

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on  
Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
in St James Church Rooms, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.15pm**

- Present** Cllrs W Griddale (Chair), S Allcroft, P Allcroft, G Castle, P Edge, D Farrar, M Harrington, P Holt, J Humphries, G Mavin, S Mavin, K Moore, S Patience, R Roberts, A Shilton, M Swinbank and A Symmonds
- In attendance** W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer, and H Cairns (County Councillor).
- C15/161 Questions from the public**  
None.
- C15/162 Apologies for absence**  
Cllrs. P Broom.
- C15/163 Declarations of Interest**  
Councillor Castle declared a non-pecuniary interest in county council matters.  
The Assistant to the Town Clerk declared a pecuniary interest in Item 13 (C15/173).
- C15/164 Presentation by Mr Paul Leo (PL), Head of Strategic Estates Programme, NCC**  
Paul gave an update on NCC's estates programme within Alnwick.  
Town centre strategy - to have a hub for all NCC's front office services.  
Alnwick Library – the building has been put up for sale by the owners (not NCC).  
Northumberland Hall – 1<sup>st</sup> phase work currently being undertaken.  
The Playhouse – not owned by NCC but looking to purchase to bring services into one central location. As Arts Funding was being reduced NCC were trying to look for a sustainable future for the arts services in Northumberland. NCC have also commissioned architect to look at options for the Playhouse. He confirmed that the Playhouse was a good location for the library services and could mean extended hours for all services. (Library / Playhouse). Cost of refurbishment of the Playhouse was around £750k - £1m.  
Dave Campbell (DC), Town Champion for Alnwick explained that the role was to act as a conduit between residents, NCC and other parties. He would attend Town Council meetings when needed and also attended Town Team meetings.  
Northumberland Hall – general refurbishment has started and will include new acoustic designed windows, new kitchen and full redecoration. He advised that it would not just be used as a venue for weddings and would be available to everyone who had used it previously.  
Councillor questions / comments:  
Councillor Roberts asked if the money for the Playhouse included any work on the auditorium. PL advised that it didn't, but that could be looked at.  
Councillor Roberts asked if there was anything the Town Council could do to support NCC. PL advised that there was not really anything needed of the Town Council. He advised that it was key to keep the Playhouse facility and that they and NCC should work together. He also advised that Alnwick was a good town to work with.

Councillor Moore asked if anything was being done about the roof of the Northumberland Hall. DC advised that no work was planned and asked if there was a problem with the roof. Councillor Moore advised that he had been told that the roof was leaking. The Town Clerk added that ½ the roof had been replaced by Alnwick District Council in about 2003/04. Councillor Symonds confirmed that there had definitely been a leak.

Councillor Symmonds welcomed the fact that everyone who had previously used Northumberland Hall could continue to do so. He asked what would happen if the Tourist Information Centre moved to the Playhouse. DC advised that the shops could be used as business units. He also explained that PL had asked him to collate information about the toilets. He added that he welcomed suggestions from the Town Council.

Councillor Holt felt that the Playhouse was a super facility that was underutilised and that the facilities could be extended. PL explained that Hexham Theatre and Hexham Hall were being linked together and that the same could be done in Alnwick with the Playhouse and Northumberland Hall.

Councillor Cairns said she welcomed the commitment of the Labour administration to Alnwick. She added that the Playhouse needed dedicated car parking. PL felt this was a good point to make.

Councillor Patience explained that car parking spaces had been lost in the Market Place during the building works and that there was no signage anywhere about parking during the works. DC said he would follow this up with NCC and report back. Councillor Patience added that it was dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians.

Councillor Swinbank explained that the scaffolding was impinging on the markets and asked if the compound could be made smaller. DC advised that the work was due for completion by then end of June. Councillor Swinbank explained that the Taste of the North Festival was taking place in June. DC asked for the dates to be emailed to him.

Councillor G Mavin advised that six parking tickets had been issued that day in the Market Place and suggested that the Market Place could perhaps be used only for delivery parking during the work. He also advised that there was a conflict with markets on a Saturday and asked if NCC had talked to Local Living. DC advised that he didn't know but would find out.

Councillor Holt asked what would happen to any profits from the Playhouse. PL advised that there were a number of options including NCC buying the Playhouse building and leasing to other people or split ownership with NCC leasing parts of the building. He added that the building needed to be flexible to increase revenue.

Councillor Edge asked if the Playhouse Trust were committed to housing the Library. PL advised that they were.

