

# **Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014 in the Council Chamber, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7pm.**

**Present:** Cllrs B Grisdale (Mayor), P Allcroft, S Allcroft, P Broom, D Farrar, G Castle, C Goodfellow, M Harrington, P Holt, J Humphries, G Mavin, S Mavin, K Moore, S Patience, R Roberts, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

**In attendance:** Councillor H Cairns (NCC), W Batey, Chief Officer & Town Clerk and J Pibworth, Administration Assistant.

## **C13/121. Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from the public.

## **C13/122. Apologies:** None.

## **C13/123. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Symmonds declared a pecuniary interest in the payment for the Alnwick Music Festival.

## **C12/124. Request for a Dispensation**

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 2014/2015. 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.**

## **C13/125. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (12<sup>th</sup> December 2013)**

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Council meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013 were agreed as a true record.**

These were duly signed by the Mayor.

## **C13/126. Matters Arising not on the Agenda**

Referring to Minute C13/120, Councillor Castle informed the Council that the appointments of School Crossing Patrols had still not been confirmed, although it was hoped these would be finalised soon. The appointment procedure had not gone as smoothly as had been hoped.

## **C13/127. Mayor's Report**

The agenda papers included a link to the Mayor's diary

**RESOLVED: That the report be received.**

## **C13/128. Review of Reserves Policy**

The current Council policy (which was set in March 2012) required 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 the level of reserves was £120,000. At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 it was anticipated the level of

reserve would remain similar. In addition, having agreed to take on the ownership of Swansfield Park play area from the County Council, the Council would shortly receive an endowment of close to £100,000 for future maintenance. This endowment was ring fenced for the play area and could not be used for other purposes. Councillors were satisfied with the current policy.

**RESOLVED: That the reserves policy be continued as approved.**

**C13/129. Investigation of a replacement mechanism for the former Community Development Trust**

At the Town Council strategy day on 7<sup>th</sup> December consideration was given to the issues and gaps that have arisen in the town following the demise of the former Alnwick Community Development Trust. This session was facilitated by Social Enterprise Northumberland (SEN). The next step recommendations made by the facilitators had been circulated with the agenda. Councillors felt it important to explore options fully including visiting other locations and models, they also felt that such opportunities should be available to all councillors

**RESOLVED: An opportunity be given for all Councillors to gather further information before the end of March and report back to the Council and then a sub-group be appointed to investigate and progress the next steps.**

**C13/130. 2013/14 budget update, to agree the 2014/15 budget and to set the 2014/15 Precept.**

A budget update for 2013/14 as at 31<sup>st</sup> December was given by the clerk. This showed expenditure was £116,869 and income received was £178,618. The current balance was £192,359 but this would reduce over the next 4 months to about £130,000. County Councillor Cairns asked about insurance costs and the possibility of the proposed cycle track being included in the policy, the clerk outlined that this may be difficult given that the Council will not be running the facility, although the Recreation and Amenities Committee would be looking at the scheme, at their next meeting

**RESOLVED: To note the 2013/14 budget position**

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

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Net Expenditure</b>
Cemetery	£26,500
Recreation & Amenities	£53,205
Finance & Policy	£80,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£159,705</b>

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

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

<b>Recreation &amp; Amenities Committee</b>	
Additional costs of planting	£1,300
Additional budget for projects	£3,200

<b>Finance &amp; Policy Committee</b>	
Additional administrative support	£1,960
Additional grants budget	£500

On 5 December 2013, the Finance and Policy Committee had 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.

It was agreed that budget provision of £5,000 be made for the Town Council to have a town centre presence and that budget provision of £10,000 be 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 would 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 would be receiving an endowment for the future maintenance of Swansfield Park Play area which has been transferred from Northumberland County Council, the clerk suggested that 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 was therefore £179,455.

**RESOLVED: To approve the 2014/15 budget of £179,455.**

At the Finance and Policy Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the Committee considered the extent to which reserves should be used to support the 2014/15 budget. The Committee recommended that reserves were not used to reduce the precept in 2014/15. In addition, 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. Councillor Symmonds outlined the main issues that the proposed budget would cover and proposed the 2014/15 precept be £179,455. He outlined that this would mean a Band D dwelling Town Council element of £71.88 per annum, an increase of £19.32 per annum.

**RESOLVED: To set a precept of £179,455 for 2014/15.**

#### **C13/131. 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 are invited, to undertake the review and report back to the March or April Council meeting. The date for the working group was given as Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 7pm.

**RESOLVED: That a working group of the full Council be formed to review the constitution and meet on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 7pm.**

#### **C13/132. 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 had now been displayed and as no electors had requested the vacancy be filled by election, the Council could now fill the vacancy by co-option. Councillors were happy to proceed with a similar process to

that which had been used before, namely that interested individuals submit in writing why they would like to become a councillor. The clerk suggested a timetable which would enable a decision to be made at the next Council meeting. It was also agreed to leave the positions occupied by Councillor Hewison vacant until the next meeting.

**RESOLVED: To seek applications from prospective councillors with a view to making a decision at the next Council meeting.**

**C13/133. Minutes of Committees**

a) Planning, Highways and Transport Committee (12<sup>th</sup> December 2013)

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013 were agreed as a true record.**

**C13/134. Correspondence**

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Action if any</b>
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 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Noted
23 Dec	NCC – working with Town & Parish Councils	Letter circulated with agenda, feedback form to be completed Content noted
8 Jan	RAF Boulmer – invitation for 9 councillors to visit the station on 27 <sup>th</sup> March	Responses from Cllrs P Allcroft, S Allcroft, M Harrington, D Farrar, G Mavin, S Mavin, A Symmonds, P Holt, (R Roberts may be able to attend), Names to be submitted.
7 Jan	Lagny Sur Marne – request to join in commemoration of Great War	Referred to Recreation and Amenities Committee to consider
7 Jan	Groundwork – Alnwick Bike Track – meeting at Alnwick Cricket Club 28 <sup>th</sup> Jan at 6pm	Councillors invited to attend
10 Jan	Time Kommune – request for discussion on twining links	Referred to Recreation and Amenities Committee to consider
	Mid & SE Magistrates Court – Request for sponsorship of Junior Mock Trial event 2014	Councillors agreed to pay £100.
14 Jan	NCC – Temporary Road Closure – U3142 Lower Barresdale -23 <sup>rd</sup> January	Noted
Dec/Jan	Various letters of thanks for grants	Noted

**RESOLVED: That the correspondence be noted and actions taken as listed.**

**C13/135. Feedback Local Multi-agency Crime Prevention Initiative Meeting**

Councillor Moore informed the council that a meeting had been held last week and outlined that publicity was to be given to a scheme for volunteers using speed guns in areas of the town; in answer to questions he confirmed that a speeding motorist could receive a warning letter but not an endorsement.

**C13/136. Financial Matters – Payments.**

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

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
AFS Country Store	£18.28	Poison
Frank Flannigan	£192	1 skip - allotments
Davidson & Son	£2400	Christmas Lights expenditure
Greenlay	£34.03	Machine Parts
James McLean	£17.30	Tools
Azure	£38.10	Neighbourhood Plan flyer
WR Batey	£59.73	Supplies £34.05, Postage £10.40, Stationary 315.28
Scottish Fuels	£716.10	Diesel Fuel
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£16,570.35</b>	

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 erection was £1963.18; this left a payment due to the Alnwick Music Festival of £1786.82. A grant of £350 had also been agreed to RENUIT at the Finance and Policy Committee.

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 <sup>th</sup> Dec 13
npower	£217.33	Electricity – Town Hall Clock and Robertson's Fountain

**RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £18,707.17 and to note the direct debit payments of £302.84.**

**C13/137. Any Other Urgent Business**

Councillor Broom and Councillor S Allcroft highlighted the amount of dog fouling occurring and in particular the problem on Fisher Lane. It was suggested the matter be reported to the County Council through the on-line facility.

Councillor Broom suggested that an organised clean-up day of the town would be a good idea especially if this could be organised before Easter. It was agreed to discuss this further. Councillor Holt highlighted the condition of Bailiffgate which could benefit from a clean-up.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.