

Alnwick Town Team

Minutes of the meeting of Alnwick Town Team meeting held on **Wednesday 7th February at 5.30pm** at The Pavilion, Alnwick Garden.

Present: Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Chairman), Mark Brassell (MB) (Alnwick Garden), Carlo Biagioni (CB) (Chamber of Trade), David Taylor (Chamber of Trade), David Lovie (DL) (Civic Society), Elizabeth Jones (EJ) and Eileen Blakey (EB) (Alnwick in Bloom), Tim Kirton (TK) (Alnwick District Council)

The Chairman welcomed Eileen Blakey, who will be replacing Elizabeth Jones as Chair of Alnwick in Bloom in March and will therefore be attending Town Team meetings from then. The Chairman also wished Elizabeth well and thanked her for her work over the years; it is very evident around the town what EJ has achieved in her AiB role.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr. Gordon Castle (GC), Philip Angier (Local Living),

2. Minutes of the last meeting, held Wednesday 10th January 2018

Approved as a true and correct record.

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Parking

This item had been placed on the agenda at the request of CB, who welcomed the NCC response given at their Parking Feedback meeting held the previous week; the suggestions presented by NCC had essentially been what the Chamber of Trade and Alnwick Town Council have been looking for and clearly NCC are listening to the community's views. CB verbally summarised the Chamber of Trade's "wants" for parking. It was agreed CB would provide these to TK for circulating.

TK circulated paper copies of the Town Council's own Alnwick Parking Action Plan and invited comments on this. The Chairman clarified that the Town Council's resolution does not say that parking charges should be re-imposed but does say this could be considered as an option.

MB said that the biggest problem for Alnwick's visitor experience is the bottleneck around the Greenwell Road/Bondgate Without/Hotspur Tower junction; cars go into Greenwell Lane looking for a parking space and having been unable to find one, they then cannot easily turn around and exit Greenwell Lane. (There is a "No Right Turn" at this point so vehicles cannot go directly into Bondgate Within looking for parking there). There is a need to stop vehicles going into Greenwell Road when the car parks there are full. There would be considerable technical difficulties in providing accurate counters for "smart" signs to the car parks.

5. Willowburn Industrial Estate – Planning Appeal

TK reported that Northern Commercial and Harris and Sheldon had lodged a formal appeal with the Secretary of State against the refusal by NCC to grant permission for housing on Willowburn Industrial Estate. There will be a public inquiry held in Alnwick, probably in the summer.

Although the appeal will essentially be by Northern Commercial and Harris and Sheldon against NCC as the Planning Authority, the sole grounds for refusal last July had been that Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Policy E3 expressly forbids the development of housing on industrial land. NCC

Planning Authority's decision to refuse had been made when the Neighbourhood Plan had not been formally "Made", however it has been "Made" since then.

Although the appellants are appealing against NCC Planning's decision, their case is essentially a challenge against the Neighbourhood Plan produced by ATC so the Town Council is considering applying for Rule 6 Status in order that it may lodge the most robust possible defence of its Neighbourhood Plan at the Public Inquiry.

All those who objected to the application for housing last year are invited to write to the Planning Inspectorate reiterating their objection, this includes the Chamber of Trade, Local Living and many of the businesses at Willowburn Industrial Estate. CB said that the CoT would be writing, underlining their objection.

Action: CB

DT said that he had suggested last year that an application should be submitted for planning permission to build small, starter industrial units on the Northern Commercial site and said this should still be done.

Further reports will be made to the Town Team as this progresses.

6. Proposed Business Improvement District (BID)

CB said that although Morpeth Town Team and Chamber of Trade are funding the proposed Morpeth BID, after further consideration he did not feel that an Alnwick BID should be pursued; CB said that a lot of businesses within Alnwick are no longer paying business rates and the likely yield from Alnwick Town Centre would only be about £20,000 which would not be sufficient to employ full-time staff to deliver BID projects, so he felt a BID is not feasible.

DL said that having been involved in a BID proposal elsewhere a huge amount of labour is involved in putting together a BID submission.

It was agreed that the Town Team should maintain its' stance of keeping an interest in the BID concept but not progressing it at this time.

7. Updates

a) Local Living/Alnwick Markets

PA had submitted apologies for this meeting but had circulated a written report, which had been received by all members. There were no comments on this.

b) Civic Society

DL reported back on the Christmas Shop Window competition which had been won by the Elemental Tattoo Parlour on Fenkle Street. The three runners-up were The Farm Bakery, the Salvation Army and Proudlock's.

A Heritage Interpretation Training Workshop will be held from 10am-12noon at Bailiffgate Museum on Monday 5th March. Anyone wishing to attend should register on the Bailiffgate Museum website; <http://www.bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk/>

Copies of the "Heritage Heroes" book will be made available at the Alnwick Tourism Day on March 13th.

A visit to the Alnwick Castle Archives is being arranged for after March; this will be limited to a small number of visitors.

Guided walks will be held on Northumberland Day, Sunday 27th May 2018. Guided walks will also be offered in an auction in aid of Alnwick Hospice. DT asked DL to notify Alnwick Tourism Association of the Guided Walks in order that they be put on the ATA website.

Action: DL

Bailiffgate Museum will be holding a major new exhibition titled, "Batteries Not Included" opening on Friday 16th March and running all summer of 2018, featuring all types of toys, games and pastimes across the years. In connection with this Town Team members (and everyone else) are invited to go onto the Bailiffgate Museum website to identify their favourite toy and the decade in which it was popular.