#### **C15/165 Minutes of the Last meeting**

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 11th February 2016 were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2016 were agreed as a true record and duly signed.**

#### **C15/166 Matters Arising**

**C15/153 HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY** Councillor Swinbank suggested that Denwick Parish Council could be asked to contribute to the cost of the housing survey as it covered both parishes.

**C15/167 Mayor's Report**

The Mayor's Report is on his blog [www.alnwickmayor.wordpress.com](http://www.alnwickmayor.wordpress.com). He highlighted the Alnwick Town Council constitution meeting which had taken place on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

**C15/168 Minutes of Committees**

Minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee Meeting (11<sup>th</sup> February 2016) were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways & Transport Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016 were agreed as a true record.**

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting (18<sup>th</sup> February 2016) were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016 were agreed as a true record.**

**C15/169 Risk Management Register**

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that this was undertaken on an annual basis and was an audit requirement.

He advised that the document had been reviewed and amended at the Finance & Policy meeting in February and had been recommended for approval at this Full Council Meeting. The updated Risk Management document included updates on the 2015/16 Proposals which were highlighted in red and the suggested New Proposals for 2016/17 were highlighted in green.

**RESOLVED: To approve the Risk Management register.**

**C15/170 Asset Register**

The Town Clerk advised that the Asset Register had been updated and reviewed at the Finance & Policy meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup> 2016. This year a number of changes had been made he also advised that some seats had been removed and new bins, play equipment, computer equipment and the Magna Carta facsimile added. He added that the insurance values used were from 2015/16 and that an approximate 3% increase was likely in June 2016.

**RESOLVED: To approve the updated Asset Register.**

**C15/171 Proposed Council Investment**

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that the Town Council had an approved Investment Policy and that a suggestion from the Finance & Policy Committee was that £16k be invested in Rathbone Ethical Bonds.

Councillor Farrar reminded councillors that the Investment Policy had been signed off in December 2015. He explained that from the work the investment group had undertaken the best option currently for investment was Rathbone Ethical Bond R Acc. Others funds offered slightly higher returns but with higher risk. He added that Rathbone did not invest in certain items such as tobacco. He added that this was a fairly safe investment, although it could fall or rise.

Councillor Moore asked how long the bond would be for. Councillor Farrar advised that it was indefinite but that money could be taken out at any time.

Councillor Moore asked what level of return the Town Council could expect. Councillor Farrar advised that currently it was returning about 6%.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the risk would be lessened if the money was invested in more than one pot. Councillor Farrar said he recommended just one pot.

Councillor S Allcroft added that the working group had looked at several funds and they had felt this was the safest and gave instant access to the money.

Councillor Harrington thanked Councillor Farrar for his work and asked who would look after the investments when Councillor Farrar leaves. He felt that as this was an investment it could be risky. Councillor P Allcroft advised that everything has a risk element but that this was considered a stable investment.

Councillor Harrington added that he was concerned as it was tax payer's money being invested. Councillor Symmonds advised that he had been part of the investment working group and was confident that a lot of work had been put into researching the right investment for the Town Council. He added that the amount was a very small amount of the Town Council's resources that were being used.

Councillor Harrington felt that this was a very specialised field. Councillor Farrar advised that as a civil servant he has no specialised skill and that other councillors were capable of continuing to look after the investment.

**RESOLVED: To invest £16k with Rathbone Ethical Bond R Acc.**

**C15/172 New External Audit Arrangement for 2017/18**

The Town Clerk advised that a new government scheme was being put into place in 2017/18 and that the Town Council needed to decide by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 whether to go along with national arrangements or make their own arrangements. He also advised that other councils he had spoken to had confirmed that they were keen to stay in a national scheme.

Councillor Swinbank asked how long the Town Council had to sign up to the scheme. The Town Clerk advised that it was an annual process.

**RESOLVED: To accept the recommendation that the Town Council go with the new national audit scheme in 2017/18.**

**C15/173 Assistant to the Town Clerk - Hours of Work**

The Clerk reported that the Assistant to the Clerk works for the Council for up to 15 hours a week (2 days). She also works for other employers on the other days of the working week. From the beginning of April 2016 she will have the capacity to do a further day's work per week for the Town Council (potentially therefore 3 days). This would assist the administrative efficiency and operation of the council, and would for example enable more timely minutes to be prepared, more website updates etc. An additional day per week, with on costs would cost in the region of £4500. This could be accommodated within existing budgets.

