



ALNWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Cemetery Lodge Office
South Road
Alnwick
Northumberland NE66 2PH

Your Ref:

Our Ref: FC/1 /2014

Dear Councillor

Clerk to Council

Bill Batey

Tel: 01665 714922

Mobile: 07971 810267

4th January 2014

The next meeting of the Council will be held on **Thursday 16th January 2014** in the Council Chambers, Clayport Street Alnwick at **7.00pm**. You are hereby requested to attend.

Yours faithfully

Bill Batey

Clerk to Town Council

Agenda

1. Questions from the Public
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Request for a Dispensation
5. Minutes of the Last meeting – 12th December 2013
6. Matters Arising
7. Mayor's Report
8. Review of Reserves Policy
9. Investigation of a replacement mechanism for the former Alnwick Community Development Trust
10. 2013/14 budget update, to agree the 2014/15 budget and to set the 2014/15 Precept.
11. Review of Constitution
12. Councillor Vacancy
13. Minutes of the Committees
 - a) Planning Committee Meeting (12th December 2013)
14. Correspondence
15. Feedback Local Multi-agency Crime Prevention Initiative Meeting
16. Financial Matters – Payments
17. Any Other Urgent Business

Declarations of Interest

To receive disclosures of pecuniary interests from Councillors, on matters to be considered at the meeting. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest. If you become aware, during the course of the meeting, of an interest that has not been disclosed under this item you must immediately disclose it.

Agenda item 4**Request for a Dispensation**

Guidance from Northumberland County Council relating to declarations of interest when setting the budget and precept, is that all councillors should apply in writing for a dispensation to the Council to enable them to be involved and vote. At the start of the meeting the clerk will circulate a form and ask councillors present to sign it (this covers the application in writing). Under this agenda item we will acknowledge the receipt of the requests for dispensations and will then vote on granting the dispensation.

Recommendation: That the Council grants a dispensation to all Councillors to enable them to participate in full decisions relating to the setting of the 2014/15 Budget and Precept.

Agenda item 7**Mayor's Report**

An update on the mayor's diary can be obtained at <http://alnwickmayor.wordpress.com/>

Agenda item 8**Review of Reserves Policy**

The current Council policy (set in March 2012) requires the Council to keep a minimum reserve of 4 months of gross expenditure and a maximum reserve of 8 months. For 2013/14 this meant a reserve of between £65,000 and £130,000. At 31st March 2013 the level of reserves was £120,000. At the 31st March 2014 it is anticipated the level of reserve will remain similar. The gross expenditure in the 2014/15 budget is likely to increase (based upon the budget recommendation in agenda item 10, the reserve requirement in 2014/15 would be £70,700 minimum to £141,400 maximum). In addition, having agreed to take on the ownership of Swansfield Park play area from the County Council, the Council will shortly receive an endowment of close to £100,000 for future maintenance. This endowment is ring fenced for the play area and cannot be used for other purposes. This agenda item gives councillors an opportunity to review the current reserves policy.

Recommendation: The reserves policy be reviewed.

Agenda item 9**Investigation of a replacement mechanism for the former Community Development Trust**

The Town Council strategy day on 7th December considered the issues and gaps that arise in the town following the demise of the former Alnwick Community Development Trust. This session was facilitated by Social Enterprise Northumberland (SEN). Their recommendations (which have been circulated with the agenda) suggest some next steps. As the initial work involved town council representatives, it is suggested that a sub group from the town council and potentially other interested parties is formed to develop the plan and the vision.

Recommendation: A sub group from the Council be appointed to investigate and progress the next steps. It is suggested that the Council representatives be the Mayor and 5 councillors.

Agenda item 10

2013/14 budget update, to agree the 2014/15 budget and to set the 2014/15 Precept.

A budget update for 2012/13 will be given at the meeting by the clerk.

Recommendation: a) To note the 2013/14 budget position

Each of the Council's committees has approved a recommended budget for 2014/15, these are as follows:

Committee	Net Expenditure
Cemetery	£26,500
Recreation & Amenities	£53,205
Finance & Policy	£80,000 (but see below)
TOTAL	£159,705

Some of the main changes to the proposed committee budgets for 2014/15 are as follows:

Cemetery Committee	
Progression of the Cemetery Extension	£8,000
Additional Building repairs and Grounds works	£2,500
Additional fee income	£3,500

Recreation & Amenities Committee	
Additional costs of planting	£1,300
Additional budget for projects	£3,200

Finance & Policy Committee	
Additional administrative support	£1,960
Additional grants budget	£500

On 5 December 2013, the Finance and Policy Committee agreed that their 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.

Following initial consideration of these two issues and whilst no final decisions have yet been taken it is suggested that budget provision of £5,000 is made for the Town Council to have a town centre presence and that budget provision of £10,000 is made to investigate and progress the provision of a replacement mechanism to address gaps left by the former Alnwick Community Development Trust. Both these issues will be the subject of further detailed reports to the Council.

In addition a recent meeting of Committee Chairs indicated a desire to make budget provision of an additional £3,000 towards play area replacements (to enable better improvements to be made at Glovers Green and Cawledge View) and for a £3,000 contribution to public convenience improvements, in partnership with the County Council.

As the Town Council will receive an endowment for the future maintenance of Swansfield Park Play area which has been transferred from Northumberland County Council, the estimated expenditure of £1,250 in 2014/15 should be funded from this endowment.

Taking the above matters into account, the overall recommended budget for 2014/15 is therefore £179,455

Recommendation: b) To approve the 2014/15 budget of £179,455

Having agreed the budget the Council must then set the precept. At the Finance and Policy Committee on 5th December 2013, the Committee considered the extent to which reserves should be used to support the 2014/15 budget. The Committee has recommended reserves are not used to reduce the precept in 2014/15. In 2013/14, provision was made for a Council Tax Benefit Support Grant to be given to Town and Parish Council's through Northumberland County Council. This amounted to £14,186 for Alnwick and assisted in reducing the precept by this amount. The County Council has indicated that they are not in a position to operate a similar scheme for 2014/15, despite the government indicating that they expect this to happen.

In the light of the above two issues, it is recommended that the 2014/15 precept be £179,455

A precept of £179,455 would mean a Band D dwelling Town Council element of £71.88 per annum, an increase of £19.32 per annum. In 2013/14 the Band D Council Tax breakdown in Alnwick was as follows

	£
NCC	1372.50
Police	86.61
Alnwick TC	52.56
	<u>TOTAL £1,511.67</u>

In 2013/14, the Alnwick Town Council precept was 3.47% of the total bill.

Recommendation: c) to set a precept of £179,455 for 2014/15.

Agenda item 11

Review of the Constitution

Under the Council's constitution it is a requirement to have an annual review. It is therefore proposed to have a working group meeting, to which all councillors are invited, to undertake the review and report back to the March or April Council meeting. The proposed date for the working group will be given at the meeting.

Agenda item 12

Councillor Vacancy

At the last Council meeting it was reported that there was a vacancy in the Castle Ward following the resignation of Bruce Hewison. Notice of the Vacancy has been displayed and at the meeting the clerk will be able to update councillors as to whether the vacancy will be filled by an election or if the council is free to fill the vacancy by co-option. In the event that co-option is possible, the process will need to be agreed. Councillor Hewison was a member of the Planning Highways and Transport Committee, Finance and Policy Committee and Recreation and Amenities Committee. He was also a reserve council representative on the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group (LMAPS). It is recommended that the committee places and outside body appointment are left vacant at present.

Agenda item 14

Correspondence

The following correspondence has been received since the last meeting:

Date	Detail	Action if any
17 Dec	NALC enews	Available from the clerk on request
18 Dec	CAN news	Available from the clerk on request
23 Dec	NCC – Parish Liaison meeting 9 th Jan	Mayor to attend
23 Dec	NCC – working with Town & Parish Councils	Letter circulated with agenda, feedback form to be completed

Recommendation: That the correspondence received be considered.

Agenda item 16

Financial Matters –Payments

The following invoices have been received for payment (as at 4th January); this list will be updated at the meeting, if necessary.

HMRC	£1608.04	Tax/NI payment for Dec
Wages Account	£4000	
Argyle Planning Consultancy Ltd	£2610	Neighbourhood Plan Consultancy
Northumbrian Water	£324.24	Ratten Row allotments (paid 24/12)
Northumbrian Water	£44.13	Robertson's fountain (paid 30/12)
Frank Flannigan	£768	4 skips - allotments (paid 24/12)
Viking	£105.50	Stationary
CBS World	£5.09	Diaries
John Gray Ltd	£134.40	Repairs to Hedge cutter
Playsafety Ltd	£573.60	Annual inspections
Chubb	£152.64	Annual Contract
Northumberland County Council	£276.36	Removal of Seats
Northumberland County Council	£2355.81	Stage/Stall erection Music Festival
Information Commissioner	£35	Data Protection Registration
Ian Fernyhough	£102	Renewal of Neighbourhood Plan website domain & hosting
TOTAL	£13,094.81	

In addition, within the 2013/14 budget the Alnwick Music Festival was awarded support of £3,750. It was agreed that the Town Council would meet the costs of the stall and stage erection and the balance would be paid to the Festival. The net cost of the stall and stage was £1963.18; this leaves a payment due to the Alnwick Music Festival of £1786.82.

The following payments are now paid by direct debit and are reported for information		
BT	£85.51	phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge paid 26 th Dec 13

Recommendations: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £14,881.63 and to note the direct debit payments of £85.51.