

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 14th March 2013 in the Council Chamber, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7pm.

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

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

C12/144. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

C12/145. Apologies: Cllrs Bell, Castle and K Moore.

C12/146. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gray declared a pecuniary interest in Minute C12/158 regarding an invoice being paid to his son.

C12/147. Presentation on the proposed skate park in Alnwick North

Hannah Moeini from Alnwick North Community Centre attended the meeting with a group of young people from the area to present their proposals for a skate park in Alnwick North. They outlined that the proposal was to build the park near to the Community Centre, this was currently County Council land. Consultation had revealed a need for the facility and the police were supportive. North Country Leisure had agreed to help them with funding applications. The project could cost £200,000 and it was hoped that it could be built within 2 years. They asked the Council to consider holding the lease and assist with on-going maintenance and inspection. Councillors were supportive of the proposals and thanked the youngsters for putting forward their scheme and ideas.

RESOLVED: That in principle, the Town Council agrees to hold the lease for the scheme.

C12/148. Presentation by Liz Herbert, Bailiffgate Museum.

Liz Hebert, the new project manager at the Bailiffgate Museum attended the meeting to introduce herself and updated councillors on the Heart of the Community Project. She explained that the museum was due to close in mid-April to allow alterations to take place. The project would include a number of trails across the Alnwick district. Councillors asked questions, made comments and suggested ideas such as the story of Alnwick in fabric. The Mayor thanked Liz for her presentation.

C12/149. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (14th February 2013)

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Council meeting held on 14th February 2013 were agreed as a true record.

These were agreed and duly signed by the Mayor.

C12/150. Matters Arising not on the Agenda

Referring to Minute.C12/137, Councillor Roberts asked for an update on the proposed bench at Oaky Balks. The clerk confirmed that NCC has agreed a location and an order was being placed with Northumberland Estates.

C12/151. Mayor's Report

The Mayor's report for the period 14th February to 14th March had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor also highlighted the launch of the Mayor's Civic Awards and hoped the councillors would support the initiative.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

C12/152. Northumberland Local Development Plan, Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation.

At the last Council meeting it was agreed that a draft response to the Core Strategy would be tabled at this meeting for consideration. Comments needed to be submitted by 20th March 2013. The Clerk tabled a draft response to the consultation and took councillors through the key points. To give councillors more time to consider the comments it was suggested that final comments be submitted to the clerk by noon on Monday 18th March.

RESOLVED: That final comments be forwarded to the clerk by noon on 18th March to enable the Council's submission to be made.

C12/153. Transfer of Swansfield Park

The agenda item contained further information about the possible transfer of Swansfield Park from the County Council to the Town Council. This followed a meeting attended by the Mayor and the Clerk with NCC officers.

In terms of the play area, the clerk outlined the proposal was to transfer this to the Town Council with effect from 1st April. This would make the town council responsible for everything in the area enclosed by the play area fence (play equipment, picnic benches, litter bins as well as gates and fence). It was explained that the transfer would mean that the Town Council was then responsible for all play areas in the town and an endowment of approximately £102,000 would pass to the town council for future maintenance. Any Town Council play area expenditure in relation to inspection, insurance and repair and replacement could be funded out of the endowment. The County Council would remain responsible for the emptying of the litter bins. The clerk reported that the insurance implication of the transfer would be an additional £800 or so, for a full year. Councillors were satisfied with the transfer proposal.

In relation to the park, the County Council's initial intention was to transfer this to the Town Council with effect from 1st April 2013; however such transfers were generally delayed until 1st April 2014 to enable more discussions to take place. It was reported that the County Council were prepared to agree to the transfer from 1st April 2013 (or such other agreed date, to fit in with their legal procedures), if the Town Council wishes to proceed in 2013/14. Councillors were informed that the boundary of the site included the car park and the full length of the footpath to The Alnwick South School. At the last meeting councillors discussed a drainage problem in the south west corner of the site, which results in water running across the footpath and car park. This has been discussed with county council officers and there were of the opinion that this arises under only very wet conditions when the ground is saturated and is due to the sloping nature of the site. They did however agree to investigate any plans that may show if there are any land drains which could be blocked.

In relation to the park, an endowment of approximately £107,000 would pass to the Town Council (assuming a transfer on 1st April). The County Council had spent some £7,000 on maintenance in 2012/13 (June to March) which will be funded from the endowment. The County Council had estimated their costs to be £10,386.92 in 2013/14, based upon a prepared schedule of works (the split is £903 for play area checks and £8539.65 for the park, plus a management fee).

Councillors discussed the park and were concerned about the inclusion of the car park, what they thought was a right of way and the future responsibilities regarding the lighting in the park. The general view was that further discussions needed to take place before a decision could be taken. It was suggested that the matter be referred to the Recreation and Amenities Committee for more detailed consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to proceed with the Transfer of Swansfield Park play area from 1st April and further discussions should take place regarding the rest of the park before a decision is taken.

C12/154. Transfer of Finger Post signs

The Clerk reported that Northumberland County Council was prepared to transfer the finger post signs that were located around the town, to the Town Council. Such a transfer would be in keeping with the general move for street furniture (seats, map cases etc.) to be the responsibility of the Town Council. To add these to the insurance policy all risks would cost approximately £130 per annum. Councillors were in favour of the transfer.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council agrees to take over the responsibility for the Finger Post signs from a date to be agreed with Northumberland County Council.

C12/155. Review of the Constitution

Under the Council’s constitution it was a requirement to have an annual review. It was therefore proposed to have a working group meeting, to which all councillors be invited, to undertake the review and report back to the April Council meeting. The proposed date for the working group was Thursday 4th April at 7pm.

RESOLVED: That a working group be established to review the constitution.

C12/156. Minutes of Committees

a) The Minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee (14th February 2013) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee held on 14th February 2013 were agreed as a true record.

C12/157. Correspondence

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

Date	Detail	Action if any
13 th Feb	NCC - residents festival 16 th /17 th March	For information
14 th Feb	LMAPS – letter looking to develop closer links with Town/Parish councils	Cllr Harrington is council’s rep. Letter available on request.
25 th Feb	NCC – Republished Register of Electors	Held by clerk
26 th Feb	NCC – leaflets – Become a local councillor	Copies available on request
28 th Feb	NCC – Joint Meeting with parishes agenda for 11 th March	Circulated to Councillors
28 th Feb	CAN – CAN news	Available on request
3 rd March	TDC Waste Management – Controlled Waste Transfer Note for Cemetery	Completed and returned
3 rd March	CAN – info about services and request for donation	Councillors considered and agreed a donation of £50.
5 th March	NCC – Temporary Road Closure –Fenkle Street	Circulated for information
7 th March	NCC- Temporary Road Closure Bondgate Within	Circulated for Information

RESOLVED: That the correspondence received be noted and a donation of £50 be paid to Community Action Northumberland.

C12/158. Financial Matters – Payments.

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

Inland Revenue	£1,501.59	Tax and National Insurance
Wages Account	£2,000	
NFU Mutual	£1,530.88	Pension contribution for clerk 2012/13
John Gray Ltd	£50.40	Weld Hedgecutter
The Play Practice	£118.88	Play area equipment parts
Alnwick Plumbing & Heating	£69.60	Repair of water leak Ratten Row
JBT Waste Services	£175	Skip Hire – St James allotments
Local Living (NE) Ltd	£20	Market Stall 16 th Feb Neighbourhood Plan
Northumberland County Council	£37.88	Building Insurance, Unit 5 St Thomas Close
W. R. Batey	£301.73	Skip hire £135 (Cemetery), sign for cemetery £38.93 postage £7.20, printer cartridges £120.60
Thomas Sherriff & Co Ltd	£359.81	Tractor Parts
Alnwick Young Peoples Assn.	£45	Printing & display board costs – Neighbourhood plan
Petty Cash	£23.47	Petrol, tools
Northumberland Estates	£75	Rent for Ratten Row allotments
Diamond Business Systems	£54	Photocopier contract charge
Zurich Insurance	£53	Town Centre planters
H2Flow	£186	Boiler repair Cemetery Lodge
Royal Mail Group Ltd	£57.97	Postage returns Neighbourhood Plan
Northumberland CC	£2,541	NNDR Cemetery
Northumberland CC	£372.93	NNDR Cemetery Lodge
Northumbrian Water	£60.56	Water Bill, Cemetery
Northumbrian Water	£69.11	Water Bill, Cemetery
Durham Company Ltd	£2,113.44	Trade Waste, Cemetery
TOTAL	£11,817.25	

The following payments are now paid by direct debit and were reported for information		
BT	£143.26	Phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge Paid 28 th February and to be paid 28 th March

It was also reported that an overpayment for funeral costs has been received and a refund of £240 was needed to Co-op Funeral Care Ltd.

RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £11,817.25 and to note the direct debit payments of £143.26

C12/159. Councillor Issues

- a) **Councillor Hewison** raised the poor condition of the flowerbed at the Oaks roundabout. The agenda papers highlighted that last year, this flowerbed had been excluded by the Town Council from the summer and winter planting undertaken by NCC and paid for by the Town Council on the grounds of cost. To have summer and winter bedding displays would have cost £710 plus vat (including maintenance and watering). As an alternative, the County Council agreed to plant sustainable shrubs (at their cost). County officers had confirmed that the planting was not as successful as they had anticipated and have offered to replant the bed with sustainable shrubs (at their cost). They had also confirmed that planting the bed with summer and winter bedding in 2013/14 would cost £710 plus vat. Councillor Hewison wished to see the flowerbed planted with attractive bedding plants.

Other councillors agreed the flowerbed was a mess by felt that a more sustainable planting option should be again tried and the County Council's offer should be discussed with them and accepted.

RESOLVED: to accept the County Council's offer of replanting the flowerbed with sustainable plants and to ask for the Town Council to have an input in to the choice of plants.

- b) **Councillor Castle** had requested that the Council gave consideration to reviewing the condition of the town's toilets. This was firstly in relation to the general state of cleanliness and repair, and secondly the inadequate size of the town centre toilets. Councillors were in agreement that something needed to be done to improve the town centre toilets. It was highlighted that the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire was also asking a question about the provision. Most Councillors felt that although the toilets were the responsibility of the County Council, the Town Council would be in a position to highlight the deficiencies.

RESOLVED: To refer the issue to the Recreation and Amenities Committee for consideration, to enable a response to be sent to the County Council.

C12/160. Any Other Urgent Business

- a) **Councillor Roberts** outlined the success that the Playhouse had enjoyed with its film programme in February.
- b) **Councillor Watson** circulated the programme for the 2013 Spring Show.
- c) **Councillor Hewison** raised a safety concern about the footpath running from Royal Oak Gardens on to Alnmouth Road, A resident had raised a concern about child safety and he asked if a gate could be put at the Alnmouth Road end of the path. The clerk agreed to ask Northumberland County Council. He also asked if the sign ordered for the cemetery to give advice to car drivers about parking, had been installed, the clerk said he thought it was installed. Councillor Hewison also asked the clerk to write to thank the county council about the footpath and kerb works which had been carried out close to Robert Adam Court.
- d) **Councillor Walton** asked for confirmation of the County Council's pot hole repair programme. The clerk outlined that a programme was due to be put in place dealing with some 70 potholes a day, utilising new equipment.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.