

**COUNCIL 11 SEPTEMBER 2013****1. External Audit and Annual Return Accounting Statements for 2012/2013**

- 1.1 Members approved the Accounts and Accounting Statement for the financial year 2010/2011 following consideration of the Final Accounts and Balance Sheet at the Annual Meeting in May. The documentation was available for inspection by the public as required by the legislation.
- 1.2 The Annual Return was duly completed and submitted to the appointed External Auditors BDO LLP who have signed and returned the certificate and opinion. Copies of Sections 1, 2 and 3 are attached at Appendix 1 and have been available for public inspection since 22 July.
- 1.3 The External Auditors have confirmed that the information in the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. There are no matters to be drawn to Members attention.

**RECOMMENDED that: the Town Council approves and accepts the Annual Report as audited.**

**2. Newbiggin Gardens Competition**

- 2.1 The Gardens Competition for 2013 has been overseen and judged by Newbiggin in Bloom Association and arrangements are in hand for an Awards Ceremony evening event when the Mayor will present the certificates and prizes. This year's competition has seen some new and extremely strong entries.
- 2.2 It is hoped that an announcement can be made that the Gardens competition can be run the same way in 2014 giving early notice to potential entrants and ensuring the small budget commitment.

**RECOMMENDED that: the Town Council confirm arrangements for the Newbiggin Gardens Competition for 2014.**

**3. Local Transport Plan (LTP) Programme 2014-15**

- 3.1 The Town Council has again been invited to submit its top three transport priorities as part of the Northumberland County Council process to review the priorities for the LTP for 2014-15.
- 3.2 Last year the three priorities submitted to the county council were a resubmission of the previous year:
  - i) A section of new cycle track and footpath widening scheme adjacent to Spital Farm to provide a safe walking and cycle route to the High School;
  - ii) A town-wide reduced speed limit for all non classified roads in the town;

iii) A new cycle track and footpath from East Lea to the Colliery and the new school site to provide a safe all weather route for young children.

3.3 Item iii) has been implemented and the following item on the agenda has a bearing on item i). A copy of the list of requests (9) for transport related schemes within the Parish will be circulated for Members' information.

**Recommended that: the Town Council decide its top three priorities for assessment for inclusion in the Local Transport Plan.**

#### **4. B1334 Newbiggin – Proposed Toucan Crossing**

4.1 I have received information from the Transport Projects Officer at the County Council advising that a genuine consultation is being carried out to seek views on the proposed introduction of a Toucan Crossing facility on the B1334 access into Newbiggin at Spital Farm where the cycle track/footpath crosses the main road.

4.2 Location and design plans will be displayed at the meeting.

4.3 The Town Council's first priority in transport schemes referred to above over the past few years has been the improvement of this cycle track/footpath at Spital Farm to ensure a safe route to the High School. The introduction of a Toucan Crossing may well improve the situation but on its own may not be a total solution.

4.4 Members' views are requested for the consultation exercise.

#### **5. Cycling along the Promenade – proposed repeal of Bye-Law**

5.1 A County Council Project Officer has advised that the repeal of a historical byelaw prohibiting cycling along the promenade needs to be considered to support other projects and is seeking the views of the Town Council.

5.2 The Newbiggin Town Team has recognised that there is a requirement to better represent Newbiggin town centre and Maritime Centre for cycling tourists and other users accessing employment or services using the National Cycle Network (NCN) number 1. There is currently a lack of signage to promote Newbiggin attractions resulting in the town often being overlooked as a tourist destination.

5.3 To support this a project to signpost cyclists into and out of Newbiggin has been developed and is included in the Portas Pilot Action Plan. The Town Team believe there is an opportunity to create a distinct tourist loop from NCN1 into Newbiggin, along the promenade and to the Maritime Centre and town centre and back onto the NCN1.

5.4 Whilst the byelaw might have been necessary in days gone by county officers consider the current level of use of the promenade and available width of the access would lend itself to dual use without any likely detriment to users. It is therefore considered there are strong merits for revocation of the cycling prohibition to meet modern day requirements and support the tourist trade for the town.

- 5.5 The Town Team were supportive of this approach to enable their project to progress but a decision was made to refer this up to the Town Council for a decision as to whether the County Council should be asked to pursue revocation of the byelaw or not. A report would have to be prepared for the Licensing and Regulatory Committee initially seeking permission to look at the process of amendment/revocation followed by a consultation process then a decision to seek amendment or revocation accordingly which could be a lengthy process.
- 5.6 The Aims and Objectives of the Town Plan do strongly encourage and support an increase in tourism and better signage.

**Recommended that: the Town Council request Northumberland County Council to undertake the process to revoke the byelaw and support the Portas Town Team Cycling and Signage Project.**

## **6. Beach Volleyball Equipment**

The Newbiggin by-the-Sea Partnership has acquired Beach Volleyball equipment installed on the beach with nets and balls available from the Maritime Centre free of charge and has donated the equipment to the Town Council.

**Recommended that: the equipment be accepted and added to the Council's Schedule of Assets for insurance purposes.**

## **7. Quay Wall Promenade Access and Bridge Street**

- 7.1 Members may well be aware of the complaints of problems and safety conflicts in the vicinity of the Quay Wall as a result of vehicles horses and traps accessing Bridge Street and the promenade.
- 7.2 There have been clear conflicts with pedestrians in an area that is essentially recognised as vehicle free apart from the occasional maintenance vehicle and sailing club access.
- 7.3 The recent regeneration scheme in the Quay Wall Piazza introduced a uniform surface adding to the feeling of pedestrianisation although Bridge Street remains a highway albeit with restricted vehicular access. Vehicles are now frequently parked in this area and horses and horse and traps have added to the safety concerns.
- 7.4 It is suggested that a physical barrier is required to limit vehicular access to Bridge Street and to the promenade to essential vehicles but this will require modification of the highway by the Highways Authority. It may also require a financial contribution from the Town Council.

**RECOMMENDED that: the County Council is requested to approve and implement a suitable solution to remove the danger to pedestrians at the Quay Wall.**

**8. Woodhorn Villa Repairs**

- 8.1 The Town Council took over responsibility for the lease of Woodhorn Villa last December to maintain the various arts activities and currently has a full repair obligation.
- 8.2 Some essential repairs are being undertaken as the rear flat roof is cracked and water is entering two of the rear rooms. It is likely that work will be required to internal ceilings and lighting which will be explored when the roof repairs are complete.
- 8.3 No direct budget provision was made for Woodhorn Villa as there was an adequate income from room lettings but this has declined considerably this year.

**RECOMMENDED that: The Town Clerk be authorised to arrange the necessary repair works with the costs being met from contingencies.**

**9. National Pay Award**

- 9.1 For the first time in five years the Local Government Employers Organization has agreed a nominal increase in the pay scales of local government workers. This is set at 1% effective from 01 April 2013.
- 9.2 The National Association of Local Councils and the Society for Local Council Clerks have confirmed the increase to be applied to all employees at local councils and issued modified salary scales.
- 9.3 There is adequate provision in this years' budget to cover the gross cost of £230 including National Insurance contribution.

**RECOMMENDED that: the National Award is implemented.**