

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 10th January 2013 in the Council Chamber, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs A Symmonds (Mayor), S Allcroft, G Castle, D Farrar, K Gray, M Harrington, B Hewison, K Moore, S Patience, R Roberts, R Waddell and G Watson.

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

C12/113. Questions from the Public

Mr Carlo Biagioni, Mr John Hope, Mr Philip Angier and Mrs Lorraine Ochocinska attended the meeting to raise questions about the Weatherspoon's planning application on the former Corn Exchange and the impact this would have on the town. In particular Mr Biagioni highlighted the fact that the pub trade and businesses were struggling. Mr Hope questioned the fact that the Town Council had not consulted businesses on the matter. Mr Angier asked if the neighbourhood plan issues and options results could be taken into account in the decision making process, whilst Mrs Ochocinska highlighted the potential noise and disturbance and loss of washing lines. Councillor Roberts outlined that the Council's Planning Committee had viewed the plans in October and whilst they were supportive of the proposals concerns had been raised about the external drinking area, the delivery times and the steep steps from the premises to Bondgate Within. Furthermore the Committee had restricted its comments to planning issues. Councillor Patience confirmed that the neighbourhood plan survey results were unlikely to be available prior to a planning decision being made. The Mayor thanked the individuals for their questions but suggested that they may wish to address the issues raised with the County Council Planning Committee either by writing to them or requesting to speak at the meeting which considers the application.

C12/114. Apologies: Cllrs, J Bell, B Grisdale, G Knox, B Thompson, J Thompson and S Walton.

C12/115. Declarations of Interest

In advance of the meeting the clerk had circulated advice from Northumberland County Council regarding the declaration of interests by councillors prior to setting the precept. All Councillors present signed a form requesting the grant of a dispensation under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable them to participate in the discussion and vote on setting a precept for 2013/2014. This request was made because they all are (or are closely connected with persons who are) council tax payers who will be affected by the precept set by the Council. They all considered that, without the dispensation, the number of members prohibited from participating in the business of setting a precept would be so great as to impede the transaction of business.

RESOLVED: To grant a dispensation to all Members of the Council to enable them to participate in full in all decisions relating to the setting of the Council's budget and precept.

Councillors Symmonds, Harrington and Moore declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute C12/112 regarding the Mechanics Institute as they are all council representatives on the management committee. Councillor Castle declared a non-pecuniary interest in County Council matters.

C12/116. Presentation on the proposed skate park in Alnwick North

The proposed presentation was rescheduled for early in 2013 at the request of the skate park group.

C12/117. Inspector Paul Truscott, Northumbria Police.

As Inspector Paul Truscott had been unable to attend it was agreed to re-schedule the meeting in early 2013. .

C12/118. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (13th December 2012)

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Council meeting held on 13th December 2012 were agreed as a true record.

These were agreed and duly signed by the Mayor.

C12/119. Matters Arising not on the Agenda

Referring to Minute C12/106, the Mayor outlined that the allotment rent collection had gone well and it had been a busy morning. Referring to Minute C12/108 (d) the clerk outlined that it had not been possible to take out the highlighted Bond with Santander as the Bond had been withdrawn, alternatives were being looked at. The clerk also informed the Council that he had written to the County Council, expressing concerns that signs on the Willowburn roundabout had been put up ahead of any planning decision.

C12/120. Mayor's Report

The Mayor's report for the period 14th December to 5th January had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor thanked Councillors for supporting the Civic Carol Service which had been successful.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

C12/121. Swansfield Park. Alnwick

The clerk reported that in 2013/14 Northumberland County Council had been proposing to transfer the responsibility for all non-strategic parks to local town or parish councils. In the Alnwick Town Council area this included Swansfield Park and would mean that on 1st April 2013 the Town Council would become responsible for the park, including the seats, bins, play area equipment, grass cutting, trees and shrubs etc. However in the week prior to the meeting the council had been informed that such transfers may be put on hold to enable further discussions to take place.

When the park had been created the developer paid Alnwick District Council an endowment for future maintenance (to be used after the initial 10 years), the County Council have confirmed that this, together with interest, amounts to £217,155, which was split £103,148 for the play area and £114,007 for the rest of the park. The endowment is ring-fence for expenditure on the park.

Councillors discussed the options in the event that a transfer was possible. Councillor Watson highlighted that there had been ongoing issues with the play area maintenance and repairs needed to be carried out. Councillors were generally supportive of a transfer to the Town Council provided the endowment was received.

RESOLVED: Subject to Northumberland County Council agreement, the Town Council agrees to take over the responsibility for Swansfield Park from 1st April 2013 and the endowment of £217,155 be transferred from Northumberland County Council to Alnwick Town Council.

C12/122. Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee (13th Dec 2012) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee held on 13th December 2012 were agreed as a true record.

C12/123. To agree the 2013/14 budget and to set the 2013/14 Precept

The clerk circulated the budget summary for the current financial year and took councilors through it. The summary which was up to 31st December 2012, showed expenditure to be £119,000 and income to be £180,000. Most of the anticipated income had been received for the year and at the end of the financial year a small contribution to reserves was forecast.

RESOLVED: the 2012/13 current position be noted.

The Council then considered the budget requirement for 2013/14. Each of the Council's committees has approved a recommended budget for 2013/14 together with a recommended precept requirement. The clerk had adjusted these figures where more up to date estimates had been received from for example the County Council. He also referred to the results of the limited consultation that had taken place on the budget proposals. The overall budget requirement was therefore now £155,079.

RESOLVED: To approve the 2013/14 budget of £155,079

Having agreed the budget the Council then considered the precept. The Finance and Policy Committee on 4th December 2012 had recommended one-off expenditure on play area replacements which was included in the Recreation and Amenities budget at £10,000, be funded from reserves.

Councillors were informed that the Government has given financial assistance to Northumberland County Council to compensate for the impact of council tax base changes and the County Council had agreed to pay a non-recurrent grant in 2013/14 to town and parish councils provided the impact was more than £100. The consequence of this was to offer a grant to Alnwick Town Council of £14,186 which should now be deducted from the precept requirement.

Councillors discussed the level of precept required, some felt that any increase should be as little as possible whilst others were conscious of the non-recurrent nature of the grant and possible future additional responsibilities and felt a larger increase may be needed. Most councilors felt the proposed precept once the grant and £10,000 contribution from reserves was deducted was fair in the circumstances. This would mean that a Band D dwelling would pay £ 51.87 per annum in 2013/14. For a Band D dwelling, this would be increase of £2.60 per annum or £0.05 per week or in percentage terms 5.28%.

RESOLVED: To set a precept of £130,893 for 2013/14.

C12/124. Correspondence

The clerk reported that the following correspondence has been received since the last meeting, these were discussed.

Date	Detail	Action if any
19 th Dec	CAN news	Available from clerk on request.
20 th Dec	NALC news	Available from clerk on request.
21 st Dec	NCC- Calculation of Revised Tax base by Town/Parish Councils	Available from clerk on request. Reference included in Budget item on agenda
31 st Dec	Ellingham Parish Council – need to support bus service 460.	To note and Town Council to assist with publicity for the service
Dec/Jan	Various letters of thanks for grant support	To note

RESOLVED: That the correspondence received be noted.

C12/125. Financial Matters – Payments.

The clerk reported that the following invoices had been received for payment:

Inland Revenue	£1504.17	Tax and NI
Wages Account	£2000	Transfer to wages account
Information Commissioner's Office	£35	Data Protection Act Renewal fee
Northumbrian Water	£504.78	Bills for allotments, cemetery and Robertson's Fountain. (Paid 27 th Dec)
R Blackman	£400	Emergency tree works at cemetery
Border Stoves	£1919	Installation of wood burning stove at Cemetery Lodge
Azure Printing	£1000.87	Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire
Azure Printing	£718.68	Neighbourhood Plan Summary Booklet
Azure Printing	£393.08	Neighbourhood plan Booklet
SignPro	£316.80	Neighbourhood Plan Display Material
Alnwick Markets	£20	Rental of stall for Neighbourhood Plan consultation on 22 nd December
Chubb Electronic Security	£147.19	Annual contract
CBS Ltd	£26	Photocopying
Glendale Paints	£31.99	Woodstain
npower	£207.70	Electricity – cemetery chapel
Argyle Planning Consultancy	£2320	Neighbourhood plan
Davidson & Son	£2400	Christmas Lights grant
Azure Printing	£120.80	Neighbourhood Plan labels
TOTAL	£14,066.06	

The following payments are now paid by direct debit and were reported for information		
BT	£79.31	Phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge Paid 27 th December

RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £8,959.19 and to note the direct debit payments of £79.31

C12/126. Any Other Urgent Business

- a) Councillor Allcroft raised the need for chewing gum to be removed from pavements in the town, particularly near to Morrisons and Bondgate Within. The clerk agreed to write to Northumberland County Council.
- b) Councillor Hewison raised the need for action to be taken against vehicles in the area parking on the road side advertising for scrap cars. He felt that the police should enforce the matter. The Mayor informed the Council that he had already taken the matter up with Melanie Thew the County Council Enforcement Officer and she was dealing with the matter.
- c) Councillor Moore raised the untidy condition of Clayport Square. The Clerk agreed to write to Northumberland County Council.
- d) Councillor Waddell enquired about the removal of the wind turbines at the Defra building.
- e) Councillor Patience updated councillors on the Neighbourhood Plan 'Issues and Options' consultation events to be held on 25th January and a proposed Denwick Parish meeting.
- f) Councillor Castle asked if the Town Council would be prepared to look at residents parking schemes and make recommendations. Clayport Street and Hotspur Street should be included in the piece of work. The clerk advised the most appropriate committee would be the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee.

Agenda items in Private

Exclusion of the Public and Press

The following resolutions was moved and seconded, to exclude the public and press.

“That pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that if members of the public were present during the discussion of these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100 1 and paragraphs 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act”.

The item considered in private was:

C12/127. Mechanics Institute Update

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.