**RESOLVED: The Assistant to the Clerk be employed for 3 days per week from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.**

**C15/174 Correspondence**

The following correspondence had been received since the last meeting:

Date	Detail	Action if any
25th Feb	NCC – Residents Festival Leaflets (12th and 13th March)	Available from the clerk on request
26th Feb	NCC – Changes to Active Northumberland structure	Circulated to councillors

29th Feb	Friends of Voerde/Alnwick – request for civic welcome for May 2016 visit	Agreed to do welcome on evening of May 18th
3rd March	Alnwick resident – request for litterbin near to Robert Adam Court	Clerk to consider

**RESOLVED: To accept the correspondence.**

**C15/175 Feedback from NCC North Area Committee (Councillor Symmonds)**

Councillor Symmonds gave feedback from the NCC North Area Committee meetings. He advised councillors that NCC Officers attend the meetings and that North Area issues were covered along with countywide issues such as Broadband.

He explained that the public are able to ask questions which is good. It is a good positive meeting and would recommend councillors to attend.

He added that it also deals with petitions from people. He suggested that in the future, the agenda be sent to all councillors so they can attend if necessary. He also confirmed that it would be a good platform for councillor issues such as Councillor Holt's issue with the overgrown footpath which was raised in the earlier Planning meeting. Councillor Patience thought it would be useful if all councillors got the link to agendas / minutes.

Councillor G Mavin advised that he had attended a meeting which was excellent but advised that all questions were dealt with at the beginning of the meeting.

Councillor Castle explained that as not all members of all NCC committees attended the North Area meetings questions may not be answered on the night but that a reply would be sent to you.

Councillor Cairns added that the meeting was very useful as the public get to listen to NCC Officers which is really valuable.

**C15/176 Financial Matters – Payments**

The following invoices had been received/payments were due:

PAYEE	TOTAL	VAT	DETAIL
HMRC	£2,673.89	£0.00	Tax/NI
Wages Account	£6,000.00	£0.00	
NFU Mutual	£2,101.84	£0.00	Clerk's pension annual contribution 2015/16
Standard Life	£436.79	£0.00	Assistant to the Clerk's annual pension contribution 2015/16
BT	£104.83	£12.47	Broadband Fenkle Street (Paid 25/2)
Local Living (NE) Ltd	£612.50	£0.00	Rent for Willowburn Jan - March 2016
Northumberland Estates	£75.00	£0.00	Annual Rent Ratten Row allotments
Wicksteed Playgrounds	£309.88	£51.64	2 new swing seats (Allerburn Lea)
Robson & Cowan	£108.60	£17.80	Lawnmower service
Playdale Playgrounds	£81.25	£13.54	Play equipment parts
C Bowden	£450.00	£0.00	Cemetery wall pointing

Northumbrian Water	£108.00	£0.00	Allotment survey fee St Georges's
W R Batey	£74.45	£3.40	Stamps (£54) and Nuts and Bolts
J Pibworth	£71.99	£12.00	Printer Cartridge
Max Recycle	£135.00	£22.50	Trade Waste - Duty of Care (2016/17)
Diamond Business Systems	£59.40	£9.90	Photocopier Service Charge
Ian Fernyhough	£15.00	£0	Neighbourhood Plan Domain Name
Argyle Planning Consultancy	£1,740.00	£0	Neighbourhood Plan Consultancy
J Pibworth	£9.99	£1.67	Printer lead
P H Hamner	£30.00	£0	Owl box
Weasdale Nurseries	£112.00	£18.75	Cemetery Tree
James McLean	£431.74	£71.96	Marine Ply (cemetery), fixings
Groundwork UK	£49.22	£0	Repayment of unused grant
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£15,791.37</b>	<b>£235.63</b>	

In addition the Finance & Policy Committee had agreed to pay a grant of £100 to the Alnwick Junior Triathlon Club.

The following payments are now paid by direct debit and were reported for information:		
BT	£50.38	Phone Bills Cemetery paid 9 <sup>th</sup> and 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb
BT	£32.14	Fenkle Street Phone Bill (paid 22 <sup>th</sup> Feb)

**RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £15,891.37, to note the direct debit payments of £82.52.**

#### **C15/177 Any Other Urgent Business**

Councillor Roberts advised that trees were being planted in the Community Orchard to commemorate Mike McPhun on Sunday March 13<sup>th</sup>.

Councillor Holt asked if the Town Clean-Up was still planned for March 20<sup>th</sup>. The Town Clerk advised that it was.

Following the recent decisions of Councillors Farrar and Roberts to resign from the Council with effect from the end of this meeting, Councillor Grisdale thanked them both for all their hard work. He added that they had both really made a difference to the Town Council in the time they had been councillors. He wished them all the best for the future and hoped their move to Sheffield goes well.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm