

Alnwick Town Team

Minutes of the meeting of Alnwick Town Team held at **5.30pm on June 13th** at The Pavilion, Alnwick Garden.

Present: Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Chairman), Mark Brassell (The Alnwick Garden), David Taylor (Chamber of Trade), Philip Angier (Local Living), David Lovie (Civic Society), Tim Kirton (Alnwick Town Council), Cllr. Lynda Wearn (Alnwick Town Council)

Councillor Symmonds reported that he had been re-elected as Mayor of Alnwick for a third term and as such would continue as Chairman of the Town Team in accordance with the Town Team's constitution.

The Chairman welcomed Alnwick Town Councillor Lynda Wearn who was attending and observing in her capacity as Deputy Mayor of Alnwick and who would Chair future Town Team meetings if the Mayor was unavailable.

1. Apologies for absence

Carlo Biagioni (Chamber of Trade), Cllr. Gordon Castle (NCC), Eileen Blakey (EB) (Alnwick in Bloom).

2. Minutes of the last meeting, held Wednesday May 2nd 2018 Approved as a true and correct record.

3. Matters Arising

MB expressed concern over the contents of the previous minutes around The Alnwick Garden and the town's Coach Friendly Status. MB clarified that The Garden had got involved at the request of the Town Council with the express intention of benefitting the town. This was done in good faith. The Chairman said there was no suggestion that The Alnwick Garden had ulterior motives and was appreciative for their support. DT suggested that Coach Friendly Status should be promoted in coaching magazines; TK said that this could be done but, in any case, the Confederation of Passenger Transport had already publicised Alnwick's new Coach Friendly Status through the coaching trade press and their own publications.

As suggested at the last TT meeting, copies of the Heritage Heroes book had been supplied by DL to the Town Council, who had sent them to Alnwick's twin towns and Canadian contacts.

Town Crier: TK reported that Clive Mattison had advised that the Freeman pledge to provide a £500 donation towards the purchase of a town criers gown, this will be provided on appointment of a suitable town crier. They will also consider making a similar donation next year and possibly yearly following. The meeting expressed gratitude for this generous pledge by the Freeman.

TK also advised that he was still awaiting a response from Salisbury Town Council who had, at the beginning of this year, appointed a Town Crier, as to how much their budget for their new Crier is, to give us a guide. Emails and phone messages have not been responded to but TK will chase.

4. Town Centre Working Group meeting and sub-group meetings, May – feedback and actions

At the May meeting the geographical boundary of the Sub Group work had been set as the Neighbourhood Plan's Town Centre boundary plus the buildings affronting Bondgate Without between the town and the War Memorial

The NCC policy on dealing with empty business premises and the policies on dealing with rate relief for charities is to be ascertained.

The CoT have approached the local MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan for help with business rate relief and empty business units in the town centre. She has promised to look into policy options and support from central Government.

A list of all available premises with their details could be compiled together on a website and the CoT have suggested a 'trade fair' organised to promote the town centre when information is gathered. CoT believe there are around 200 business premises in the town centre with 22 currently unoccupied.

LW and DT will look at the idea of investigating a wheelchair / buggy / impaired mobility friendly route around Alnwick to be available as a guide

The Working Group will to look at idea of a survey of pavements surfaces to highlight the problem areas

5. Town Centre empty property survey – progress

TK and DT had received around 16 returned vacant property forms. A number of empty buildings were already being occupied; Cussins had expanded into the shop next door, the owner of the three shop units under Robert Adam Court had advised TK that he expected all of them to be occupied by early August, the former Post Office/Council Chamber at 1 Clayport was going to be converted into two dwelling units and the former Conservative office in Greenwell Road and one of the banks/building societies in Bondgate Without were under offer for occupation. Conversely some town centre shops currently occupied were probably going to be vacated later in the year. The agents involved in TK's response had all said that they welcomed the offer to assist in getting the units filled and were keen to work together. The results of the survey will be analysed and further discussions will be held with agents on working together to market void units.

6. Market Place Whole Year Strategy for events and activities – survey

PA and TK had attended the Council's Town Centre Working Group Market Place Sub-Group, which is charged with delivering the year-round Strategy for the Market Place identified within the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. PA said there are essentially two market places, one for the summer and one for the winter months and it is essential to deliver the different types of market appropriate to each of these.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to look at best practice from other market towns and PA will meet with Greg Gavin of NCC Markets.

Action: PA It is also essential that we engage with the retailers and the cafes in the Market Place and on its fringes and as an essential first step a survey will be undertaken of all these businesses, within the next few weeks. This is being arranged by TK.

Action TK

7. Bollards repainting, June 9th; feedback

The Chairman thanked all those organisations and individuals who took part in this event on June 9th which had been so effective (20 volunteers attended) that the planned painting sessions for the remaining nights of that week were not needed. It was likely that a second event would be held on Tuesday 19th. DT said we need to keep in mind that there may be other similar works which can be undertaken by the community.

8. Funding request from Alnwick Chamber of Trade for half the costs of a second run of the Good Food Guide leaflet – result of emailed vote

TK reported that the result of the email vote amongst Town Team members was to approve funding and this had been advised to the Chamber of Trade. DT expressed the thanks of the Chamber of Trade for this funding award and asked whether bunting might be funded in future from the same Portas fund. DT was asked to provide information on this for the next Town Team meeting.

