

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on
Thursday 14th February 2019
in St James Church Rooms, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.15pm**

Present Cllrs A Symmonds, S Allcroft, P Broom, B Grisdale, M Harrington, J Humphries, G Mavin, S Patience, M Swinbank, A Waton, G Watson and L Wood-Mitchell.

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

C18/159 Questions from the public
None.

C18/160 Apologies for absence
Councillors Aynsley, Castle, Edge, Moore, Wearn and Westendarp.

C18/161 Declarations of Interest
Councillors Patience and Grisdale declared a pecuniary interest in Item 16. Correspondence (Bike Track).

C18/162 Presentation from NEED Ltd
Charlotte Wilson (CW), Finance Director from North East Equality & Diversity Ltd (NEED) updated the Council on their activities. She reminded councillors that the charity had started in 2002 becoming NEED in 2010 with the aim of offering accessible cost effective transport.

At present they had 27 minibuses around Northumberland including Alnwick which operated a number of contracts including a home to school contract for Northumberland County Council, a dialysis and patient transport for North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) and secure transport for the NHS. They also operate 3 dial a ride schemes, two in Alnwick and one in Morpeth.

In addition, they offer a 'need a car scheme' where pool cars are used to take people to medical appointments and social events. The scheme had proved very popular with 650 people using it in 2018 and 72 in January 2019.

Charlotte reported that NEED are buying the old fire station in South Road with some of the building being used by NEED and some accommodating 6 incubator units inside and 2 outside. There will also be a meeting room on site with white board and wi-fi which people can make use of.

Charlotte then told councillors about the training that NEED offer. They offer Minibus Drivers (MiDAS) courses; Emergency First Aid; Drivers Certificate in Professional Competence (CPC); Managing Violence and Aggression and Basic Risk Assessment. In addition NEED are working in a consortium with CP Training from Carlisle to offer the additional training that all minibus drivers now need in Alnwick.

Councillor questions:

Councillor Grisdale asked if NEED were considering electric vehicles. CW advised that NEED were looking at this but that at present there were not enough charging points around Northumberland especially in rural areas.

Councillor Broom thought that the subsidised transport seemed very cheap. CW explained that there may be more than one customer in the car at any time and that NEED undertake a large number of contracts to cover their costs. She added that NEED only operate Monday to Friday from 9am to 2.30pm and that most of their customers were elderly and living in rural areas.

Councillor Swinbank thought that NEED was doing an excellent job and that the incubator units were a good idea.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell explained that CW was on the Investing in Alnwick group and that she was very supportive of NEED.

C18/163 Minutes of the Last meeting (10th January 2019)

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 10th January 2019 were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2019, with the agreed amendments, were agreed as a true record.

C18/164 Matters Arising

None.

C18/165 Mayor's Report

Councillor Symmonds reported the main events attended since the January meeting:

January 18th - Mayor's Quiz Night – he reported that it had been a good evening with all table taken and had made £603 for HospiceCare North Northumberland.

January 19th he attended the service of thanksgiving for former councillor Ritchie Waddell. He reported that it had been a joyous event.

February 12th – Alnwick Stroke Club – he had attended their 40th birthday celebrations.

February 14th – he and Councillors Castle and Watson, had attended the funeral of Dave Gamlin, 1801 (Alnwick) Air Training Corps. He reported that it had been very well attended and that it was evident that Dave was well thought of.

C18/166 Feedback on County Council matters

The Town Clerk advised that, as Councillors Castle and Moore were unable to attend the Full Council meeting feedback on County Council matters would be emailed out to councillors.

C18/167 Lindisfarne Sports Centre

The Town Clerk explained that Alnwick Town Council have been asked, through the Alnwick Forum, to consider taking over the Lindisfarne Sports Centre. The exact nature of the asset transfer has not yet been discussed. He issued a report containing the details of the information currently available.

The Town Council currently pay business rates on the Cemetery and the Cemetery Chapel, but if they were to take on the Sports Hall this asset would take the Town Council over the relief threshold and result in an additional £3,156 (based on the 2018/19 figure) being payable on the cemetery.

The report also shows that the total estimated works are in the region of £220,000 and even in a good tender price was obtained, probably at least £200,000.

He reported that the current users include Alnwick Town FC Juniors, Alnwick Harriers, Felton FC Juniors, Alnwick CC Juniors. Alnmouth & Lesbury CC, Northumberland Cricket Board, Rock CC, Newcastle United Foundation and Judo. Some of this usage is seasonal, for example cricket clubs often book for 6 weeks of pre-season training.

Daytime usage during the week is very low and reduces further in the summer as many sports are able to play/train outdoors.

Hire rates are £20 per hour for juniors and £35 per hour for seniors. At the weekend all bookings are £35 per hour and a minimum of two hours must be booked. The hire rates have not been changed for at least 5 years

The current usage is estimated to bring in an income of approximately £450 per week over the autumn/winter and approximately half of this over the spring/summer. An average weekly income can therefore be assumed to be approximately £350 (£17,500 per annum).

Other Sports Hall provision in the Town

He reported that other Sports Hall provision exists at Willowburn Sports and Leisure Centre and that evening bookings are popular and are nearly all fully booked. The Hire rate is currently £40 per hour.

Community Sports Hall provision is also now available at the Duchess's Community High School. Hire rates are £35 per hour if 10 sessions are booked, if less it is £35 per hour plus VAT (£42).

The Lindisfarne site also has a school gym which is currently used by Boogie Bounce, men's keep fit, HIIT (High Impact Interval Training) and Alnwick South Primary School. Again usage is very low with only 8 slots of day time use.

Current position and observations

The Town Clerk explained that, following a recent public meeting and a meeting of the Alnwick Forum, the Town Council has been asked to arrange and chair a working group of users to help establish the best way forward. He reminded councillors that in the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, the Lindisfarne Sports Centre is a protected community building. Policy CF1 states that a '*community buildings will be protected and developed as key community facilities and their redevelopment for other uses will be refused unless appropriate alternative provision is made or it can be demonstrated, further to 12 months proactive marketing, that the use is no longer viable.*'

Next Steps

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council has been asked to meet with some of the users to ascertain their potential future use of the Sports Hall and also look for new users. He advised that he had recently visited the Sports Hall with the Chief Executive of Active Northumberland.

Councillor Questions

Councillor Swinbank asked what timescale there was for the user group meeting. The Town Clerk advised that his would be in the next month.

Councillor Waton felt that this was an NCC problem which they were asking the Town Council to undertake the work on. He felt that there were legal issues for the Town Council and that the only way forward was for there to be a joint working group which should be co-ordinated by NCC. He added that it was an appalling building especially in winter and that the site needed to be looked at as a whole.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the User Group would be useful. The Town Clerk advised that the User Group would include NCC and Alnwick's County Councillors.

Councillor Harrington said that the Town Council had a duty to offer a service. He would like to compare the usage with Willowburn Sports Centre. He also felt that NCC should be pushed to keep the sports hall and look after it.

Councillor Symmonds felt the Town Council should fulfil their duty by leading the user groups meeting.

Councillor Watson felt that NCC should be asked if they were prepared to pay the £200k to repair the existing building before the Town Council made a decision.

Councillor Allcroft felt that the Town Council and NCC had a responsibility to the residents.

The Town Clerk advised that the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan listed Lindisfarne Sports Hall as a Public Protected Building. He also advised that some users could make use of other facilities but that this would be more costly for them.

Councillor Symmonds recommended that councillors agreed for the Town Clerk to work with the users of the building, gain their feedback and speak to NCC.

Councillor Swinbank agreed with Councillor Waton that the site should be looked at as a whole. He said the report was useful but felt that the Town Council could not commit to take on the Sports Hall at this stage. He added that NCC could be asked to ask Active Northumberland to manage the Sports Hall.

Councillor Waton felt that the Town Council should not lead the user group as he felt that they would be held responsible if it goes wrong. He needed more information as he did not get copies of the minutes for the Alnwick Forum or other Town Council Working Groups.

Councillor Symmonds advised that this had been a Town Council LTP (Local Transport Plan) priorities for a number of years.

Councillor Broom felt that if the facility was lost it would be lost forever. He asked if potential users knew about the facilities which were available on site.

Councillor Gridale explained that NCC were never going to bulldoze the site as the funding had come from the education budget.

Councillor Humphries thought that the user group could promote new users such as dodgeball and walking football.

Councillor Mavin felt a step by step approach was the best way forward. He also noted that active Northumberland have increased their prices.

RESOLVED: The Town Council to progress the user group discussions.

C18/168 Updates

a) Away Day

The Town Clerk issued a draft agenda and advised that he had tried to include the most common themes that councillors had requested be covered on the day. He explained that other suggestions could be covered as part of the Constitution Review.

Councillor Patience asked if it was felt to be needed that another Away Day be considered.

The Town Clerk explained that he planned to do some preparation work on areas such as Town Council Visions, which would help to speed up some of the areas on the Away Day agenda.

b) Alnwick Forum Consultation Event

The Town Clerk advised that the next Alnwick Forum Consultation event was on March 23rd between 10am and 3pm. He explained that it would include updates on the Lindisfarne School site and Narrowgate. He advised that he would be looking for volunteers to help on the day.

RESOLVED: To note the updates.

C18/169 Feedback from Bill Grimsey's (BG) Alnwick Business Forum Presentation

The Project & Funding Officer reported that the event had been very well received with over 70 people attending. He reported that Bill Grimsey had been very impressed with the town and was amazed that, for town of around 8,000, it had such as extensive retail offer. He was particularly impressed with the physical fabric of the town including the Market Place and felt it was a fantastic environment for events.

He strongly agreed with the pedestrianisation of Narrowgate and was impressed with the three main tourist attractions (Alnwick Castle, Alnwick Garden and Barter Books). He felt this gave Alnwick a very unique combination and should maximise on its medieval heritage to offer an 'experience' for people.

He had warned that the smart-phone will, over the next few years, replace the car in shaping town centres and that all stakeholders need to collaborate to diversify their town centres away from traditional retail. Mr Grimsey also suggested town centres needed to become community hubs offering a unique experience to visitors and residents alike. He highlighted five essentials:

1. A clear 20 year vision and prospectus which complements other town centres
2. Leadership
3. A genuine Community Hub (not a retail hub) partnership of 7 or 8 key players in the town with a commitment to work for the benefit of the town
4. To embrace and adapt to new technology
5. Need measurement

Councillor Symmonds thanked the Project & Funding Officer for his hard work.

Councillor Broom explained that there could be an indoor market in the Towergate building. He added he was not sure that pedestrianisation worked.

Councillor Swinbank advised that he had found the presentation very good and had crystallised ideas. He felt that the picture in the Gazette was not reflective of the people who used the town centre including young people, who need to be more engaged in ideas for the town centre.

Councillor Symmonds thought that more people need to be added to the Town Centre Working Group.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell suggested that someone from Investing in Alnwick, which is community led, be added to the Town Centre Working Group. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Centre Working Group could decide how to take the group forward.

Councillor Humphries suggested asking 5th and 6th formers from DCHS to join the Town Centre Working Group.

The Town Clerk explained that the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan had a section for the Town Centre which included policies and Community Actions.

Councillor Waton felt that any decisions should be left until after the Away Day on March 2nd.

Councillor Mavin reminded councillors that Bill Grimsey had said that anyone on the Town Centre Working Group needed be committed to the town and not focus on their own agenda. Bill Grimsey had suggested setting up a Youth Council. He also gave credit to Councillor Aynsley for suggesting BG's visit and to the Project & Funding Officer for organising the event and inviting other towns to attend.

Councillor Patience thought BG's presentation was good but was obviously limited as he did not have any history of the town. She added that NCC run a Youth Council.

RESOLVED: To defer any further decisions until after the Away Day on March 2nd.

C18/170

NCC Local Plan

The Town Clerk advised that the final phase of public involvement in a Local Plan for the whole of Northumberland started on Wednesday 30th January. Residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups, town & parish councils are able to have their say. There will be a number of public consultation events running in Northumberland including Alnwick which had been on Saturday February 9th at St James's Church Centre.

He advise that the consultation runs until March 13th and that the Project & Funding Officer will draft a response.

RESOLVED: To give delegated authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of Planning, to finalise the Town Council's comments and send to NCC.

C18/171

Update and Recommendation from the Sustainable Transport Working Group

Councillor Swinbank reported that Narrowgate had been one of the Town Council's LTP priorities for a number of years. NCC's Consultation event in November 2018 gave four options for Narrowgate of which pedestrianisation was the preferred option.

Richard Mackenzie, NCC, had been to the Sustainable Transport Working Group to talk through the next steps. He advised that the pedestrianisation would be taken forward as a trial during the summer months. All the businesses on Narrowgate will be visited by NCC to discuss their issues and gather comments. All car park bays will be retained and the trial date will be from May 2019 with the road closed using a planter at each end of the area. The trial will be reviewed at the end of the summer with a view to making it permanent.

Councillor Broom felt that pedestrianisation could be dangerous.

Councillor Waton thought the advantage of a trial was that it could be stopped quickly if it is not working effectively.

RESOLVED: To agree, subject to further consultation by NCC, to support the progression of a trial pedestrianisation scheme in Narrowgate.

C18/172

Mechanics Institute 2018 Draft Accounts

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council was a Corporate Trustee of the Mechanics Institute. He issued the Mechanics Institute Accounts 2018-2019. He reported that income was slightly down but expenditure was also down leaving a surplus of £6k. He took councillors through the proposed works for 2019/20 amounting to £13,750.

RESOLVED: To approve the draft Mechanics Institute accounts for 2018/19 and the 2019/20 budget.

