



**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on
Thursday 7th December 2017
at the St James's Church Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors B Grisdale (Chair), P Broom, G Mavin, S Patience, M Swinbank, A Symmonds, G Watson and L Wearn.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer.

FP 17/26 Apologies
Councillors Allcroft, Castle and Humphries.

FP 17/27 Declarations of Interest
There were a number of non-pecuniary interests in Item 5a) and 5b) Grant Applications: Councillors Patience and Swinbank (Bullfield Community Orchard); Councillor Grisdale, Mavin and Patience (The Playhouse); Councillor Grisdale (Baillifgate Museum) and The Town Clerk (Alnwick and District Sports Council and NTC).
A dispensation was requested and granted for Councillor Grisdale and Mavin to take part in the discussion regarding the Playhouse.

FP 17/28 Matters Arising not on the agenda
None.

FP 17/29 Budget update 2017/18
The Town Clerk went through the circulated budget as at 5th December 2017. He highlighted the following lines of expenditure:
RENT / ROOM BOOKINGS – slightly lower than budget.
INSURANCE – slightly down on budget.
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – over budget due to some additional printing of the 'made' version of the Neighbourhood Plan and the referendum.
ELECTIONS – no budget used as no elections held in May 2017.
N PLAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROPOSALS/OTHER COUNCIL PRIORITIES – not much spend to date (£9,280.05) so will carry forward to 2018/19.
CCTV - £20,846.36 expenditure. Budget figure included £5k for maintenance and on-going repairs.
INCOME – insurance payment due from Mechanics Institute which will be paid next week.
The end of year figure will be slightly below budget.
Councillor Mavin asked if there was an alternative plan if the Town Council had to move out the Willowburn unit. The Town Clerk advised that they had moved to another unit at Willowburn and that Local Living held the licence but there was no long term plan.

RESOLVED: To accept the budget update.

FP 17/30 2017/18 Grants a) Alnwick Playhouse; b) Other applications
The Town Clerk reminded councillors that there was £16k in the budget for grants. He also advised that there was an underspend of £2k on Elections should they wish to allocate more grants.

RESOLVED: To increase the grant budget by £2k to £18k.

- a) Alnwick Playhouse – The Town Clerk issued an update regarding the Alnwick Playhouse grant 2017/18. He took councillors through the document reminding them of the resolution made in January 2017 to give The Playhouse financial support subject to demonstrating need. He reported that he had met with representatives of the Playhouse to discuss the current situation.

He advised that as the deal regarding the sale of the Playhouse had not been finalised the delay has had a negative impact on the Playhouse's financial position.

Grant applications to trusts had been put on hold until the deal had been completed. This had also led to uncertainty with bookings as it is not known when the building will be closed for repair work.

They are currently £5k below budget and the situation may worsen.

Councillor Symmonds asked if Councillor Patience, as the Town Council's Board member, she had been fully involved in decision making. Councillor Patience advised that she had attended two meetings and felt fully involved. She felt it would be useful if the Playhouse Manager attended some of the Executive Board meetings.

Councillor Mavin said that the Playhouse is a real asset to the town. He asked if NCC are contributing to the upgrade. Councillor Patience advised that they were but £800k was needed to be raised by the Playhouse for auditorium repairs, a new kitchen, a new lift and bar works.

The Town Clerk explained that there were 2 options for the grant payments:

- a) £2.5k be paid now and £2.5k paid in March 2018 and that this be regarded as year 1 of the previously agreed 4-year funding;
- b) £2.5k be paid now and £2.5k paid in March 2018 and, given the delays, defer the start of year 1 of the 4-year funding package to 2018/19 and for it to run until 2021/22.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the Town Council should support the Playhouse and that a deferred package be offered with £2.5k now and £2.5k in March 2018 (option b) above).

RESOLVED: To recommend to Full Council that Alnwick Playhouse be paid £2,500 now and £2,500 in March 2018.

Councillor Watson proposed that option b) be resolved.

Councillor Broom asked if all grant recipients could be asked to display Alnwick Town Council support on publicity.

Councillor Wearn felt it was important that the Town Council received feedback including how the need was identified and would they do anything differently.

- b) Other applications - The Town Clerk advised that £1k of the grants budget had already been used, that £5k had just been allocated to The Playhouse so there was £12k left in the grants budget.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk issued copies of the list of grant applications. She explained that, excluding The Playhouse, 26 applications had been received including 12 from organisations applying for the first time. She advised the grant criteria for new councillors and those which were and weren't covered under Section 137.

Councillors reviewed each application and awarded the following grants:

Bailiffgate Museum £1,600
Northumbrian CAB – Alnwick Office £1,600
HospiceCare North Northumberland £1,600
Alnwick & District Sports Council £300
Alnwick Medical Group £250
Alnwick Dolphins £250
Mind and Soul £250
Alnwick Health Walks £250
Lionheart Radio & Media CIC £700
Bailiffgate Singers £250
Alnwick Music Society £250
MyLife Productions £250
Northumberland Touring Theatre Company £250
Alnwick Stroke Club £250
Alnwick Arthritis Care £250
Community@NE66 £600
Aspire to Believe £300
STARS Learning Ltd £300
MIND (Tyneside and Northumberland) £400
Mighty Oaks £400
Abbeyfield House £250 (subject to clarification on use)
Friends of the Bullfield Community Orchard £250
Alnwick Garden Trust £250
Northumberland Credit Union £400
Lionhearts (Blyth Star Enterprises Limited) £250
Western Front Association £300

RESOLVED: To recommend to Full Council that the grants listed above are paid.

FP 17/31 Update on a) CCTV, b) bus shelters and c) Alnwick bus station

The Project & Funding Officer updated as follows:

a) CCTV

Sharon Wilmore Greaves hopes to attend the next meeting in February. Police are very satisfied with the CCTV system and practice and familiarity with operation has resulted in it becoming very effective. Many arrests have been made using our CCTV – most not possible without our CCTV – but not widely reported as Police cannot reveal any information until they have gone through due legal process. Several individuals have appeared before courts in the last few weeks in relation to No Limits and Chocolate Spa.

The window breakages at the Post Office and Rook Matthews Sayer were captured on CCTV but as the premises are in the far distance, zooming in is pixelated so not of evidential quality in this case. The CCTV system was never intended to cover every sq. m of the town as it was centred on known hotspots.

Coverage will be reviewed with the Police, in February 2018 after 6 months operation, with a view to changes / additions.

Chapel Lane NCC temporary camera installed two weeks ago with no incidents so far.

b) Bus Shelters

Shelter at Greensfield and St. Paul's are made of polycarbonate.

Wagonway Road/Barter Books shelter – quotes have been received from Queensbury for the same shelters as those recently installed at Greensfield Court and St. Paul's:

- (a) toughened glass - **£4,591.00** + VAT (similar to NCC's Taylor Drive)
- (b) polycarbonate - **£4,898.00** + VAT

Earliest Queensbury could install would be early in February 2018. NCC would be happy with a shelter at the site, to be situated on the pavement to the north of the bus stop itself, i.e. to the left as you look at it from the road.

RESOLVED: To purchase and install a polycarbonate bus shelter at the bus stop outside Barter Books.

c) Alnwick Bus Station

Meeting took place yesterday, December 6th and Arriva and Morrison proposed a package of improvements valued between £17k to £20k:

1. Repairs to roof
2. Recladding the ceiling, including new LED lighting, bright and vandal proof. To be on until after last bus has departed.
3. Remove all steel barriers
4. Jet washing walls and floor
5. New landscaping (in conjunction with Alnwick in Bloom)
6. Repainting throughout
7. Installation of Mosquito system
8. More effective maintenance and cleaning

Longer term there is the possibility of a coffee shop but this needs to be researched and proven with a decision for Alnwick expected around February 2018.

They also discussed the possibility of a glass enclosure at the bus station which could be locked after the last bus has left and may make the bus station more secure.

CCTV images from the bus station – it was suggested that the images from Arriva's CCTV system be sent to the Police. There are a few issues to overcome before this can happen including firewall issues, Data Protection Act and under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

They discussed possibly having a taxi rank at bus station which would mean that there would be a presence there all the time which could help improve security.

It was reported that one of the bus companies may not use the bus station as it has to pay Departure Charges amounting to £15,000 a year which they do not feel is worthwhile.

Arriva and Morrison's would welcome ATC support in terms of new signage, etc. at the bus station.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates.

FP 17/32

Initial consideration of draft 2018/19 Budget

Staffing Budget 2018/19

The Mayor issued his staffing report.

Following staff appraisals financial implications are brought to this committee as recommendations for approval and, if approved, for inclusion into the 2018/19 budget.. Three issues were brought to this committee.

The Project & Funding Officer left the meeting.

a) Project & Funding Officer

This was a new three day a week post appointed in November 2015 and was initially for a three year period and was then to be subject to review. The 2017/18 budget including the funding for the full financial year, this post should therefore be reviewed

for the 2018/19 budget.

Over the three year period the post holder has been involved in and led on a number of council priorities including the CCTV system, new bus shelters, the community orchard, play area improvements, the housing needs study, fingerpost refurbishment scheme, Neighbourhood Plan and Town Team activity and funding advice.

In April 2016, it was agreed to add an additional day a week for the post (making 4 in total), to undertake work on economic development. This has been subject to annual review. This work has included the town council's approach to the Willowburn Industrial Estate and the establishment of organisation of the Alnwick Business Forum.

RESOLVED: To make the Project & Funding Officer permanent (3 days a week) and the additional day a week for economic development activity is continued and be reviewed annually.

The Project & Finding Officer re-joined the meeting and the Assistant to the Town Clerk left the meeting.

b) Assistant to the Town Clerk

Over the last year the Assistant to the Town Clerk has taken on additional responsibilities, this has included undertaking some project work, such as the Davison Blue Plaque, War Memorial works and assuming greater responsibility for civic events and supporting the Mayor. Councillors are also aware of the significant work done by the post holder in relation to Alnwick Cemetery. A salary review would add an additional £700 per annum including on-costs to the budget.

RESOLVED: To regrade the post of Assistant to the Town Clerk from Scale 4 (Spinal Column Point (SCP) 18-21) to Scale 5 (SCP 22 -25) and that with effect from 1st April 2018 the post holder is placed on SCP point 23 currently £21,268 (pro rata).

The Assistant to the Town Clerk re-joined the meeting.

c) Succession Planning

During his appraisal, the Chief Officer and Town Clerk announced his intention to retire in March 2019. For contractual reasons this will mean that he would need to give suitable notice by the end of September 2018 from which time the recruitment process could begin.

This presents financial implications within next year's budget and there will need to be a budget allocated for the job advertisement. To assist the smooth transfer, Councillors were also asked to consider having a 1 month overlap period for the outgoing and incoming potholders during March 2019, if so this would also need budgetary provision.

RESOLVED: To make a budget provision of £5,000 in 2018/19 to cover the recruitment process and an overlap arrangement of up to 1 month.

Other Budget headings 2018/19

The Town Clerk took councillors through the rest of the budget 2018/19 column on the budget sheet and the following budget lines were increased:

Administration – increased to £63,450 to reflect the staffing costs agreed.

Grants – increased to £25,000.

RESOLVED: To accept the amended Finance & Policy budget for 2018/19 amounting to £155,950 and recommend to Full Council.

FP17/33**Initial consideration of draft 2018/19 Precept**

The Town Clerk issued the precept sheet with recommended budgets from Cemetery and Recreation & Amenities along with the precept comparisons and Band D analysis. The Town Clerk took councillors through the information circulated showing a comparison between the Alnwick Town Council precept and other Town & Parish Councils. This showed that based upon the 2017/18 figures, Alnwick's precept of £100.39 for a Band D dwelling was below the average figure of £106.92.

Based on the total draft budget for the Council for 2018/19 of £287,175 and using the Tax Base figure of 2727.39, this would give a Band D equivalent Town Council element of £105.29. This equates to a £4.90 a year / 9.4p a week increase and is below the average 2017/18 Northumberland town council precept of £106.92.

Councillor Watson felt that the parish precept should not be increased more than the rate of inflation.

The Town Clerk suggested that reserves were not used to fund the budget for 2018/19 as the reserves policy requires a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 8 months expenditure to be kept in reserves which based on the 2017/18 figures would need a reserve of between £110k and £220k. Reserves, after allocated expenditure are £142k.

Councillor Symmonds proposed not using the reserves to offset the precept as this would leave the reserves below the required level.

RESOLVED: To recommend to the Full Council that the precept for 2018/19 should be £287,175 (with any further amendments being reported to the Council Meeting) and that Council reserves should not be used to reduce the precept.

FP17/34**Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm