

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 09 June 2010 at 7 pm at the John Dobson School Campus Newbiggin.

PRESENT:

Councillors: R McCready (Mayor)

L Anderson
M Boon
M Cholerton
M Kirkup

M Peden
W Rogers
A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE:

38 members of the public and 1 member of the press

OPEN SESSION

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

- Members of the Newbiggin Colliery Residents Association were in attendance to present a petition regarding the town-wide bus service from which the county council were withdrawing the subsidy resulting in the service being withdrawn in July. Residents were upset at the loss of the service which was relied upon particularly by the elderly for shopping; attend social clubs and appointments with doctors, dentists and hospital.

It was requested that the petition be forwarded to the Northumberland County Council Area Committee for consideration.

- Reference was made to the intended trial for a Farmers' Market and whether there would be an impact on existing retail businesses. Members confirmed that a trial was being investigated and that a meeting with local traders would be held on 21 June. It was felt that the initiative would assist the regeneration of the town and attract visitors to the benefit of all as there were good shops in the town now.

C014/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received all members being present.

C015/10 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2010 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

C016/10 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made.

C017/10 MINUTES OF THE GRANT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Grant Committee acting under delegated powers held on 12 May 2010 had been circulated and were received.

C018/10 LOCAL TRANSPORT SERVICES

Andrew Harding and Ian Coe of Northumberland County Council Transport Department were in attendance to provide an update of the local transport issues for the town.

Andrew explained that they had to operate within the legislation, council policies and the budget provision which had been reduced. They attempted to support services to fill in gaps and could not compete with commercial services.

The policy context required that they look first at providing services for those more than 400 metres from an alternative service; provide good value for money and expect 40% of income from travellers towards the gross costs. The town's Phoenix service unfortunately didn't get near the policy criteria even with the value of the concessionary passes and the majority did have an alternative Arriva service within 400 metres.

The budget for transport subsidy had been cut by £60,000 and some tough decisions had to be made with notice being served to withdraw the service on 18 July. This service had a subsidy of £25,000 and potential alternatives would be looked at through partnership on community transport with 'Dial-a-Ride' being a possibility. Results of a recent on-bus survey and financial information from the operators electronic ticketing would be provided.

Issues were raised by members of the public concerning access to services for the disabled who could not walk 400 metres and the possible abuse of the electronic ticketing system. They felt that the bus was used all of the time not just at certain times.

There were also problems over the change in services by Arriva withdrawing all direct buses to Newcastle via the colliery route leaving only one per hour requiring a change in Ashington. A second petition was referred to and the possibility of re-routing a bus at 39 minutes past the hour to go via the hospital to Newcastle. There had clearly been some mix up over passenger figures quoted by the company.

Members felt that some urgent work was required to consider service provision in the town.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a Working Group be appointed to look into community transport and report back to the Council at the next meeting;
- 2) Councillors Anderson and Cholerton be appointed to work with community representatives Carol O'Connell and Doris Young and county representatives Andrew Harding and Ian Coe.

C019/10 GO WANSBECK

Graeme Trotter outlined to the meeting that Go Wansbeck was a combination of many things and wanted to focus on Community Enterprise Coaching.

The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative had been set up three years ago with assistance from central government for areas affected by the loss of major employers like collieries and shipyards etc. He advised that there were not enough businesses in the area and that in excess of forty per cent of spending power was lost to the local area.

Their role was to assist with business ideas through research to grow the local economy and support enterprising people in business. The concept of jobs for life was gone but there were opportunities out there. It was pointed out that each local business required an income of £50,000 for each employee engaged and that it rose to £250,000 for supermarkets.

There were only 18 months of the project left and Graeme was keen to encourage aspiration and increase the skills base through work with Go Wansbeck.

Members supported the initiative even though there was a long way to go to develop the local economy with only 650 VAT registered businesses in the former Wansbeck area and new ones needed to be sustainable. The use of prime-time television advertising for Go Wansbeck was queried as not being best value but it was explained that it was part of the branding process.

C020/10 FARMERS MARKET INITIATIVE

In connection with the possible establishment of a Farmers' Market members had been involved in discussions and inspected the setting up of a Market and the arrangements involved.

To progress matters it was suggested that discussions take place with the local traders in the town to see how such an initiative could benefit the area and complement local services.

It was agreed that any trial should take place at an appropriate time in the summer

and maybe complement other events in the town. In view of the organisation and quick decisions required it was suggested that a small committee be established with delegated powers.

A budget for Local Service Delivery was available and a maximum allocation could be agreed to cover the start-up costs and advertising of two trial markets on suitable dates during July to September.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) A consultation meeting with local traders be held on Monday 21 June;**
- (2) A Markets Committee consisting of Councillors Anderson; Cholerton; Peden and Rogers be appointed with delegated powers to make arrangements for trial events within a working budget allocation of £1,000 from the Local Service Delivery Budget.**

C021/10 WOODHORN CHURCH

The building had recently been vacated by KEAP Creative and the keys handed back to Northumberland County Council to whom the listed building transferred from Wansbeck District Council on re-organisation.

It was acknowledged that this fine building was one of the oldest churches in the county and provided a good facility and visitor attraction to the town. Being also a large listed building the costs of maintenance and repair were high and an economic use of the building may be difficult to find.

Woodhorn Church needed to be recognised as a valuable community asset and the county council encouraged to ensure its retention for local use and to attract visitors from around the county and region.

It was suggested that the Town Council establish a small Working Group to investigate the future possibilities for Woodhorn Church.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The importance to the community of Woodhorn Church be recognised and representations be made to Northumberland County Council regarding the retention of this valuable community asset;**
- (2) A Working Group be established consisting of Councillors Kirkup and Rogers with representatives from stakeholder groups KEAP Creative; Newbiggin Arts Forum; Newbiggin Heritage Partnership; Churches Together; Newbiggin History Group; Northumberland County Council and a local community representative Lynn Burns with a remit to investigate the future uses of the building and report back to the Council by the end of October.**

Members considered the report regarding public consultation on the introduction of further Dog Control Orders in Northumberland and were advised that the County Council was seeking the views of the Town and Parish Councils as the proposed orders would affect the whole county.

Four new orders were proposed under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 to simplify the process across the county and to make the laws clear to the general public. Penalties for contravention of the orders could be a fine of up to £1,000 but it was proposed to offer a fixed penalty of £75 which would ease enforcement and avoid formal prosecution through the courts.

This would apply to Removing Dog Faeces; Keeping Dogs on Leads particularly in all cemeteries and other designated areas within the County of Northumberland; Keeping Dogs on Leads when Directed; Excluding Dogs from Land - all enclosed children's play areas; school playing fields; some of Northumberland's beaches in a separate order where dogs have restricted access between May and October. This would include a review of the current order that applied to Newbiggin Beach.

The existing order put in place by the former Wansbeck District Council prohibited dogs using the whole of Newbiggin beach and had both lacked enforcement at times and been controversial for penalising the responsible dog owners as well as the irresponsible ones.

The introduction of the fixed penalty orders was generally welcomed and members considered the options regarding the beach area. There had to be both education and enforcement and the responsibility to playing children was emphasized while the merits of a seasonal or year round ban were considered. It was suggested that an area at the southern end of the bay could be used by responsible dog owners between the high and low water marks.

RESOLVED that;

- (1) the proposals for fixed penalty orders be agreed;**
- (2) a full year dog exclusion from the beach be supported with the exception of provision in the southern area of the bay between the high and low water marks to the Needle's Eye Point;**
- (3) the county council be requested to provide adequate dog bins; bags and notices to supplement the enforcement.**

C023/10 ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

A number of environmental issues that could impact on the appearance of the town following the launch of the Bees and Trees initiative in Newbiggin by-the-Sea and the significant planting that had taken place. Flowering Cherry trees had been acquired and following agreement with the county council planted near Woodhorn Road/Woodlea.

It was felt that an initiative to Adopt a Bee Hive through the British Bee Keepers Association and SAGA with an approach to local schools for future involvement would complement the environmental work.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The Cherry tree planting be a Town Council initiative and the cost up to £60 be met;**
- (2) One Bee Hive be adopted by the Town Council at a cost of £29.50 with a request that it be located locally.**

C024/10 NALC – 2010/11 SUBSCRIPTION

The report outlined the budget provision and the reasons for the increase in the subscription to the Northumberland and the National Association of Local Councils and the basis of payments per elector.

RESOLVED that the subscription of £446.15 for 2010/2011 be approved.

C025/10 MAKING GOOD IN THE COMMUNITY

Northumberland Youth Offending Service was keen to give communities a say in how young offenders made amends for offences and was consulting town and parish councils inviting suggestions for projects. This would involve young offenders becoming involved in doing unpaid work to benefit the local community.

Projects such as cleaning local areas and repairing damage would be risk assessed and supervised to provide pay back to the local community although the Youth Offending Service was not however able to supply materials.

RESOLVED that the initiative be welcomed and suggestions put forward for local schemes.

C026/10 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Town Council was aware of concerns over the standard of public conveniences in the town and had investigated interim arrangements for the current summer season to benefit both local people and visitors and approaches had been made to the county council service manager.

Some vandalism had occurred at the old block of toilets near the Church Point Car Park and basic amenities and extra cleaning at weekends was required. Estimates had been obtained for full cubicle replacement and additional cleaning visits and members considered that pay arrangements should be considered to deter access for vandalism.

RESOLVED that a budget of £5,000 be approved with delegated powers granted to the Mayor and Town Clerk to make appropriate arrangements for improvements in the service standards for public conveniences.

Signed by the Chairman:

Date:.....