9. Updates

a) Alnwick Garden – Mark Brassell

MB circulated a leaflet on The Alnwick Garden's new "Grow Into Work" programme; This is a work experience project to support local young people who are not in employment, education or training. A pilot of 10 people will be enrolled in July to August 2018 and if it works The Garden will look to expand the project and seek partnerships with employers in the town – MB stressed this is not a recruitment method just for The Alnwick Garden. MB said he had already spoken to the police and to Gallery Youth but invited nominations from TT members for potential candidates for the programme. The Chairman wished the project well.

Action: All

MB reported that the "Giants" had arrived at The Garden for the summer theme. The carriage of the giants along the A1 had been recorded by the BBC for a television programme celebrating the importance of the road.

MB reported that the Duchess of Northumberland had received a call from the Japanese Ambassador regarding the planting of a cherry tree to celebrate Anglo-Japanese relations; the Ambassador has now offered 100 cherry trees and The Alnwick Garden has suggested planting these in Alnwick, possibly to create a Cherry Blossom Trail. Plans for planting need to be quickly made and although the trees and the planting will be paid for by the Japanese private sector, their maintenance must be guaranteed to be funded. The trees will take 20 years to grow. MB said that although he is handling this project it is not an Alnwick Garden initiative. The Mayor of Alnwick will receive a formal approach about this from MB.

DT suggested that the Alnwick Garden Town Trust could get involved in this as they planted the cherry trees in the Column Field.

DL said that Alnwick in Bloom should be involved with this; the Chairman thought that there was probably scope for more cherry trees in the Column Field and suggested that the main entrances and exits to Alnwick would be appropriate locations for others.

MB reported that The Alnwick Garden is about to put together the Winter edition of its Friends of The Alnwick Garden magazine and this needs to include text about a recommended route through the town so suggestions from the TT were welcomed. It could also include something about the Tourism Association. DL suggested including text about the quality buildings in Alnwick for people to enjoy. **The deadline for text is July 10th.**

Action:

All MB said that The Alnwick Garden is enthused by the Borderlands proposals coming forward from the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal partners (the five County/City Councils in the Borders of England and Scotland) and suggests that Alnwick town cannot afford not to be a part of it. The Northern Powerhouse is behind this on the English side of the Border. The Garden, Chamber of Trade and Loving Alnwick have arranged for an event at The Garden on June 26th to which Alnwick organisations are being invited and at which attendees will be requested to suggest possible projects for inclusion in the Borderlands Growth Deal; it was stressed that such projects must be **capital** and need to think “big”. Suggestions for projects so far include making Alnwick a “green” centre for recycling, development of the Aln Valley Railway and looking at “satellite” education facilities for a university. Project proposals need to be fed back to the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal partnership by September.

b) Alnwick in Bloom - Eileen Blakey

No report as Eileen had given apologies for absence owing to illness but the Chairman reported that there had been another visit by the Northumberland in Bloom judges and the Alnwick in Bloom committee are busy with their work.

c) Chamber of Trade – David Taylor

The CityScape map dispensers are away being repaired and repainted and will be restored to their town locations shortly. A new batch of the Tourist Information Centre maps is being printed now.

The planning application for the new retail development on the edge of town close to Arcinova had been approved by NCC as the planning authority. The Alnwick butcher Mark Turnbull is taking one of the units there. The Chamber of Trade had objected to the planning application and had attended the planning meeting. PA said it was difficult to object when Alnwick Town Council supported the development.

The new town planters are being delivered and should be *in situ* shortly.

d) Civic Society – David Lovie

DL expressed gratitude for the Civic Award received for the Heritage Heroes book. The final grant report for the Heritage Lottery Fund is being prepared. The volunteer time contribution has been assessed as being worth around £30,000. Distribution of the book continues; one copy has been placed at the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the book had

featured in the magazine "Context for Conservation". DL expressed thanks to the Town Council for dispatching copies to contacts in Alnwick's twin towns and in Canada.

A Northumberland Day Heritage Walk around the town centre had been well supported. Another Heritage Walk was being offered as a prize in the Hospice Raffle.

e) Local Living/Alnwick Markets – Philip Angier

Local Living is focussing on the Taste of the North Event on 23rd and 24th June. This will include a presence by the Help for Heroes Harley-Davidsons at lunchtime. Plans are also being made for the Food Festival in the autumn. There has been a good run of weather recently attracting a lot of visitors to the markets but converting footfall into spend is significantly down.

f) County Council – Cllr. Gordon Castle

No report as GC had given apologies for absence.

g) Town Council – Tim Kirton

TK reported on the NCC-led "Masterplanning" meeting held on May 23rd: This Masterplanning group, from hereon to be known as the Alnwick Forum, was looking at NCC and ATC held property in Alnwick and its possible future uses. Numerous investigations into these buildings are under way. At the last meeting it was agreed to hold a first public consultation event on this in September 2018, probably at Northumberland Hall.

The second application by Northern Commercial and Harris & Sheldon for housing at Willowburn Industrial Estate has been refused by the Planning Authority. The public inquiry for the appeal against refusal of the first housing application was scheduled to start on July 17th and the Council has appointed appropriate legal and other expert representatives to present its case and submitted the appropriate case documents to the Planning Inspectorate.

Work has still not started on the Bus Station improvements as the new lease between landlords Morrison's and tenants Arriva has still not been signed.

10. Any other urgent business

LW reported that for the Great Exhibition of the North events on Sunday August 12th it was planned to leave up the Market Place stalls from the Music Festival and local food would be provided.

The Chairman reported that this year's Mayor's Charity is the Alnwick Hospice.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

5.30pm on Wednesday July 4th 2018, at Alnwick Garden Pavilion

The meeting ended at 7.15pm