

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 12th January 2012 in the Council Chamber, Clayport Street Alnwick at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs A Symmonds (Mayor), S Allcroft, E Blakey, G Castle, K Gray, W Grisdale, M Harrington, B Hewison, G Knox, K Moore, S Patience, R Roberts, J Thompson, R Waddell, S Walton.

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

Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

C11/176. Apologies: Cllrs B Thompson & G Watson.

C11/177. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Patience, Hewison, Castle and Roberts declared a personal interest in item 8 (Neighbourhood Plan). Councillor Hewison and Castle declared a personal interest in relation to item 5 (Festival of Alnwick) and Councillor Castle declared a personal interest in relation to county council issues.

C11/178. Update on the proposed Festival of Alnwick

Paul Larkin (Chairman of Festival of Alnwick Committee) and Karen Larkin (Festival Coordinator) attended the meeting and took councillors through a handout which outlined the current position. They covered the festival aims, dates, the work of the various subgroups and the events that were being planned, the arrangements for the closing ceremony, the fundraising and the publicity and communication methods being used. Councillors asked questions including road closures and about the legacy from the festival. The Mayor thanked Paul & Karen for their excellent update and felt sure we were heading for a successful festival.

C11/179. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (8th December 2011)

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2011 were agreed as a true record.

These were agreed and duly signed by the Mayor.

C11/180. Matters Arising not on the Agenda

It was reported that the footpath inspection (Minute C11/168) had taken place and had been useful. Minute C11/170 - the council's insurers had given advice on snow volunteers and this would incur an additional premium, this would be discussed with the Chairman of the Recreation & Amenities Committee. There was a discussion on Minute C11/175 regarding the lack of progress in relation to a Tree Preservation Order. Councillor Castle outlined that he understood the matter had been raised at a senior officer level but the view was that there was no need for the Order mainly because the woodland remained in County Council ownership. He promised to circulate the correspondence he had received.

C11/181. Mayor's Report

The Mayor's report for the period 8th December to 12th January had been circulated with the agenda. He thanked councillors for supporting the Carol Service and asked councillors to endorse his view regarding the excellent performance of the clerk which had been highlighted at his performance appraisal.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

C11/182. Neighbourhood Plan Update

A report was tabled which updated councillors on the current position. The Mayor led councillors through this and covered the background, governance, the geographical area, the steering group, the coordinator post and the project plan. He asked Councillor Patience who is Chairman of the Engagement Sub Group to give an update on the initial engagement process which was on-going. She reported that over 350 questionnaires had been returned and some further engagement events were planned during January.

RESOLVED: That the update report be received.

C11/183. Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee (8th December 2011) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning Highways and Transport Committee held on 8th December 2011 were agreed as a true record.

The Minutes of the Cemetery Committee (15th December 2011) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Cemetery Committee held on 15th December 2011 were agreed as a true record.

The Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee (15th December 2011) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee held on 15th December 2011 were agreed as a true record.

The Minutes of the Finance (22nd December 2011) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance Committee held on 22nd December 2011 were agreed as a true record.

C11/184. 2011/12 Budget Update, to agree the 2012/13 Budget and to set the 2012/13 Precept.

A budget update for 2011/12 was circulated by the clerk, his covered the period up to 8th December and he reported that there were no areas of concern. The balance brought forward was £126,429.

The clerk explained that each of the Council's committees has approved a recommended budget for 2012/13 together with a recommended precept requirement. He outlined some of the main changes and summarized the total budget which was £138,500. The precept in 2011/12 was £123,403. The 2012/13 proposals amounted to an increase of £15,097 representing a 12.2% increase. The Council was however budgeting for over £16,000 of additional costs which arose from the County Council transferring services to the Town Council, the majority of this increase falling to the Recreation and Amenities Committee. It was reported that the Finance and Policy Committee had discussed reducing the increase in precept by using some of the Council's reserves but the recommendation to Council was to precept for £138,500 in 2012/13.

The Tax Base for Alnwick in 2012/13 is 2811.27. A precept of £138,500 will mean the Town Council element of the Council Tax on a Band D dwelling will be £49.27. In 2011/12 the equivalent figure was £44.68. The increase on a Band D dwelling is therefore £4.59.

RESOLVED: a) To note the 2011/12 budget position, b) To approve the 2012/13 budget and c) to set a precept of £138,500 for 2012/13.

After the precept was agreed the Mayor thanked the committees for the though way in which they had set their budgets. He stated that he felt the overall precept was good value and that services would be improved by having more local responsibility and ownership.

C11/185. Ratten Row Allotments Lease

At the Council meeting in October 2011, the Ratten Row allotments were discussed in the light of the Northumberland Estates not wishing to enter into a lease of more than one year with the Town Council. At that meeting it had been resolved to referred back to the allotments working group to enable Northumberland Estates, the allotment holders and the Town Council to discuss the lease arrangements further.

Northumberland Estates had now indicated that they will offer the council a three year lease. A meeting with allotment holders took place on December 11th and the allotment holder's preference was for the Town Council to continue to manage the allotments and take up the three year lease on offer. Members of the allotment working group felt that the proposed arrangement gave more certainty than the existing arrangement and made investment in the site more justifiable.

RESOLVED: that the Council enters into a three year lease with Northumberland Estates for the Ratten Row allotments.

C11/186. Funding for Alnwick Spring Show

The Alnwick Spring Show requested a grant of £560 for the purchase of tables tiered staging and items linked to the children's sections of the annual show (eg rosettes, floral art material). The Finance and Policy Committee on 22nd December felt that it was more appropriate for this to be dealt with as an event, and as such it could receive support from the Recreation and Amenities Committee Budget. The Recreation and Amenities 2012/13 budget has unallocated funds.

RESOLVED: The Alnwick Spring Show be awarded a grant of £300.

C11/187. Defibrillators in Telephone Boxes

In October 2011, the Council agreed to participate in this scheme and a suitable decommissioned telephone box had been identified by the North East Ambulance Service at Cedar Grove. The NEAS had now suggested a better location would be the telephone box at the Alnwick Castle end of Bailiffgate. Under the BT agreement the buyer (the Town Council) is expected to buy the telephone box for £1 inclusive of VAT. The telephone box and equipment has a total value of £1800 and it was proposed that this be insured by the Town Council.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council agrees with the Bailiffgate location and progresses the scheme.

C11/188 To Discuss the Funding for Arts Venues in Alnwick compared to other parts of the County.

This item was placed on the agenda following the Finance and Policy Committee meeting on 22nd December 2011 as councillors were concerned that Northumberland County Council are still not giving equal support to arts venues across the county and wished for this to be discussed at this council meeting. They were concerned about the funding levels given to Alnwick Playhouse, Bailiffgate Museum and the Northumberland Theatre Company, particularly as Arts Council funding had been cut whilst other venues had received an increase. The Mayor outlined that he had raised this at the North Area

Committee and felt that any move to harmonise arrangements might be slow. Councillor Castle outlined that this was not a new issue but the County Council were showing little signs of resolving the matter. Councillors felt there was a fairness and equity issue which must be addressed.

RESOLVED: To write to the Leader of the Northumberland County Council, outlining the town council's strong feelings and urging that the current disparity in county council support for arts venues across the county be ended over a period of time.

C11/189. Correspondence

The clerk reported that the following correspondence has been received since the last meeting:

Date	Detail	Action if any
17 th Dec	Northumbria Army Cadet Force – Parading through Alnwick for Armed Forces Day 2012	Noted
19 th Dec	NCC – Advice & Guidance on Snow Squads	To discussed with insurer
7 th Jan	NCC – information about housing need survey	Noted
10 th Jan	Susan Bell – Drinking at the Summerseats	To write to Northumbria Police
10 th Jan	Peter Brown –Unsatisfactory condition of Greenwell Road toilets	To raise with Northumberland County Council

RESOLVED: That the correspondence received be noted and the Council agrees to the actions listed.

C11/190. Financial Matters – Payments.

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

Inland Revenue	£1245.54	Tax and NI (Nov £101.61 and Dec £1143.93)
Wages Account	£5000	Transfer to wages account
B Grisdale	£66	Banner Stand for Neighbourhood Plan (paid 21 st Dec)
Northumbrian Water	£107.42	Alnwick Cemetery (paid 4 th Jan)
Northumbrian Water	£535.43	Robertson's Fountain and Allotments
Information Commissioner's Office	£35	Data Protection Act 1998 registration renewal
M Weatheritt	£255.17	Repairs to Chimney at Cemetery Lodge
Chubb	£141.40	Contract for equipment maintenance
Scottish Fuels	£956.34	Gasoil
Azure printing	£607.20	Neighbourhood plan questionnaire
Azure printing	£17.82	Allotment meeting flyer
Argyle Planning Consultancy Ltd	£870	Neighbourhood Plan consultancy work - Nov & Dec
Davidson and Son	£2400	Works for Christmas lights – annual grant.
TOTAL	£12,237.32	

The following payments were paid by direct debit and were reported for information		
BT	£89.58	Phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge Paid 28 th December

In addition, grant payments totaling £9,000 to 18 organisations, were agreed by the Finance & Policy Committee on 22nd December 2011 and needed authorisation.

RESOLVED: a) To approve and authorise the payments amounting to £12,237.92 and to note the direct debit payments of £89.58 and b) authorise the payments of grants to outside bodies totalling £9,000, as agreed by the Finance & Policy Committee on 22nd December 2011.

C11/191. Councillor Issues

a) Councillor K Moore – car parking.

Councillor Moore raised the continuing problems of parking in the market place and the changes soon to be introduced by Northumberland County Council regarding civil parking enforcement. The clerk had received information that civil parking enforcement was being transfer to the county council on April 12th and plans would be released before then about the levels of enforcement. The impact this would have on the market place, if any, was unknown.

RESOLVED: To seek clarification from Northumberland County Council on the impact of the parking changes.

C11/192. Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Blakey requested that the review of the Council's constitution was due shortly; she was informed this would be included on the next agenda.

Councillor Gray raised the problem highlighted in a recent letter to the Northumberland Gazette, namely dog fouling between the Playhouse and War Memorial. It was agreed to take this up with Northumberland County Council.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm