

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday
15 December 2010 at 7 pm at the Town Council Cottage Newbiggin.**

PRESENT:

Councillors: R Mc Cready (Chairperson)

M Boon M Cholerton A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

Also present: Councillor W Rogers

FC07/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Anderson M Kirkup and M Peden

FC08/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 06 October 2010 be approved as a true record

FC09/10 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillor Boon declared an interest as Secretary of the Newbiggin & District Allotment Association. Councillor McCready declared an interest as a member of Newbiggin in Bloom. Councillor Thompson declared an interest in the arrangements with the county council being a member of that authority.

FC10/10 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 paragraph 1 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act relating to personal financial and business affairs.

FC11/10 PROJECTED BUDGET EXPENDITURE REPORT FOR 2010/2011

The Committee considered the projected and committed expenditure in the current financial year as set out in Appendix 1 to the Town Clerk's report.

Members discussed the committed expenditure for each budget heading and that there would be a significant under-spend as the Town Council had awaited completion of the Town Plan process before committing to project expenditure and there would therefore be budgets carried forward and earmarked for completion next financial year.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

FC12/10 NORTHUMBERLAND CHARTER FOR LOCAL SERVICES – LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY POSITION AND COST ESTIMATES

The Town Clerk reported that little progress had been made with Northumberland County Council and the possible transfer of some local services under the Northumberland Charter for Local Councils. Capacity of the county council had been the main problem with another tranche of senior officers and managers leaving the authority throughout the year owing to continued financial pressures.

The Deputy Leader had indicated in October that the county council was reviewing the policy of service transfer and the Charter itself was still undergoing joint review with the Northumberland Association of Local Councils with representation from the south east authorities this time. He had also indicated that conditions may have to be imposed and that dependent on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review NCC may have to consider the cessation of some service provision.

Since then the financial situation for the county council had if anything worsened and there was little indication of their budget direction at present as they were awaiting details of the reduced government grant funding. It seemed likely that the detail of the county council budget and in particular service reductions would not be known until the New Year and the consultation period was likely to be even more restricted than last year. Any service reductions or cessation may present the Town Council with a dilemma but there was unlikely to be enough time to respond before the Precept had to be set.

The Town Clerk explained the situation from the concern over the perception of double charging moving through the council tax savings made already by the county council and the special charges imposed by them. It was considered better to consider what initiative the Town Council wanted to take regarding local service provision to be addressed over a five year term.

The Committee considered the arrangements for the administration of Allotments which were operating well through the Allotment Association and Seasonal Lighting which had now fully passed from the county council although assistance was being received from the Newbiggin Traders Association.

The county council still wanted to proceed with the transfer of responsibility for the Play Areas and cost had been provided for the inspection regime under a Service Level Agreement but actual repair costs and insurance would also be incurred. It was felt that this could be done and the special charge absorbed into the Town Council Precept at no overall increase to local people although there

was still a desire to look at planning the transfer and managing the process on a cheaper basis. Members did not want to see these facilities closed over the summer period.

Provision would be made to continue enhancing public toilet provision and seek also to make arrangements with the Maritime Centre once it was open to the public.

The county council was looking towards service equalisation for grass cutting and was to harmonise the service throughout the county from 01 April to 30 September 2011 (26 weeks) but had not specified the actual number or frequency of cuts. Extra cuts before or after this period would have to be paid for by the Town and Parish Councils.

Local Transport and School Crossing Patrol contributions for next year would be incorporated along with After School and Holiday Sports Schemes and the operation of the Farmers' Market.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) The Town Council accept the transfer of the Play Areas and make appropriate arrangements through a Service Level Agreement with Northumberland County Council;**
- (ii) Provision be made to cover the cost of other local services considered above.**

FC13/10 CONTRACT COMMITMENTS AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES FOR 2011/2012

The Committee considered some initial estimates set out in Appendix 2 to the report and the Chairperson lead a discussion through the budget heads for Administration; Office/Meeting Costs; Fees and Charges; Members and Civic Expenses to fine tune requirements for the next year.

Now that the Town Plan had been finalised members still needed to plan financial provision for special events; service delivery and a range of projects to meet the Aims and Objectives.

RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned to consider the outstanding issues on Tuesday 04 January 2011 at 7.00 pm.

Signed by the Chairperson:

Date:.....