

## NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Tuesday 22 November 2011  
at 7 pm at the Town Council Cottage Newbiggin.**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: R McCready (Chairperson)

L Anderson M Boon M Cholerton A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

Also present: Councillors M Kirkup and W Rogers

### **FC01/11 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Peden

### **FC02/11 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON**

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor R McCready be appointed Chairperson

### **FC03/11 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2011 be approved as a true record

### **FC04/11 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Thompson declared a personal interest in item 7 on the agenda Local Service Transfer being a county councillor and item 9 Councillor Boon being the secretary of the Newbiggin Allotment Association and Councillors Anderson and McCready as members of Newbiggin in Bloom.

### **FC05/11 PAYMENTS OVER £500**

The Town Clerk 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.

### **FC06/11 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 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act relating to financial and business affairs.

## **FC07/11 LOCAL SERVICE TRANSFER**

The Town Clerk reported on developments and discussions with Northumberland County Council concerning intended Local Service Transfer following a more partnership related draft of the Charter and a more realistic approach to cost quotations for Service Level Agreements (SLA's) with NCC.

Across the county from 01 April 2012 the county council would standardize its approach to a range of local services and where they were not then undertaken by Town and Parish Councils would either phase out delivery or impose a special charge so that all local communities paid for the local service provided for local people. This stage would include War Memorials; Litter bin replacement; Public seating; 'In Bloom' competitions; Bus shelters; Play Areas and Public Conveniences. The approach to grass cutting and floral displays would also be consistent across the county with 10 – 13 cuts between 01 April and 30 September (26 week season) and all beds to be planted with perennial plants or shrubs or grassed over.

The Town Council was invited to address which local services it wished to see provided in the town and what input it wanted to the service level and cost.

Members and the Town Clerk had carried out inspections of these assets in recent months when most had been photographed and generally they were in reasonable condition and the county council had confirmed some minor repairs to bus shelters and seats would be carried out shortly. The horticultural areas were also being reviewed to consider changes that would produce maintenance savings and ascertain what planting the Town Council was prepared to fund.

Each of the service areas was considered in turn along with the estimates of cost of service under service level agreements with the county council including enhanced grass cutting and floral planting. It was noted that as the public toilets in Newbiggin were classified as strategic to serve visitors and tourists the county council would continue to maintain them.

Members discussed at length the implications of accepting the transfer of these community assets and any enhancement of the standardized services as well as the approach towards longer term asset replacement. The approach for the budget consideration would be on the basis of a twenty year replacement cycle.

### **RECOMMENDED that the Town Council:**

- 1) Confirm the transfer of responsibility for the Play Areas;**
- 2) Accept the transfer of other assets and responsibility for War Memorials; Litter Bin replacement; Public Seating; Bus Shelters; 'In Bloom' and Floral Bedding;**

- 3) **Accept the costs for Service Level Agreements for the county council to provide these services in 2012/13;**
- 4) **Do not request an enhanced grass cutting service for 2012;**
- 5) **Agree a twenty year replacement cycle in relation to all assets transferred;**
- 6) **Make appropriate financial provision in the budget for 2012/13.**

**FC07/11 2011/12 BUDGET EXPENDITURE**

Members considered the income and expenditure update that had been circulated along with further commitments and balances available in the current financial year.

Some minor overspends were anticipated for rates; publications; bank charges and community events leaflet which could be absorbed by an under-spend in other budget areas.

The grant allocations in the previous two years had been under-spent but there was greater interest from local organisations this year and the allocation would need to be increased.

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- 1) **Over-spends on the budgets identified be approved;**
- 2) **The allocation for grants be increased.**

**FC08/11 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2012/13**

Members discussed the draft proposals for the 2012/13 budget prepared by the Chairperson taking account of the service delivery aspects and looking to provide flexibility in approach to the contingencies that would be required for asset repair and replacement in particular. There was a general feeling that providing global budgets would be the best option and that the Council should aim to keep the increase in Precept to around five per cent.

**RESOLVED that further consideration of the budget proposals be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.**

Signed by the Chairperson: .....

Date:.....