

NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 08 April 2015 at 7 pm at the Grace Darling Campus Newbiggin by-the-Sea.

PRESENT:

Councillors: M Peden (Chairman)
M Boon L Burns M Cholerton
R Dixon W Rogers

Officer: D Earl – Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: 5 members of the public

OPEN SESSION

- A local resident raised questions about the former school site ownership and development proposals. The Chairman and Town Clerk explained that the site had been purchased by Arch Development Company from the County Council and that only indicative proposals had been put forwarded ahead of a formal planning application that would have to go through the normal process and consultation. The Town Council would look at the formal plans once submitted for planning consent.
- A local resident commented on observed recent traffic speed on Front Street indicating that the speed camera must not have been operational. It was confirmed by local Councillors that the camera was changed regularly.
- The success of the recent Easter Weekend activities in the town was commented on by a resident. Many visitors had been attracted and it was thought to be in excess of 6,000.
- Dog fouling on the promenade and some refuse bins overflowing were reported. Talks had recently taken place between the Town Council and County Neighbourhood Services and an education and enforcement campaign was anticipated shortly. The importance of registering complaints in the County on-line system was again stressed. A local resident expressed interest in volunteer litter-picking to be discussed with the Chairman.

C071/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Thompson and Todd.

C072/14 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

C073/14 MINUTES OF THE GRANT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Grant Committee held on 11 March 2015 were received for information.

C074/14 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Finance Committee held on 18 March were received and approved.

C075/14 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS No new interests were declared at this point.

C076/14 ANNUAL TOWN ASSEMBLY

RESOLVED that: the Annual Town Assembly be held prior to the Annual Council Meeting on 13 May 2015.

C077/14 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION

i) Planning Service Review

The Town Clerk outlined the latest developments regarding the Review of the County Planning Service following adverse reports on performance. It was intended to streamline the processes resulting in greater delegation for officers to make decisions in line with national practice.

The town and parish council's would continue to be consulted on applications in the local area as at present but would not be able to require an application to be decided by the Planning Committee which was the cause of delay in decisions being reached. This had been the subject of some controversy particularly in the more rural areas of the county which had been used to making such referrals over many years. The proposed change did not however diminish the representations put forward provided they were on proper planning grounds.

Further protocols would be developed quickly with clear arrangements for town and parish involvement. A Performance Management Plan had been put in place and changes would be developed for the Committee Structure alongside the Scheme of Delegation.

ii) County Property Review

Having undertaken a full property review and shaping the future accommodation needs of the County Council it had now published its plans centered on the main towns which were intended to have a significant effect on a number of towns and settlements.

Many buildings in various locations had been inherited following local government reorganization that were not now fit for purpose and failed to meet modern standards rightly expected from staff and customers. Many assets were now surplus to requirements and would be proactively used to help generate or redesign towns facing the challenges of economic and housing growth.

Focus would now be on co-location of services and partnership working wherever possible and the reduction of revenue costs while providing improved access for residents and supporting town centre regeneration. Some proposals would also incorporate education and leisure options. A new county HQ was planned for Ashington as part of the town centre regeneration and other ambitious plans for the college and railway. In Morpeth the customer focus would be placed in the Chantry with library services and the possibility of schools being relocated to the County Hall site. Alnwick Berwick Bedlington Blyth Cramlington Hexham and Ponteland would all see old buildings close and services co-located.

iii) Guidance on the Use of Social Media by Members

A useful guide for Members on the use of social media was considered explaining the distinctions to be drawn when responding as a Member or a private individual and the role of the Code of Conduct and legal responsibilities.

Tips were provided to Members to maintain good 'Netiquette' with legal considerations for libel; copyright; data protection; bias and predetermination; obscene material; bullying and discriminatory comments; electoral periods all to be taken into account. The separation of private and Councillors activities was emphasized.

C078/14 NOTICE BOARD AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Now that the official Notice Board had been installed in the Quay Wall Piazza the Town Clerk tabled a report (06 150408) to cover the policy aspects of publications and priority for statutory and official notices such as elections audit and Town Council agenda.

RESOLVED that: that the Notice Board and Communications Policy be adopted.

C079/14 THE BUNGALOW

Initial works were well in hand for repair and decoration of the Bungalow ahead of occupation by the Town Council in the next few weeks. More significant pointing and repair works would be required as well as works to the grounds. The Town Clerk sought views on whether to bring forward or delay these works and Members wanted time to consider the budget implications and estimates.

RESOLVED that: a phase 2 works plan be considered at a later date.

Signed by the Chairman: Date:.....