

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on
Tuesday 4th December 2012
in the Committee Room, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7.25pm.**

Present: Cllrs Castle (Chairman), K Gray, B Gridsale, S Patience, R Roberts, A Symmonds, J Thompson and R Waddell.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk.

FP 12/13. Apologies: Cllrs S Allcroft, B Hewison and S Walton.

FP 12/14. Declaration of Interests

The following pecuniary interests were declared in relation to the grant applications listed below because the councillors/officer held positions of responsibility in the organisations:

- Alnwick Town FC– Councillor Castle
- Alnwick Boxing Club – Councillor Castle
- Friends of the Bullfield Community Orchard - Councillors Roberts, Gridsale & Patience
- Alnwick CAB – Councillor A Symmonds
- Alnwick Young Peoples Association – Councillors Roberts
- Alnwick Playhouse Trust – Councillor Roberts
- Bailiffgate Museum – Councillor Gridsale
- Hospice Care North Northumberland – Councillor Gridsale
- Choysez – Councillor Patience
- Northumberland Touring Theatre Company –W R Batey
- Alnwick Sporting Club – W. R. Batey
- Alnwick & District Sports Council – W. R Batey

A pecuniary interest was declared in the grant application from Alnwick Young Peoples Association by Councillors Patience and Gridsale due to Councillor Patience employment. A pecuniary interest was declared in the agenda item concerning the review of staffing by the clerk, W. R. Batey.

FP 12/15. Review of 2012/13 Budget position

The clerk circulated the committee budget as at the 2nd December 2012. This was examined line by line and showed that expenditure was £38,430 against a budget of £66,500. Some underspends were likely so the committee decided to use these underspends and increase the budget available for new grant applications to £8,000. With this adjustment, the final out turn for 2012/13 was estimated to be £66,362, marginally below the budget of £66,500.

RESOLVED: That the budget update be received and the budget for grants be increased to £8,000.

FP 12/16. Consideration of Grant Applications 2012/13

The Clerk reported that a total of 23 applications had been received. These had been reviewed against the grant criteria by the chairman and the clerk and all were eligible. Some initial recommendations were circulated to assist discussions. Each application was considered in-turn and the following 19 grant awards were agreed:

Organisation	Agreed support from Town Council	Award
Alnwick and District Playhouse Trust	Support with core costs (2012 was second year of agreed three year support)	£1000
Northumberland Credit Union	Towards the establishment of a paying in point in the Centre, Fenkle Street (operating 2 hrs per week)	£400

Northumberland Touring Theatre Company	Support with core costs	£500
Alnwick Community Centre	Funding for the under 9's provision, sessional material, trips and ext. tutors	£500
Alnwick Branch of Arthritis Care	Support with core costs	£100
Alnwick Young Peoples Association <i>(Cllrs Patience & Grisdale left the room for this item)</i>	To provide an independent facilitator to support and engage young people from the Youth Forum	£500
Lionheart Radio & Media	Support with core costs (offer of show sponsorship to be discussed)	£500
Alnwick and District CAB <i>(Cllr Symmonds left the room for this item)</i>	To help support 3 new volunteers (recruitment, training and travel).	£800
Alnwick Sporting Club	Support with core costs	£400
RE-NU-IT	Assistance to keep the van on the road	£300
Hospice Care North Northumberland	Contribution to running costs	£500
Alnwick & District Sports Council	Contribution to annual awards evening	£350
Alnwick Stroke Club	Assistance with transport	£100
Friends of the Bullfield Community Orchard	Contribution towards signage and interpretation boards	£400
Alnwick Town Juniors FC	Club equipment	£350
Carers Northumberland	To expand the Alnwick support group meetings for careers	£500
Alnwick Amateur Boxing Club	Contribution towards a minibus	£350
Choysez	For evening activity work in Alnwick	£200
North East Equality & Diversity (NEED) Ltd	Contribution towards an equipment loan scheme for use by the residents or visitors	£250

The Committee discussed the following applications and decided not to award grants for the reason given.

Bailiffgate Museum	In May, the Council had already paid £2,000 to the Museum (this was for a 2012/13 grant and to support the HLF application).
Friends of Alnwick South First School	The Committee did not support assisting with the purchase of ipads for the school. This was not eligible for NCC funding and the committee felt that it was not appropriate for the Town Council to pick up this funding.
Alnwick MACPI (Multi-agency crime prevention initiative)	The Committee had concerns about funding an organisation which is then using the funding to give out grants to others (some of the organisation's receiving grants were also receiving funding direct from the Council). They wished to discuss future funding with MACPI as they were concerned about where their future funding would come from.
Alnwick Tourism Association	The Recreation and Amenities Committee were making budgetary provision for 2013/14 for town promotion and the Town Team project was receiving £10,000 from the government to address signage and promotion. It was felt more appropriate for the Tourism Association to jointly work with the Council and Town Team to address any town promotion requirements.

FP 12/17. Review of Staffing

The Clerk left the room whilst the Mayor outlined that as a result of the additional responsibilities the Town Council now has it was appropriate for the clerk to become full time. At present he worked 30 hours a week and it was proposed that this be increased to 37 hours from 1st April 2013. The additional cost of this, which would need to be built into the budget, was £6,536.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk hours be increased to 37 with effect from 1st April 2013.

The clerk returned to the meeting and outlined that some occasional administrative assistance was necessary to undertake routine tasks such as updating databases, maintaining allotment records and issuing event invitations. A budget provision of £2,000 was suggested for a part time post undertaking up to 3.5 hours per week.

RESOLVED: To make budgetary provision of £2,000 for additional administrative support with effect from 1st April 2013.

The Committee then considered the merits of the Town Council employing a seasonal worker in 2013/14. The clerk explained that a decision had not yet been taken on the transfer of Swansfield Park from NCC to the Town Council, but if this was agreed then funding should also transfer to the Town Council. In this event, a seasonal worker could have responsibility for the maintenance of the park and also additional Town Council responsibilities around the town such as the maintenance of assets. It was difficult to finalise the exact detail until the Swansfield Park situation was resolved, but in the event of this becoming a Town Council responsibility, a full-time worker, operating between April and the end of October was desirable and perhaps half the necessary cost could be taken from any endowment coming to the Council.

RESOLVED: To make budgetary provision of £5,219 towards the cost of a seasonal worker with effect from 1st April 2013.

FP 12/18. Proposed Finance & Policy Budget 2013/14

A proposed committee budget was circulated and discussed. Amendments were made to the 2013/14 grant budget, increasing it to £10,000 and there was support for including £2,500 to go towards the Town Team initiative. The neighbourhood plan budget was retained at £12,000 and the clerk agreed to check to ensure the County Council would be paying for the cost of the referendum. Once the agreed staffing changes were built into the budget, the total proposed committee budget was £82,889.

RECOMMENDED: That the Finance and Policy Committee budget for 2013/14 be £82,889.

FP12/19. Consideration of the draft Finance & Policy Precept and draft Council Precept for 2013/14

The clerk outlined that the draft budgets set by the committees were as follows; Recreation and Amenities £49,690, Cemetery Committee £24,000 and Finance and Policy £82,889. This gave an overall 2013/14 proposed budget of £156,579, an increase of £18,079 on 2012/13. Some minor amendments to some of the figures may be necessary in the light of any up-to-date information being received from Northumberland County Council about its charges. The Committee was reminded that the Town Council had reserves of £95,871 at the 31st March 2012, this was likely to increase slightly by 31st March 2013 and the clerk had recommended earlier in the year that reserves should stay above £80,000. The Committee considered the extent to which reserves should be used to support the 2013/14 budget. There was support for one-off expenditure such as play area replacements which was included in the Recreation and Amenities budget at £10,000, to be funded from

reserves. The Committee favoured this rather than using reserves for ongoing expenditure. The Committee supported making a recommendation to the Council for the additional £18,079 to be funded, £10,000 from reserves and £8,079 from the precept. The clerk highlighted that the figures may change slightly if more information came from Northumberland County Council. It was difficult to give an indication of the impact on the council tax, as government changes were being made to the Council Tax Base, but based upon 2012/13 a £1,000 increase in council tax on the parish precept added £0.355 to a Band D equivalent property, per year.

RECOMMENDATION: Based upon the financial information currently available, the Council sets a precept of £156,579 for 2013/14, towards its budget of £166,579.

FP12/20. Council Investments

The Clerk reported that the Investment Bond of £50,000 held at Barclay's Bank had now matured and another short term investment should be considered. He had looked at current investment rates and reported that Santander were offering 2.3% on a £50,000 investment for 1 year. This was the best rate he had found and was aware that another local parish council had recently decided on this investment. Councillor Waddell thought that a better rate may be achievable at a local Building Society. The clerk promised to investigate and bring the matter to the next full Council meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: The Council agree to the most appropriate short term investment for £50,000 at the 13th December 2012 meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm