

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 13th September 2012 in the Council Chamber, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs A Symmonds (Mayor), S Allcroft, G Castle, D Farrar, K Gray, B Grisdale, M Harrington, K Moore, S Patience, R Roberts, J Thompson, and S Walton.

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

C12/53. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

C12/54. Apologies: Cllrs J Bell, G Knox, B Hewison, B Thompson and R Waddell.

C12/55. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harrington and Thompson declared a pecuniary interest regarding the Town Handyman request (minute 12/64). Councillor Castle declared an interest in relation to County Council matters.

C12/56. Welcome to Councillor David Farrar and Committee and Outside Bodies appointments

The Mayor welcomed Councillor David Farrar to the Council following his co-option at the last meeting. Vacancies existed on the Recreation and Amenities Committee and the Cemetery Committee and Councillor Farrar had indicated he would like to fill these vacancies and in addition he would also like to fill vacant council positions on Alnwick in Bloom and Community Action Northumberland.

RESOLVED: Councillor Farrar be appointed to the Recreation and Amenities Committee and the Cemetery Committee and to the following outside bodies: Alnwick in Bloom and Community Action Northumberland.

C12/57. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (12th July 2012)

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2012 were agreed as a true record.

These were agreed and duly signed by the Mayor.

C12/58. Matters Arising not on the Agenda

Referring to minute 12/47, the clerk reported that 3 of the dog bins and the litter bin had now been installed. Referring to minute 12/51, he reported that the Alnwick Ambassador scheme had not run in 2012 and it was something that the Town Council would look at for 2013.

C12/59. Mayor's Report

The Mayor's report for the period 12th July – 12th September had been circulated with the agenda. In particular, the Mayor highlighted the Charity Ball on 12th October and the date for the Mayor's Carol service, which was the 17th December.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

C12/60. Completion of the 2012 Audit and Approval of the Annual Return

It was reported that the Council's external auditor has completed the audit for the year ending 31st March 2012. The auditor had concluded that the information in the annual return was in accordance with proper practices and no matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern. In completing the audit the auditor had added a note to the annual return to assist the reader and no action is required by the council. The note related to the change

in asset values due to the adoption of new assets during the year (from the former Development Trust).

RESOLVED: That the Annual Return for the Year ending 31st March 2012 be approved and accepted by the Council.

C12/61. Consultation on Parking in the Market Place

Councillors had held previous discussions about proposed solutions to car parking problems in the market place. Northumberland County Council were consulting on a suggested 'Restricted Parking Zone, No loading except in signed bays' be established. If agreed, allowing loading only in signed bays would negate the need for Double Yellow Lines around the periphery of the Market Place and hatched markings in the centre. To promote turnover for businesses, '30 minute Limited Waiting' bays were proposed incorporating Disabled Parking and Motor cycle usage. Councillor Castle gave further details of the background to the proposals. Councillors debated the proposals and the following points were made:

- The amount of signage seemed excessive and should be rationalised if possible, particularly the signage behind the Market Cross. Any redundant signage should be removed.
- The number of parking spaces proposed should be seen as a maximum.
- The use of studs to delineate parking spaces was preferred to lines.
- No parking should take place on market days or when events are held.
- The use of the time limited Loading Bays would need to be properly enforced
- Consideration would need to be given to the parking of the Blood Transfusion Unit vehicle which from time to time operates in the Market Place/Northumberland Hall.

RESOLVED: that the Council supports the proposals and wishes to make the comments listed above.

C12/62. Portas Pilot support

On 24th July the Council had been notified that the application to become a Portas Pilot had been unsuccessful. On 30th August the government had written to local MP's of towns that were unsuccessful asking them to support the local town team and encourage them to become Town Team Partners. Town Team Partners who had the commitment of their MP will be able to access a package of support, including £10,000 to help put elements of their plan into action and they will also receive support from the Association of Town Centre Management. The registration form to become a Town Team Partner is simple but needed to be returned by 16th September. It was highlighted that the Town Council were the lead organisation for the Town Team and that town team members had been circulated with a proposal, which was: *To promote Alnwick as a must-see tourist destination and a centre for local Northumbrian produce, we will look to improve footfall and encourage people to move about the town. Thinking of the town centre as a single business, we will also review publicity and branding and suggest improvements (including prioritising media relations)*". Councillors were supportive of this proposal and some saw the proposals linking to other requests for improved town signage.

RESOLVED: That the Council supports the Town Team registering as a Town Team Partner to explore improvements in footfall, publicity and branding, as outlined.

C12/63. Transfer of Allotments to Alnwick Town Council

Correspondence and details had been received from NCC regarding the transfer of 11 allotments at St George's and 3 at Cawledge View, to the Town Council. No rents had been charged since April 2012 and the County Council are happy for these to now be collected

by the Town Council. The rents in 2011/12 were £15 at Cawledge View and £17 at St George's. It was suggested by the clerk that the rents for 2012/13 be continued at these levels. It was explained that the Town Council had always maintained that some site clearing up was required at St George's prior to take over, this was still outstanding.

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to take over of the allotments at St George's and Cawledge View as soon as possible and gives delegated authority to the Recreation and Amenities Committee to finalise the details, including any reasonable expenditure required.

C12/64. Consideration of the need for a Town Handyman

The Chamber of Trade had asked the council to consider the idea of having a town handyman, or as an alternative for NCC to consider the possibility of allocating one or two personnel on a full time basis to come under the control of the Town Council and be responsible for day to day maintenance of the town. They had suggested that the role of the handyman would be to carry out those duties required to help maintain a much higher standard of appearance for the town and/or surrounding area – e.g. cleaning graffiti, weeding pavements, repairing damaged items etc. They anticipated an appointment of approximately 15 hours a week but would not be able to provide any financial assistance as their funds were limited. They would be prepared, to match the hours when needed. Councillors were generally supportive of the concept but felt that further discussions were needed and it was important not to proceed in a piecemeal fashion. This also needed to be reviewed as part of the 2013/14 budget process and should also consider any other workload issues arising from any asset transfers that were likely.

RESOLVED that the request for a Town Handyman be considered by the Recreation and Amenities Committee as part of their budget process.

C12/65. Minutes of Committees

- a) The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee (26th July 2012) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 26th July 2012 were agreed as a true record.

- b) The Minutes of the Planning Highways and Transport Committee (12th July 2012) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning Highways and Transport Committee held on 12th July 2012 were agreed as a true record.

C12/66. Correspondence

The clerk reported that the following correspondence has been received since the last meeting, these were discussed and actions agreed as listed:

| Date | Detail | Action if any |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 15 th Aug. | Invitation to NCC debate on minimum price of alcohol | Circulated to councillors, Councillor Walton hopes to attend |
| 18 th Aug | Northumberland Rivers Trust Newsletter | Available from the Clerk on Request |
| 21 st Aug | Barclays Bank. Withdrawal of Barclaysafe Premium service (The council uses this for document storage and pays £40 per annum). Offer of Barclaysafe Standard service. with documents being stored at a | The Barclaysafe Standard Service is agreed |

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| | specialist security centre. Cost £3 per month plus £10 per access. | |
| 29 th Aug | Audit Commission – BDO LLP appointed as external audit for 2012/13 | Noted |
| 23 rd Aug | Request from Sgt. Neville Wharrier to consider the removal of the Howling Lane Bus Shelter, due to an increase in anti-social behavior. | Requires further discussion at next meeting and the police and local residents to be invited |

RESOLVED: That the correspondence received be noted and actioned as outlined.

C12/67. Financial Matters – Payments.

The clerk reported that the following invoices had been paid under delegated authority given at the last meeting.

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| Clear Channel UK Ltd | £241.88 | Bus shelter repairs |
| Alnwick Chamber of Trade | £150 | Contribution to paint and materials for town clean up |
| Chris Anderson | £234 | Neighbourhood Plan work |
| Gallery Youth | £500 | Contribution to Summer Programme. (a replacement cheque had been issued to Alnwick Young Peoples Association). |
| npower | £185.79 | Cemetery Chapel |
| D Hogg (Black Olive) | £75 | Neighbourhood Plan buffet |
| Station Nurseries | £453.99 | Jubilee Trees |
| Northumberland County Council | £38.50 | Pottergate Pantry catering |
| W.R.Batey | £164.76 | Play area surface repair kits |
| Northumberland County Council | £78 | Northumberland Hall Booking – Armed Forces Day |
| Royal Mail Group | £0.40 | Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire return |
| MKM Building supplies | £126.96 | Materials for Headstone bases |
| Glasdon | £4120.44 | 4 new seats |
| Earl Percy Estates | £55 | Rent for Ratten Row allotments |
| St James's Church Centre | £276 | Hall Booking Neighbourhood plan |

The following invoices had been received for payment

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|--------------------------|----------|---|
| HMRC | £3039.95 | Tax and NI contributions for July & Aug |
| Wages Account | £5000 | Transfer to Wages Account |
| BDO LLP | £660 | External Audit Fee |
| Fife Plant Hire | £128.64 | Materials (Sand, Gravel and Cement) |
| Chubb | £110.70 | Work to intruder alarm system |
| Playdale Playgrounds Ltd | £1627.81 | Play area replacement parts |
| Diamond Business Systems | £54 | Service Charge Photocopier |
| W. R. Batey | £352.89 | Printer Cartridges £315, Postage £20.40, Stationary £9.99, photocopying £7.50 |
| Hobblelaw Plants | £210 | Planting of Floral Clock |
| A Symmonds | £45 | Mileage – two meetings |
| James McLean | £225 | Cordless Drill |
| Thomas Sherriff & Co | £70.07 | Oil |

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| The following payments are now paid by direct debit and were reported for information | | |
| BT | £168.86 | Phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge Paid 26 th July and 27 th August |
| npower | £184.02 | Three electric bills, paid, 12 th , 19 th and 26 th July. |

RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £18,224.78 and to note the direct debit payments of £352.88

C12/68. Councillor issues

- a) Councillor Moore highlighted the condition of the rear lane at Lisburn Street. The lane was untidy, weeds were growing and residents often left their bins out in the lane.

RESOLVED: to arrange a site meeting with Northumberland County Council and Homes for Northumberland.

- b) Councillor Hewison proposed signage be placed at the entrance to the archway from the Market Place to help direct foot traffic through to Fenkle Street and signs outside of Morrison's (subject to Morrison's approval could also help to direct supermarket shoppers to the town centre). Councillors felt this request was linked to the Town team proposals and should be considered as part of the bigger picture,

RESOLVED: that the request for additional signage be considered as part of the Alnwick Town Team work (Minute 12/62).

C12/69. Any Other Urgent Business

- a) Councillor Gridale suggested that the Council should be considering the options for the replacement of the functions of the former Alnwick Community Development Trust.
- b) Councillor Harrington highlighted the availability of the shoppers permit in the town, which he felt had been given very little publicity by the County Council.
- c) Councillor Patience updated Councillors on the TPO proposed for the former Thomas Percy school woodland. This was now with the county council's legal department.
- d) Councillor J Thompson highlighted the road gully at the bottom of Wagonway Road, which seems to block regularly. It was agreed to refer this to the County Council.
- e) Councillor Roberts enquired about any previous requests for a seat at Oaky Balks. No one was aware of previous requests. It was agreed to place this on the agenda for the next meeting.
- f) The Mayor congratulated the Alnwick in Bloom Committee on achieving a gold award for the town in the recent Northumbria in Bloom awards.

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.