

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on
Thursday 5th December 2013
in the Committee Room, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm.**

Present: Cllrs Symmonds (Chairman), S Allcroft, P Allcroft, B Grisdale, P Broom, C Goodfellow, G Mavin, S Patience, M Swinbank.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk.

FP 13/11. Apologies: Cllrs G Castle, B Hewison & R Roberts

FP 13/12. Declaration of Interests

The following pecuniary interests were declared in relation to the grant applications listed below because the Councillors/officer held positions of responsibility in the organisations:

- Alnwick CAB – Councillor A Symmonds
- Alnwick Playhouse Trust – Councillors Symmonds, Grisdale and Mavin
- Hospice Care North Northumberland – Councillor Grisdale
- 2nd Alnwick Rangers – Councillor Swinbank
- Northumberland Touring Theatre Company –W R Batey
- Alnwick & District Sports Council – W. R Batey

A pecuniary interest was declared in the grant application from Alnwick Young Peoples Association by Councillors Patience and Grisdale due to Councillor Patience employment.

FP 13/13. Review of 2013/14 Budget

The clerk circulated the committee budget as at the 1st December 2013. This was examined line by line and showed that expenditure was £38,317. The end of year prediction was expenditure of £78,898 which was a slight underspend. There were no areas of concern.

RESOLVED: To receive the update

FP 13/14. Consideration of Grant Applications 2013/14

The Clerk reported that a total of 18 applications had been received. These had been reviewed against the grant criteria by the Chairman and the Clerk. Some initial recommendations were circulated to assist discussions. Each application was considered in-turn and the following 17 grant awards were agreed:

Organisation	Agreed support from Town Council	Grant Award
Alnwick and District Playhouse Trust	Assistance with running costs	£1,250
Alnwick & District Camera Club	Contribution to new projector	£300
Northumberland Touring Theatre Company	Assistance with running costs	£500
Impact Youth Club, Alnwick Community Centre	Contribution to weekly youth club for 9-13's.	£500
Alnwick Branch of Arthritis Care	Help with transport costs	£125
Alnwick Young Peoples Association	Development work with young people	£500
Lionheart Radio & Media	Assistance with running costs	£500
Alnwick and District CAB	Contribution to recruitment, training and support for a team of volunteers	£900

RENUIT	Help with van running costs.	£300 (see below)
Alnwick Civic Society	Assistance with running costs.	£250
Hospice Care North Northumberland	Assistance with running costs.	£1000
Alnwick & District Sports Council	Contribution to annual sports awards which are held at Playhouse	£350
2 nd Alnwick Rangers	Contribution to running costs	£250
Alnwick Town FC	Contribution to running costs of Alnwick Juniors.	£350 (accounts req'd)
Carers Northumberland	Assistance to continue monthly support group meetings in Alnwick.	£500
Alnwick Age Concern Bowling Club	Contribution to a carpet roller for the indoor mats.	£250
Alnwick Amateur Boxing Club	Contribution towards a new combination frame	£350 (accounts req'd)
Choysez	Contribution towards 5 weekly evening classes for young people in Alnwick.	£250

In return for the grant to Lionheart Radio, the Council requires publicity to be given to the Neighbourhood Plan. The awards to Alnwick Town Football club and Alnwick Amateur Boxing Association were subject to satisfactory accounts being provided. The award to RENUIT was subject to accounts being produced and the final grant will either be £300 or £350 depending on the accounts. Councillors also considered a request for funding from Alnwick MACPI (multi-agency crime prevention initiative) , they requested funding to be able to give grants to continue to support Alnwick Boxing Club, Alnwick Training Corps and the Alnwick Community Centre Summer Play schemes. However as the grant criteria had been amended in 2013 to excluded giving grants to organisations that would then use them to fund other groups, no grant was awarded. Councillors considered the total allocation and given the prediction of a slight committee budget underspend were in agreement with the grant awards, which slightly exceeded the remaining grant budget provision of £8,000.

RESOLVED: That the grants listed above be awarded from the 2013/14 budget.

FP 13/15. Proposed Finance & Policy Budget 2014/15

The proposed 2014/15 budget was discussed and councilors felt the grants budget should be increased to £10,500 and funding should be made available for additional administrative support. The Neighbourhood Plan budget was reduced to £10,000. Overall the proposed budget was £80,000. Councillors were also keen to explore the costs associated with office provision in the town centre and also the possibility of a replacement vehicle for the former development trust. These would be considered further on the council strategy day.

RECOMMENDED: That the Finance and Policy Committee draft budget for 2014/15 be £80,000, plus any additional resources required for office accommodation and if necessary to assist with a replacement mechanism for the former development trust.

FP13/16. Consideration of the draft council precept for 2014/15

The clerk circulated information showing how the Alnwick Town Council precept compared with other Town Councils. This showed that based upon 2013/14, Alnwick had a below average precept of £52.56 for a Band D dwelling. The precept in 2013/14 was £130,893. Last year the Council had received a grant from the County Council for Council Tax

Benefit Support of £14,187 and the council had decided to take £10,000 out of reserves to fund play area replacements, this had lowered the precept. It was predicted that reserves would be between £120,000 and £110,000 at the end of the financial year although up to £20,000 of this was earmarked. Northumberland County Council has indicated that it will not be handing down the Council Tax Benefit Support Grant for 2014/15. The total draft budget for the Council for 2014/15 was £160,030, although this may change after the away day discussions. In the event that the grant was not received and no money was taken from reserves a precept of £160,030 would be the equivalent of approximately £64 per Band D dwelling. Councillors were of the opinion that this year, reserves should not be utilised to reduce the precept.

RECOMMENDED: In the event that Council Tax Benefit Support Grant is not received, the precept for 2014/15 should be £160,030 plus any additional requirements arising from the away day discussions. In 2014/15 reserves should not be used to reduce the precept.

The meeting closed at 8.59pm