C18/173

Minutes of Committees

Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting (10th January 2019) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 10th January 2019 were agreed as a true record

Minutes of the Cemetery Committee Meeting (17th January 2019) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on 17th January 2019 were agreed as a true record.

Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Meeting (24th January 2019) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on 24th January 2019 were agreed as a true record.

RESOLVED: To suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue beyond 9.30pm.

C18/174

Correspondence

The following correspondence had been received since the last meeting:

Date	Detail	Action
20th Dec	Gallery Youth – request for permission to install 2 shipping containers at Bike Track for storage and bike maintenance workshops. Also request for a portable toilet to be positioned over the summer	Councillors to consider (as leaseholder) (i)
16/1, 24/1	NALC enews	Available from the clerk on request
1st Feb	Invitation to Voedre to mark 40th anniversary of Town Twinning, 17th-21st May 2019	Councillors to consider (ii)
1st Feb	NCC – proposed residents permit parking scheme – Clayport Street	Referred to Planning Committee
7th Feb	Northumberland Estates – Archaeology works starting 11th Feb for Windy Edge Development	To Note
1st Feb	NCC – proposed residents permit parking scheme – Clayport Street	Referred to Planning Committee
12 th Feb	Letter of resignation from Town Clerk (wef 30 th September 2019)	Referred to Finance & Policy Committee

Councillors Gridsale and Patience left the meeting.

- (i) Gallery Youth – the Town Clerk explained that the costs would be met by the project. Councillor Mavin proposed approving subject to the necessary planning permissions being granted.

Councillors Patience re-joined the meeting.

- (ii) Invitation to Voedre to mark 40th anniversary of Town Twinning – the Town Clerk explained that an invitation had been received to attend Voerde from Friday 17th May to Tuesday 21st May 2019. Councillor felt that the visit should be between 16th and 19th May.

RESOLVED: (i) To receive the correspondence; (ii) To approve the request from Gallery Youth; (iii) To agree that two councillors and one officer visit Voerde from Thursday 16th May to Sunday 19th May 2019.

C18/175 Financial Matters**a) Payments**

The following invoices had been received/payments were due:

PAYEE	TOTAL PAYABLE	VAT ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Zurich Municipal	£38.16	£0	Additional insurance Orchard Play Area. (paid 11/1)
Infinite Play	£11,022.00	£1,837.00	Community Orchard play area equipment
Total Flooring	£1,769.00	£294.83	Cemetery Chapel Flooring
Local Living	£232.75	£0	Willowburn unit rent
W R Batey	£61.99	£10.33	Paint for Planters
Amberol Ltd	£211.20	£35.20	Handing Baskets cemetery
J Pibworth	£153.80	£28.58	Plants, Tubs, Compost
Abacus Playgrounds Ltd	£8,140.80	£1,356.80	Wet pour replacement Swansfield Park Play Area
NCC	£420.14	£70.02	Stage for the Big Sing
Weasdale Nurseries Ltd	£362.19	£56.59	Trees
Diamond Business Systems	£24.25	£4.04	Photocopying Dec & Jan
T Kirton	£22.04*	£3.67	Business Forum Refreshments
NCC	£5,690.41	£948.40	Extra toilet clean
TOTAL	£28,148.73	£4,645.46	

* Indicates LGA 1972 s137 Expenditure (Total £22.04).

The following invoices were paid by direct debit & were reported for information:			
BT	£28.61	£4.77	Phone Bills Cemetery (paid 28/1)
BT	£84.60	£14.10	Phone Bill Greenwell Lane (22/1) Note credit of £297.60 given for overcharge in Dec and Jan following office move
NEST	£572.43	£0	Employer pension scheme contributions for Feb. (paid 15/2)
British Gas	£22.50	£0	Gas HomeCare policy
Biffa	£111.48	£18.58	Trade Waste - Cemetery (paid 28/2)
BT	£28.61	£4.77	Phone Bills Cemetery (paid 28/1)

RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £28,148.73 and note the direct debit payments of £876.81.

b) Bank Reconciliation

The Town Clerk issued the bank reconciliation for January 31st 2019. He reported that the cash book expenditure and bank balances had been balanced. He reported that there were 8 unpresented cheques amounting to £3,677.91.

He also issued the Income & Expenditure Account as at 31st January 2019. He explained that income and expenditure were both up on the previous year and that this was mainly due to the Alnwick Bike Track project.

RESOLVED: To approve the bank reconciliation as at 31st January 2019.

C18/176 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Swinbank that a meeting had taken place with Bob Hodgson (BH), NCC Local Services, to discuss the Town Council's suggested changes to the footpath gritting priorities. BH was quite receptive and said he would work out the costs involved including an additional gritting vehicle.

The meeting closed at 9.44pm.