DT suggested that this could be tied up with a toy fair in Northumberland Hall.

c) Chamber of Trade

CB showed a number of photographs of various items of repair and improvement works needed in Alnwick, particularly to the planters in Bondgate Within and asked if the ATC Handyman could tackle some of these issues. It was pointed out that the planters and most other items mentioned are the responsibility of NCC, not ATC.

DT said that the employment of the Handyman had been stimulated to some degree by the Town Team and that the Town Team should therefore have an influence on his workload.

The Chairman explained that the ATC Handyman is only a half time post; the rest of his time he is the assistant at the cemetery and his substantial workload as Handyman has to be fitted in in between duties at the cemetery including grave preparation as and when required. The chair also explained that the handyman had a wide range of duties related to ATC issues such as health and safety, weekly inspection of playground furniture, dealing with fly tipping at our allotments, maintenance of the finger posts and maintenance of street furniture owned by ATC. This left little time for dealing with issues which in any case were the responsibility of NCC.

The Chairman said that the Town Council is not going to agree to the Town Team determining the Handyman's work however the Chairman invited suggestions from the Town Team for agreed areas of priority, for which requests could be considered within the Handyman's time restrictions.

Action: All

DT stated that somebody at ATC should take ownership of an arrangement to draw-up a working party for one-off projects. TK suggested in response that DT should provide a list of such projects to the Town Team in order that a Working Party, drawn from the membership of the Chamber of Trade and representatives from all other Town Team member organisations, could be identified and arranged by the Town Team.

Action: DT to provide this list of projects to the Town Team

CB said that NCC's repairs and maintenance in the Town Centre were "not good enough". EB said that both ATC and NCC have a major number of financial restrictions which severely limit their abilities to undertake such works. The Chairman suggested that CB and the Chamber of Trade should raise the issue at the next meeting of the County Council's North Area meeting, which takes place in Alnwick at 3pm on 22nd February.

Action: CB

CB reported that thirty business people have signed up for the Chamber of Trade's Food and Drink leaflet which was scheduled to go to print w/c 12th February. Leaflets will be placed within the Tourist Information Centre, holiday cottages and Alnwick Tourism Association members' businesses as well as being provided at the Alnwick Tourism Day event.

The Chamber of Trade had been asked by TK for their input in relation to the forms ATC was completing to apply for retention of "Coach Friendly" status for the town. DT advised that some years previously a businessman from North Shields who had wanted to bring tourists to Alnwick from cruise ships docking on the Tyne had been critical of the town's pavements, etc. for visitors. TK advised that the forms for Coach Friendly status did not refer to the condition of pavements but rather are concerned with signage guiding coach drivers to coach parks, signage to the town centre and its facilities for disembarked passengers, refreshment and toilet facilities, facilities for groups and coach parties, disabled provision and any coach washing/cleaning facilities. MB has already provided input for the form and other input from all is welcomed.

DT asked whether it might be possible for the Town Crier to greet arriving coaches as had been the case some years previously; it was thought that this has been arranged by the Freemen and it was suggested that they be contacted about this.

d) County Council

No report owing to GC being away.

e) Alnwick in Bloom

AiB is producing a manual for when AiB members are not available.

There will be four competitions this year, including Northumberland in Bloom in April and July.

New tree planters are in hand, utilising the redundant lower tiers of the two-tier planters.

The annual shop window competition will be held at the end of June.

The Chairman commended the "outstanding" documentation produced by AiB for judging.

f) The Alnwick Garden (Mark Brassell)

The Alnwick Garden is holding its post-Christmas Review Meeting tomorrow.

The Alnwick Garden is planning its biggest, fullest calendar for years. Halloween is now being planned. The summer brochure will be distributed at Alnwick Tourism Day on March 13th, the winter brochure will be issued later in the year.

The Alnwick Garden has donated £750 each to the Salvation Army and the Alnwick Sleepout.

MB emphasised the need for Alnwick to be greatly involved in The Great Exhibition of the North; this is a programme of events to reveal how the North of England's great art, culture, design and innovation has shaped all our lives and is creating the future. This is centred on Newcastle-Gateshead but also reaching out into other parts of the North East, including designated "Alnwick Days" on **August 11th and 12th**, which will coincide with the end of the Alnwick Music Festival. MB is liaising with Wendy Scott of NCC and Magnetic North-East to provide traditional Northumberland music, dance and culture. Grant money is available from NCC to provide activities in the Market Square; there could be great synergy from this and PA's involvement will be pivotal. However, time is short and there is an urgent need to get started; realistically there is only one week to arrange this.

Action: TK to request NCC to not remove the stage at the end of the Music Festival but to retain this until the following Monday.

AS advised that NCC were going to start to charge for road closures; this will be £500 but in the first year will be discounted to £250. Noted.

(g) Town Council (Tim Kirton)

New fingerposts at Pottergate and outside Boots the Opticians on Bondgate Within, and the map lectern outside Your Move all installed. Two additional fingers have been ordered, one for each of the two new posts.

The police have advised of further successes in tackling criminal and antisocial activity through the use of the new town CCTV system, including against a series of co-ordinated thefts from and of Transit vans.

The next Business Networking Forum will be held on Tuesday February 20th 2018, with assembly from 5.30pm for a 6pm start proper. The guest speakers will be the co-owner and Finance Director of Arcinova, Paul Ryan, talking about how he started the firm in February 2016 and has since achieved rapid growth resulting in the creation of a considerable number of new, highly-skilled, highly paid jobs, and Sir John Hall the developer behind the Metro Centre and the former Chairman of Newcastle United FC, who will be speaking on his life as an entrepreneur, how he developed the Metro Centre and how Alnwick can tackle the effects of the Metro Centre and other out of town shopping on its own retail centre.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

None

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 7th March 2017 at 5.30pm at The Pavilion, Alnwick Garden.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm