consider what could be done in the best interests of the local community.

C076/12 NEWBIGGIN SKATEPARK

The Town Clerk advised that while the intended scheme was not yet finalised he had been made aware of an early funding opportunity through the Housing Developer Fund via planning obligation contributions for outdoor play and sport.

RESOLVED: that the submission of grant applications be approved.

Councillor Thompson declared a personal interest in the following item as Newbiggin by-the-Sea Partnership had instigated the original project.

C077/12 NEWBIGGIN COLLIERY PIT TUB

It was reported that a local resident had offered to contribute towards the acquisition and installation of a pit tub that had been considered in principle at a previous meeting.

A larger tub in good condition had been located together with rails and was available for purchase. It was thought that County Highways had already approved the location on Woodhorn Road and that a grant of £500 was available from the County Heritage Fund. Members were supportive of the scheme and requested it be progressed with all parties.

RESOLVED: that a contribution of up to £1,500 from balances be agreed.

C078/12 SCHOOL PATH LIGHTING

Councillor Rogers reported that a meeting was being convened by Bernicia on Wednesday 21 November to consider the issue regarding lack of lighting along the footpath created between East Lea and the Academy. It was agreed that Councillors

Anderson Peden and Rogers would attend.

C079/12 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Newbiggin Traders had again arranged for the erection of a Christmas Tree at the Quay Wall Piazza and following the installation of the lights a switch-on event would be held on the evening of the last Friday in November.

Signed by the Chairman:

Date:.....