

NEWBIGGIN BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 09 February 2011 at 7.00 pm at the John Dobson Campus, Newbiggin.

PRESENT:

Councillors: R McCready (Mayor)
L Anderson M Boon M Cholerton M Kirkup
W Rogers A Thompson

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: 10 members of the public and 1 member of the press

OPEN SESSION

- A member of the community complained of the sorry state of the roads paths and side streets following the snowfall and had been told by the county council that they were working flat out and therefore short staffed. He felt that young people who were not working should present and give community service and that the areas of the shoreline and promenade could also benefit.
- A further issue he had concerned the inefficiently planned loading area adjacent to the planting boxes in front of the shops on Front Street having witnessed Traffic Wardens issuing tickets to vans in disabled spaces. This area was to have been included in the original regeneration proposals and it was suggested that the bays and planting should be removed to provide proper parking arrangements.
Members advised that the Police were to have issued warnings first but had not and employment for community work was a government initiative but relied on volunteers. Concerns had been raised regarding the poor condition of the footpaths by persons parking near the Dolphin and the general condition of the entrance and pavements at the sports centre. The Chairperson felt that the street scene issues needed a holistic approach and conversation with officers at county.
- The need for a footpath along William Hopkins Way to the new school in view of on-going problems of flooding and mud deposited by construction traffic was again highlighted by a local resident. Councillor Thompson advised that these matters were in hand and an agreement in place regarding the school. Metal barriers had been put in place of the boulders that had been removed.

C100/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Peden.

C101/10 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2011 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

C102/10 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor Boon declared an interest as Secretary of the Newbiggin Allotment Association and Councillors Anderson and Rogers as allotment holders.

C103/10 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION – COLLIERY WOOD

Mike Jeffrey the Countryside Access and Recreation Manager and Barry Wilson the Woodland Management Officer from Northumberland County Council gave a presentation to the meeting regarding proposals to create a woodland extending to twelve hectares around the north-west of the town.

The meeting was advised that the county council now managed in excess of 1,000 hectares of woodland around the county much of it on reclaimed colliery sites. They had been looking at the land owned and managed by the council to establish where more trees could be planted and provide better landscapes and habitat and assist in the carbon reduction agenda in a small way. The site identified had been owned by the former Wansbeck District Council and was unallocated so with a sizable grant from the Forestry Commission only a small financial input was required from the county council.

The mixed woodland open spaces and wetlands would enhance public access and recreation areas and be connected to the flood alleviation scheme on the adjoining land to the south around the ponds where there was further planting. The woodland would be managed in the same way as the other nearby significant areas of woodland at Queen Elizabeth II and Plessey Country Parks and there was no proposal to approach the Town Council to maintain the land.

Some members referred to the Woodlea/Eastlea planting scheme and had no reservations now and a clean-up assisted by the Probation service was underway. Some concerns were raised with regard to the allocation of the land in the Wansbeck District Plan and the Spital Wetlands taken over by the former Council in 2007. It was thought by the officers that the agreement provided for the developer to continue maintenance for 10 years and this would be pursued and it was thought that there were still 15,000 reeds to be planted.

Local consultation with residents at the Colliery had been very positive and bare-rooted trees would be planted if not in March then during the autumn largely by contractors although smaller areas would be targeted through Ground Works and local schools.

Environmental improvement was a big part of the Town Plan and generally trees were seen as a good way forward and members were encouraged to adopt the initiative.

RESOLVED that the Town Council endorses the proposed woodland.

C104/10 DEDICATION GARDEN

The Chairperson outlined the development of arrangements for the Dedication Garden to be located at the entrance to Long Park initially adjacent to the medical centre. The scheme had been progressed with the county council's approval and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds had no objection when consulted regarding bird feeding concerns expressed at a previous meeting. A range of standard species has been agreed and an application form developed as shown in Appendix 1 to the report.

A proper sign and information board was required to identify the area; name plate arrangements with a limited plaque statement would be put in place; a "Friends" organisation and scheme developed with active participation.

