

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 13 January 2010 at 7 pm at the St Bartholomew's Church Centre Newbiggin.

PRESENT:

Councillors: W Rogers (Chair)
 L Anderson M Kirkup
 M Boon R Mc Cready
 M Cholerton A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE:

14 members of the public and 1 member of the press
PC G Smith – Northumbria Police

OPEN SESSION

The following issues were raised by members of the public present at the meeting:

- It was queried whether a declaration of interest should have been made by Councillor McCready at the last meeting. She apologised and confirmed that as a director of Newbiggin Arts Forum this should have been declared.
- It was reported that the signs relating to the dogs ban on the beach had been removed. The Chairman confirmed that he was already aware of this and had confirmation from the county council that they had been removed in error and would be replaced shortly. Dog Wardens had however still not been licensed by the county council. Another member of the public felt that an update on dog fouling should have gone to the county's scrutiny forum.
- In relation to the budget proposals it was queried why fifty per cent was swallowed up on administrative costs and the basis of the Clerk's salary with a comparable authority being cited. It was explained that there was a legal requirement to appoint a proper officer; scales were set by the national body; only 14 hours per week were currently contracted on a fair mid-point and more hours were being worked than paid for at present. Provision was to be made in the budget for next year for fair payment and possible additional support and it was pointed out that the figure in the budget proposals included all associated costs and training provision and was a budget not what had been paid.
- An unsafe position had arisen at the Bottle Banks in the Bank House car park as they were overflowing from the holiday period and one was open and accessible. This would be referred to the county council.

- The advertising board in the town centre was being used by some organisations but not the Town Council. Members explained that they had for some time been seeking a key to access this facility and would display notices there as soon as possible. Another display board would be investigated for a location near the Town Council office.
- The incidence of drivers in the town continuing to use mobile telephones while driving had led to a second narrow squeak by a resident and was considered to be a serious position. The meeting was advised that this was an extensive problem throughout the country and difficult to enforce. The police however had zero tolerance towards such activity and if witnessed by an officer in uniform action would be taken leading to 3 penalty points and a fine however evidence was difficult to obtain from a marked police vehicle.
- An error in the minutes relating to the re-instatement of the Newbiggin Gateway was referred to although it had already been identified and would be formally corrected.
- A member of the public wanted to know if a decision had been made to take over responsibility for the play areas and the issue of double charging. No decision had been made but more detail would be available later in the meeting in connection with the budget discussions.

POLICING ISSUES

PC Garry Smith was invited by the Chairman to address any concerns from the public over local crime and policing. Continuing break-ins at the allotments were referred to although not much had been reported to the police who had visited and provided anti-climbing paint. The motor cycle referred to had been moved.

He advised that crime and disorder in Newbiggin was down again but the public should let him know of any issues and the police would do their best to solve them. All areas were coded green while nearby areas were coded red although improving. Police officers were about on bicycles now and a community vehicle was available if required. It was suggested that it could be used to advertise the issue of mobile 'phones. Off-road motor-cycling on the green areas and across the fields to North Seaton was still a danger. Good partnership working with many local organisations had reduced crime in Newbiggin.

CO77/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor M Peden

CO78/09 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record incorporating the following amendments:

The re-instatement of Newbiggin Gateway had been greatly assisted by John Johnston of Wansbeck Homes Limited

C069/09 Retrospective declaration of interest by Councillor R McCready as Director of Newbiggin Arts Forum

C072/09 amend reference to KEAP Creative

CO79/09 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillor Boon declared a personal interest as Secretary of the Allotment Association and Councillors Anderson and Rogers as allotment tenants.

CO80/09 TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2010 - 2011

The minutes of the Finance Committee meetings held on 03 December and 07 January had been circulated with revised estimates to form the basis of the budget for 2010/2011.

This was the first budget-setting exercise for the newly formed Newbiggin Town Council and was presented by Councillor McCready the Chairperson of the Finance Committee. It had sought to make provision for three main areas of expenditure general administration and running costs; service delivery and community partnership. It reflected projected actual costs for achieving or facilitating the aims of the Council, rather than hypothetical figures to cover purely the administration of the Council, as intended by the precept set in January 2009 and inherited in June 2009 following elections, and which had provided the 2009/10 budget.

Administration was a legal requirement and an important aspect of the work and the allocation would pay for essential staff fees, employer contributions, staff training and out-of-pocket expenses. It also made provision for training; a necessary part of staff development, and an essential aspect of achieving Quality Parish Status.

Office and Meeting Costs provided a budget for fundamental aspects of delivering work to constituents, partners and regulators to function efficiently and communicate with a range of stakeholders. It would cover office rent; meeting room hire; telecommunications, IT facilities, stationary, printing and postage; furniture; insurance and conference attendance.

Fees and Charges provided for essential costs of auditing, legal consultation and the provision of public notices, Freedom of Information, provision of a website, quarterly newsletter and Councillor training. Reasonable expenses for members, such as telephone and internet costs, printing and travel had to be paid where claimed and Civic Expenses provided funds for Mayoral duties to be undertaken on behalf of the Town, and for a fair contribution to be made to the Remembrance Day service

Part of running a Town Council must involve the delivery of some of local services. There was a legal requirement for Allotments to be provided by the Town Council and a small cost would maintain this service at the current standard in April 2010 through the Allotment Association.

Other areas of service delivery were still very much under negotiation with the County Council and there was still insufficient information regarding the costs of some services.

Negotiations about service adoption, cost and delivery would continue and develop throughout the coming year so it was thought prudent to put a contingency sum aside in the 2010/11 budget. There would also need to be provision for future Christmas lighting and the Christmas Lights business and residents competition.

All Councillors had a common desire to see Newbiggin by the Sea prosper and develop, and Community Partnership would be essential to help facilitate projects and initiatives that encourage this. It was intended to build on the successful Gardens Competition and Triathlon in 2010/11 and a number of new projects had been suggested. A Community Partnership Fund would be created to help support events such as an international weight-lifting competition; the BBC Tree O'clock tree-planting event; other local wildlife enhancing projects; a literature competition; equipment grants for local groups; musical instrument tuition for children; youth activities; improved public toilet facilities; car parking provision; summer decoration for the Town and engagement with the local active Police Force. Allocations to help in creating a thriving and vibrant town would be at the discretion of future Council meetings.

In conclusion it was proposed that the Council adopt the budget for delivering the administrative, service and community aspects totaling £113,110 for 2010/11 as set out in Appendix 1 and this was duly seconded.

Exceptionally members of the public were permitted to raise issues regarding the proposed budget for 2010/2011. It was acknowledged that any balances from the current year would roll forward. It was commented that the level of administration was still too high in proportion to services. Members felt that as this was the first budget of the Town Council it needed to be set at a realistic level and lay the foundations for progress in the community. A wide range of work needed to be done providing advice and support at various meetings and dealing with partners. There was recognition of the voluntary effort of the community and local councilors and major schemes were still to come forward.

The Finance Committee would look at balances before the end of the year and develop a short succinct application process.

Members expressed their appreciation of the work undertaken by Councillor McCready in connection with the budget.

RESOLVED: that the budget totaling £113,110 set out in Appendix 1 be agreed.

CO81/09 PRECEPT FOR 2010 - 2011

It was proposed that the total precept for 2010/2011 be set at the same figure as the budget for the forthcoming Council Tax year. It was recognised that this incurred an increase on the current administrative budget inevitably involving an increase in the Council Tax levied against all paying households in Newbiggin by the Sea. Based on the published comparator for Band D, this represented a rise in the percentage of Council Tax paid to the Town Council from 3% to just over 4%. However, the 2009/10 budget had been set purely to provide for the establishment and administration of the Town Council and the budget for 2010/11 went far beyond that with service delivery and community partnership funds to provide a fair budget to provide value-added services

for Newbiggin by the Sea.

RESOLVED: that the Precept for Newbiggin by-the-Sea Town Council for 2010/2011 be £113,110.

CO82/09 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CONTEST

The Chairman referred to the competition held for both business and residential premises in the town and expressed his appreciation to Peter Seddon and Eva Hartley for their assistance in the difficult task of judging the many fine examples. He referred to arrangements for a presentation night and announced the results as follows:

Residential Properties

1 John and Margery Muldoon 27 High Street

2 David and Jacqueline Reed 25 Manor Drive

3 Beverley Sayward 9 Beach Terrace

Commendations

Alan and Jean Sankey 8 Cleveland Terrace

Fiona Stephens 27 Woodhorn Road

Dorothy Potter 40 Front Street

Business Properties

1 Watson's 23 Gibson Street

2 Star Video 57 Front Street

3 The Coble Bridge Street

VP Fabrics 138 Front Street

Fab Sweets 4 High Street

Mandarin Gift Shop 105 Front Street

Special mention for the effective collectivity of the three houses next to each other on Front Street Nos 24, 26, 28 Front Street

RESOLVED that the above be invited to attend a presentation night on 28 February 2010.

CO83/09 FUTURE MEETINGS

Members reiterated their desire to use various venues around the town to facilitate attendance by members of the public and enquiries as to availability would be made at suitable venues that were suggested.

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on Wednesday 10 February 2010 if possible at the Sailing Club premises and on 10 March 2010 at John Dobson School.

Signed by the Chairman:

Date:.....