

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 13 April 2016 at 7 pm
at the Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:	S Todd (Chairman)			
M Boon	L Burns	M Cholerton		R Dixon
M Peden	W Rogers	A Thompson		
Officer:	D Earl – Town Clerk			

IN ATTENDANCE: 7 members of the public

Prior to commencing the meeting the Chairman referred to the sad death of former Councillor Mike Kirkup the previous morning and to the memories of Mike and his influence in the community including his many publications. All present stood for one minute's silent reflection.

OPEN SESSION

- A local resident requested that the Town Council meet every month so that public questions could be raised even when no Council business required formal decisions.

The Chairman explained that technically formal business was required to convene a Council meeting but they sought to meet as frequently as possible.

The following five questions were raised by the same local resident who was asked to read them in turn then she tabled written copies.

- Please can I request the minutes of last month's meeting are amended to reflect the question I actually asked at the meeting and the ensuing discussion.

A copy was tabled.

- Please can you clarify whether or not the required period of notice was given for the recent meetings of the Finance Committee and Grant Committee. It is my understanding that 3 clear days notice is required and that because Bank Holidays and Sundays do not count insufficient notice was given for these meetings. If this is the case, please clarify whether or not these meetings were valid and whether or not the Town Council can approve accept and approve the minutes presented tonight.

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk to reply and he advised the meeting that notice of those meetings had been issued dated 24 March but in fact placed on the notice board by him on 23 March. That took account of the holiday period and there were no issues regarding the meetings or decisions.

- I have concerns about the apparent absence of certain internal financial controls within the Town Council procedures:
 - a) Please can you explain why no schedule of payments has been presented to the Council and approval minuted during the whole of the last financial year.

It was explained that all payments within budget provision were delegated to the Town Clerk to make and save delay in local contractors receiving payments so no schedule needed to be approved. Financial Standing Orders had been amended to reflect this in 2010 as previously advised.

- b) Please can you explain why there has been no minute in the last twelve months noting that bank reconciliations have been carried out and checked.

Bank reconciliation culminated with the presentation of the annual accounts to the Annual Council Meeting where it was confirmed by the Town Clerk and the Internal Auditor that reconciliation had taken place. The Chairman added that clear reports had been received from both the Internal and External Auditors each year.

- c) Please can you explain why there is no evidence that the requirement of Regulation 3.3 of the Town Council's own Financial Regulations has been undertaken in the last 12 months.

The Town Clerk advised that the presentation of statements showing actual expenditure against planned budgets had not been done on as regular a basis as required and was generally done by verbal updates to the Finance Committee. The Chairman indicated he would discuss this with the Town Clerk.

- A local resident referred to the intention of the Newbiggin Churches forming a discussion group which they hoped would meet every 3 or 4 months with representatives from the Town and County Councils and the Member of Parliament to discuss what issues were going on in the town.

The Chairman replied that he would discuss the matter with the Town Councillors.

C085/15 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 09 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C086/15 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no new declarations of interests.

C087/15 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 30 March 2016 were received and actions noted.

C088/15 MINUTES OF THE GRANT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Grant Committees held on 30 March 2016 had been circulated and the delegated decisions noted.

C089/15 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Finance Committee held on 30 March 2016 had been circulated and the delegated decisions noted.

C090/15

TALL SHIPS - MARITIME FRINGE FESTIVAL

The Chairman reported that he had attended the meeting of interested groups convened at the Maritime Centre and the insurance aspects of the intended fringe events had been raised but he had advised that the Town Council could not take on that responsibility and individual groups needed to cover their own events.

Car parking and traffic arrangements needed advance planning as the volume witnessed over Easter Weekend had shown the town to be very busy. The Town Council would look at this along with street cleansing matters.

Councillors commented on arrangements to open the temporary car park; better signage to the Queen Street car park which was little used; extended capacity for the temporary car park; road signage; various facilities were not far out of the way compared to other towns.

RESOLVED that: the Town Council would help facilitate the parking and traffic arrangements for the festival.

URGENT BUSINESS The Chairman invited item of urgent business:

C091/15

COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION – WELFARE CRESCENT

The Town Clerk reported receipt of information and tabled a plan from County Highways showing the intention to make an order for a proposed One Way System in Welfare Crescent. Traffic movement would be in an clockwise direction around the estate.

Members commented on the tight corners and change in volume of traffic. It was felt that such an order was much needed and that it was up to local residents to see the benefits.

RESOLVED that: the Town Council agrees with the proposal to introduce a One Way System in Welfare Crescent.

C092/15

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEMES

The Town Council had submitted representations to the review of Local Council Tax Support Schemes initiated by the government in line with many town and parish councils and the national association. The basic problem was the County Council withholding of grant to compensate for the removal of properties from the base for collection of council tax which for Newbiggin amounted to approximately thirty per cent and was therefore particularly harsh for the town.

The Town Clerk reported that the review had concluded without a recommendation to compel billing authorities to pass on the grant or even part of it but only that they should state what they intend to pass on to parishes at the consultation stage. It was even more disappointing that the government minister had no intention of changing the basis of the funding arrangements leaving it for local determination. As in the current year the Town Council would continue to have to make up the shortfall in grant from the local precept.

C093/15

SEATON PARK MEDICAL GROUP

The Chairman referred to previous discussions with the Seaton Park Medical Group regarding the proposed reduction in services and reported that the Group Manager had advised that the response from the Health Authority which had been expected by 11 April had not been received as that was the wrong date.

The statement issued by the Group regarding the keeping of appointments had been shared but was of little help and as it still wanted to cut back local service the practice was writing to all local patients. Members felt there were still issues in attracting young medics and the situation for Newbiggin residents overall was made worse by the loss of Post Office services also. Improved facilities for the town were required not reduced ones.

C094/15

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

The statutory requirements for an annual parish meeting were referred to by the Town Clerk and members felt that it should be convened for the same night as the Town Council meeting.

RESOLVED that: the Annual Town Assembly be held on the same night as the Annual Meeting Wednesday 11 May at St Bartholomew's Church Centre.

Signed by the Chairman:

Date:.....