A small budget had been agreed to help start this project and consent was sought to purchase and plant four trees to be placed with the first dedication wild cherry tree at the entrance to Long Park along with the sign and some bulb planting. Arrangements were in hand to hold an initial dedication and planting ceremony in March and it was agreed that these trees would be dedicated to the former fishermen and miners of Newbiggin by-the-Sea.

Members addressed issues concerning the replacement of trees that did not survive and problems associated with the delicate issue of memorabilia which was not permitted. Such issues would be considered in conjunction with the Friends Group in due course.

RESOLVED that:

(i) The Dedication Garden Scheme be agreed;

(ii) The Town Council approve the purchase of four trees with guards and stakes and an information board at the Dedication Garden.

C105/10 PUBLIC TOILETS

Priority number one in the Town Plan had been identified as the provision of adequate public toilets in the town to complement visitor attractions and provision has been made in the budget agreed for 2011 – 2012.

As options for consideration needed to be developed as soon as possible and suitable sites and cost estimates identified it was felt that this would be best developed through a small working group that would report back to the Town Council by May.

RESOLVED that Councillors Anderson Thompson and Peden be appointed to the Working Group.

Councillor Boon declared an interest as Secretary of the Newbiggin Allotment Association and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business relating to expenditure at the allotments.

C106/10 ALLOTMENT CONDITIONS

Newbiggin Allotment Association had requested consent from the Town Council to vary the terms of the original lease of the allotment sites to permit the keeping of a pig by an accredited allotment holder as the practice had been phased out over the years.

Members considered the potential issues of smell sanitation and nuisance. It was suggested that so long as individual allotment sites to be used for this purpose were located in positions that would not give rise to complaints of nuisance owing to noise or offensive smells from nearby residents and the Association enforced reasonable hygiene and animal welfare standards as required by Environmental Health and DEFRA then approval could be given on an individual basis by the Town Clerk following assessment of the location of the site. Members felt that all sites with a boundary next to residential properties should be excluded.

The external fencing along the northern boundary of the site at Woodhorn separating the allotments from the Alcan ponds was in need of replacement. The original documents from when the site was leased by Alcan to the former Wansbeck District Council had not been traced by the county council so while an approach would be made to the company it was likely that responsibility would lie with the Town Council.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The terms of the lease are varied to allow the keeping of pigs or other approved livestock on specific allotment sites approved by the Town Clerk;**
- (ii) Approval is given to contribute to the cost of replacing the boundary fence at the Woodhorn site.**

C107/10 EVENTS PLANNING

As part of the budget process several possible events and schemes were identified that would require development and support and funding was included in the budget. Early work was required with some partners to deliver these schemes and an events calendar and programme needed to be established at an early date to complement other activities taking place in the town where possible.

Sports and leisure activities; literary events engaging school children and a book festival; the Queens Jubilee; Community Organisations event; a schools celebration and the production of an events calendar leaflet all needed early impetus and approval. Members considered that a Working Group with delegated powers to confirm arrangements for events was the best way to proceed.

RESOLVED that:

(i) Delegated powers be granted to a Working Group consisting of Councillors Anderson; Kirkup; McCready and Rogers;

(ii) Invitations be extended to four members of the community or partner representatives to assist the Working Group.

C108/10 TOWN COUNCIL NOTICE BOARD

The notice board located at the Quay Wall/Piazza had been removed as part of the intended regeneration scheme by the county council and would not be replaced as part of the scheme.

It was considered important for the town that information regarding events and agenda for Town Council meetings and various statutory notices could be displayed in a convenient location. To achieve that the Town Council would have to agree to fund a new notice board of good weather-proof quality and hopefully a place could be found for it in the new regeneration layout.

There was no specific provision in next year's budget but the cost of acquisition and installation not exceeding £2,000 could be met from balances.

RESOLVED that approval be given to acquire and install a new notice board.

C109/10 DATES AND VENUES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOWN ASSEMBLY

Following brief discussion at the last meeting a draft Diary of Meetings was attached at Appendix 2 of the Town Clerk's report and followed the same theme of meeting on the second Wednesday of each month at venues around the town. The county council Area Committee was again likely to clash with Town Council meetings on some occasions as it was to alternate between the second and third Wednesday.

RESOLVED that the Diary of Meetings for 2011 – 2012 be agreed.

Signed by the Chairperson

Date: