

NEWBIGGIN BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 26 January 2011 at 7.00 pm at the St Bartholomew's Church Centre, Newbiggin.

PRESENT:

Councillors: R McCready (Mayor)
M Boon M Cholerton M Kirkup W Rogers
Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: 6 members of the public and 1 member of the press

OPEN SESSION

- A member of the community had attended to request that a bus shelter be provided at Woodlea as this was an exposed windswept location for school children in particular. A request for a shelter here had previously been made and this service had not yet transferred to the Town Council and would be discussed with the county council over the next six months with an aim to be resolved for next winter. Current county criteria would require consultation in the local area.
- Concern was expressed at the boarding up of the building formerly occupied by the housing association and the police at Woodlea and the impression this created at the entrance to a good estate. In response this was considered to be part of the larger problem of empty buildings and failing business occupation along the main road of the town identified in the Town Plan. It had been raised by a local county councillor who would follow up the matter and possible use by the Town Council had been raised with Gateshead Council which was responsible for the Police Authority building.
- The condition of derelict land and absent owners that were difficult to trace was referred to and was also identified in the Town Plan to be tackled.
- The use of the area in front of the Central club as a car turning circle was raised by a member of the public who queried what traffic rules were in place. Problems created by construction traffic accessing the academy development from Central Park Way and William Hopkinson Way were also referred to as no street cleaning was taking place and this should have been covered by the planning conditions. Boulders had been removed and cars were accessing the grass land causing damage and it was thought that the road was to be reconfigured and raised. Members of the public were advised to take and report car registration numbers to the police. The planning position would again be raised by the county councillor.

C91/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Anderson M Peden and A Thompson.

C92/10 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 December 2010 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
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C93/10 MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 06 October 2010 were received and approved with budget matters to be considered later in the agenda.

C94/10 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor Boon declared an interest as Secretary of the Newbiggin Allotment association and Councillor McCready as a member of Newbiggin in Bloom.

C95/10 TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2011 - 2012

The Chairperson proposed the budget to the Council meeting as recommended by the Finance Committee following several meetings and proceeded to outline the key messages of the financial statement.

A range of information had been received from Northumberland County Council following a hugely dynamic period and it was proposed that the budget would incorporate the costs of the service previously levied by it as a special charge but that the precept for 2011/12 should remain the same as the current year. This would give time to begin implementing projects as set out in the aims and objectives described in the Town Plan; obtain detailed information required to consider local service issues with the County Council; acknowledge the difficult economic situation and reflect the spirit of the request made by Central Government to County Councils to not increase the precept this year.

In December 2010 the Town Plan had been agreed and the budget proposals reflected the aspirations within that document incorporating some spending against the current year's precept that could not start in earnest until the Town Plan had been agreed.

The special charge levied against Newbiggin by the Sea council tax payers in addition to the County Council's tax request was raised to cover costs of play areas in particular, and did not form part of the Town Council precept or budget. It was proposed to allocate funds in the budget to pay for the maintenance and safety of play areas in Newbiggin by the Sea with the exact mechanism for the delivery to be worked out but remove the special expense from Newbiggin bills.

Discussions regarding the transfer of services from the County Council were referred to and each service would need to be treated individually as meaningful negotiations developed over the next six months.

A number of detailed points were then highlighted by the Chairperson as administrative expenses included some minor revisions based on 18 months of real expenditure and a 50% reduction in the budget for members' expenses.

Service delivery included a growing portfolio of areas of responsibility for the Town Council including Allotments ably managed by the Allotments Association; Play Areas weekly safety Newbiggin by-the-Sea Town Council

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inspections and replacement equipment; Christmas Lighting in partnership with the Trader's Association; Public Toilets the number 1 priority for Newbigginers; regular Farmers' Markets; the successful Newbiggin Nipper bus service provided by WATbus and co-funded by Northumberland County Council and Newbiggin Town Council; the School Crossing Patrol and Speed sign at Spital all recently agreed initiatives.

Special events funding would be provided for particular activities that bring prestige, pride and visitors to Newbiggin by the Sea.

An allocation for Project funding would enable the Town Council to progress other areas of the Town Plan. Activities promoting sports, arts and literature; community events; partnership working, and training and employment promotion were identified. Dog control and environmental cleansing initiatives would run in conjunction with the revised dog control orders; the small grants scheme that has benefitted 24 groups with £6,310 over the last 18 months would continue. Provision was made to scope a wasteland management proposal; to establish a seafront strategy group and to investigate putting tourist telescopes on the promenade – ideas raised through the public consultation exercises conducted last summer; and to consider developing a youth garden and enhancing the south entrance to the Town.

In conclusion the Chairperson advised that the success of these projects would not be solely reliant on the Town Council but in the establishment of good partnerships and equal working relationships with other community groups in the area; the County Council; other public bodies businesses and individuals. She invited all Newbigginers to consider joining the Town Council in realising the ambitions of the Town Plan by volunteering their time and skills and joining the wonderful range of community and project groups to really make a positive and lasting contribution to Newbiggin by the Sea.

Members expressed their appreciation of the good work undertaken by Councillor McCready in putting the budget together and the progress made by the Town Council in its short time in being.

RESOLVED that the Town Council agree the budget for 2011 – 2012 amounting to £134,610 as set out Appendix 1.

C96/10 PRECEPT FOR 2011 – 2012

RESOLVED that the Precept for 2011 – 2012 remain at £113,110.

C97/10 DATES AND VENUES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Members were invited to consider whether to continue with the same theme of meeting on the second Wednesday each month at a variety of venues around the town. Some issues regarding cost of venues were raised and the clash with meetings of the County Council's South East Area Committee. The item was deferred for consideration at the next meeting.

URGENT BUSINESS - In view of the timescales to meet the county council consultation requirements the Chairperson agreed to consideration of the following item of urgent business

C98/10 COLLIERY WOOD

Consultation was being undertaken by the Countryside Access and Recreation Manager regarding a proposal to create twenty nine acres of native woodland on land adjacent to Collingwood Road and north-west of the Academy site.

The new woodland was to be part funded by the Forestry Commission and would be certified under the woodland carbon code a register of woodlands created and managed to store carbon whilst delivering a range of environmental and social benefits. Mixed native trees mainly Oak-Ash protected by grow tubes inside fenced compartments with public access points and paths eventually providing a habitat for a variety of wildlife with many providing seeds and berries for the various migratory birds visiting the area.

Members had a number of concerns ranging from misleading information on carbon capture; the planting of trees instead of crops; lack of maintenance and management of existing planted areas and problems with wind-blown rubbish. It was felt that the scheme needed more justification.

RESOLVED that consideration be deferred and the County Council Officer requested to present the scheme at the next meeting.

Signed by the Chairperson

Date: