

COUNCIL 09 MARCH 2011**1 Woodhorn Church**

- 1.1 It has previously been reported that the county council had declared St Mary's Church at Woodhorn surplus to operational requirements and a Working Group comprising of interested partners was considering what options may be available for its future use including providing access for the public.
- 1.2 A marketing exercise was undertaken by agents Rook Matthew Sayers on behalf of the county council and receipt of tenders closed at the end of November. I am advised that only a small amount of offers were received only one of which was deemed acceptable under the current covenants and conditions for use of the building.
- 1.3 The potential purchaser has recently pulled out of the sale for their own personal reasons. The Estates Surveyor has advised that he is currently consulting with the Church Commissioners regarding the restrictive Covenants on the building as these restrictions limit any future use within the building and is awaiting a response from them before seeing how the County Council will look to progress with the future of the building.
- 1.4 In the meantime if the Town Council has any interest in the building from Residents or Organisations he has requested that their details be forwarded so that he can discuss them further.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council consider the current position.

2 Insurance Arrangements

- 2.1 The initial insurance arrangements for the Town Council were put in place by the Northumberland Association of Local Councils through agents Came & Co before the council was elected.
- 2.2 In order to test the current market and provide evidence for the auditors a joint tender exercise is being carried out by some of the new councils in South East Northumberland.
- 2.3 Quotations are being sought from three companies well established in the local council market:

AON
Came & Co
Zurich Municipal
- 2.4 A three year agreement may be an option to obtain better discount on the premiums but all information may not be available in time for the meeting so delegated powers may be necessary to put the insurance arrangements in place prior to the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED that delegated powers be granted to the Chairperson to accept the most advantageous quotation.

3 Cultural Strategy for Northumberland – NCC Consultation

- 3.1 Another comprehensive consultation exercise by Northumberland County Council is underway and the Town Council is invited to comment on the draft Northumberland Cultural Strategy '*Stronger Together through Inspirational Culture*'. A copy is attached at Appendix 1 and attention is drawn to the role objectives and priorities of cultural strategy set out in its appendix.
- 3.2 The County Tourism and Cultural Development Officer has indicated that the draft strategy was written during significant structural change in the county. The new strategy has been produced which seeks to reflect on the considerable cultural activity that is taking place and consider the key issues and opportunities for Northumberland during the next 5 years. The overall purpose of the strategy is to ensure that culture is at the heart of all that they do and that the conditions are right for culture to flourish.
- 3.3 The new strategy shows how culture can contribute to meeting the long term aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy and has been informed by a variety of other strategic documents including the Northumberland Economic Strategy, the Area Tourism Management Plan and the Physical Activity Strategy.
- 3.4 The draft strategy has been produced following an initial consultation programme by Northumberland Strategic Partnership's Culture and Tourism Board which includes Northumberland County Council and other cultural sector stakeholders.
- 3.5 The strategy vision is that:

Culture is at the heart of all that we do, bringing a rich and meaningful quality of life for people in Northumberland

What we want to achieve:

- Increasing participation in cultural activity
- Enhancing cultural opportunity
- Enriching residents' quality of life through access to culture
- Promoting a sustainable infrastructure for cultural activity within the county

- 3.6 In particular feedback is sought on the following questions:

- 1. Do you feel the objectives and priorities are correct? How could they be improved?**
- 2. How can you / your organisation help to deliver the strategy?**
- 3. What will success look like in 2016 if the vision (page 6) is achieved?**
- 4. What targets and measures should we use to monitor the strategy?**

- 3.7 Many of the arts tourism volunteering and healthy activity aspirations are complementary to the Council's own Town Plan.

Members are invited to consider any representations to the consultation.

4 Standards in Local Government

- 4.1 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government seems set to disband the current Standards Board regime and with it the compulsory Code of Conduct and has included proposals in the Localism Bill currently going through Parliament.
- 4.2 All members have signed and are currently bound by the terms of the Code of Conduct that each Council was required to adopt and remain in force until an appointed day following the passing of the act.
- 4.3 The national Standards Board itself and the power to suspend members will be abolished and a new criminal sanction put in place. There will be no requirement for authorities to have a Standards Committee although there is likely to remain a requirement for authorities to 'promote and maintain high standards by members of the authority' and members will still have to register and declare personal interests.
- 4.4 Northumberland County Council which has the obligation in many cases to investigate and hear complaints against local councillors for breaches of the Code of Conduct is now consulting over future arrangements. A voluntary code and Standards Committee will be possible but sanctions will extend to censure only.
- 4.5 The county council survey questions are as follows:
1. Do you think local Councillors conduct should be regulated?
 2. If yes, then by whom:
 - The Local Authority
 - An independent body
 - Citizens at the ballot box
 - Other
 3. If the national standards regulator, the Standards Board for England, is abolished, should Northumberland County Council replace it with a local ethical framework/code of conduct?
 4. Should councillors face sanctions for general misconduct (e.g. disrespect, disrepute) which is not otherwise to be covered by criminal law?
 5. What priority do you feel the Council should give this matter?
 6. Any other comments.

Members are invited to address these issues and respond to the consultation.

5 Dedication Garden

- 5.1 The Dedication Garden Scheme was agreed at the last meeting and arrangements for the initial planting ceremony are being developed for 20 March with orders placed for the appropriate trees.

- 5.2 The Chairperson will provide an update for the meeting regarding the arrangements and investigations into the provision of a suitable entrance information board for the Dedication Garden and memorial plaques.

6 Bay Environment Group

- 6.1 The beach and the bay environment are clearly fine assets and high priority of the town where a range of overlapping issues interests and events would benefit from some coordination.
- 6.2 Litter cleaning; dogs' strategy; work with the Beach Warden and representation to the police; overall strategy and volunteer recruitment including establishing regular volunteer cleaning events and establishing partnership arrangements including the county council could best be coordinated through an Environment Group.

Members are invited to consider the establishment of a Bay Environment Group.

7 North Seaton Road traffic management

- 7.1 Members have reported that traffic movement and indiscriminate parking along both sides of North Seaton Road continues to be a problem for both pedestrians and motorists.
- 7.2 Existing restrictions may not be adequate and enforcement irregular and insufficient. Possible solutions both here and in other problem locations throughout the town may require a traffic management scheme for the town and this would require research and detailed discussion with the county council as the Highways Authority and the police.

Members are invited to consider the traffic management issues and any representations to be made to the county council.