

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday 9th Oct 2014 in St James Church Rooms, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

**Present** Cllrs P Broom, G Castle (left the meeting at 8pm), D Farrar, C Goodfellow, M Harrington, P Holt, G Mavin, S Mavin, K Moore, R Roberts, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

**In attendance** Councillor H Cairns; W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Administration Assistant.

The Town Clerk advised councillors that a chair needed to be selected for the meeting as both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were not in attendance. Councillor Symmonds was proposed and seconded and took the chair.

Councillor Symmonds began the meeting by welcoming back Councillor Castle. Councillor Castle responded by thanking everyone for their kind thoughts and support and thanked Councillor Cairns for covering in his absence.

### **C14/81 Questions from the public**

There were no questions from the public.

### **C14/82 Apologies for absence**

Councillors P Allcroft, S Allcroft, W Grisdale, J Humphries, S Patience and A Shilton.

### **C14/83 Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Cairns and Castle declared a non-pecuniary interest in county council matters and Councillors Symmonds pecuniary interests in the Payments item. Councillor Roberts declared an interest in item C14/89 d) Proposed Walkabout.

### **C14/84 Minutes of previous meeting (September 11th 2014)**

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2014 were agreed as a true record and duly signed.**

### **C14/85 Matters Arising**

**C14/70 War Memorial Update** Admin Assistant informed councillors that the contract had been sent back to English Heritage so the Town Council have a year to undertake the work and claim the money. Standard conditions attached to the grant, around materials and methodology, are being signed off by WMT Conservation Officer and any remaining ones signed off when stonework and bronze work trials are done. NCC have replaced the hatch and LBC conditions are being signed off through the Discharge of Conditions process by the Planning Officer. She will inspect the stonework and bronze work trials then sign off remaining conditions. Scaffolding is due to put up in the next 10 days and work completed by the end of October.

**C14/71 Local Transport Priorities** The Town Clerk advised councillors that the Local Transport Priorities had been submitted to NCC.

**C14/73 Remembrance Sunday Arrangements 2014** Councillor Symmonds asked councillors to support the Mayor at the service then at the War Memorial and the Northumberland Hall as the event is organised and hosted by the Town Council.

**C14/80 Any Other Urgent Business** Councillor Farrar asked if there had been any reply from Susan Rogers regarding the rights of way surveys. Town Clerk advised that he hadn't.

Councillor Farrar asked if there was any update on the number of fixed penalty notices issued in Alnwick. The Town Clerk advised that these were issued at the ATC / NCC joint meeting and he would distribute to councillors.

**C14/86 Annual Return and Accounts 2013/14**

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council's external auditor had completed the audit for the year ended 31st March 2014. The auditor had concluded that the information in the annual return was in accordance with proper practices and no matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

The external auditors have asked that the Council updates its asset register to include the following information for each asset: date acquired, purchase cost and location held. It was suggested that this be done as soon as possible, or in any event before the end of the current financial year. It was suggested by the Town Clerk that this register be presented to the Finance & Policy Committee at the meeting on 18th December.

Councillor Symmonds thanked the Town Clerk for his effective handling of the Town Council's accounts.

**RESOLVED: To approve and accept the Annual Return for the Year ending 31st March 2014.**

**C14/87 Views on Petition Received from NCC**

The Town Clerk informed councillors that they had been consulted by Northumberland County Council on a petition they had received about street lighting in Alnwick. Although this is outside the Alnwick Town boundaries the Town Council had received a copy for information and comment. The petition is signed by 107 people and requests street lighting in Abbeylands, Alnwick.

He informed councillors that NCC will discuss the petition at the North Area Committee meeting on 10th November.

Councillor Castle said the petition had come about after two burglaries in the area and the fact that it is a main route into the town.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the process should be left to the petition process.

The Town Clerk advised the Council that they may want to suggest NCC consult Denwick Parish Council.

**RESOLVED: To leave the petition process to the NCC North Area meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup>.**

**C14/88 New Town Council Office - 27 Fenkle Street**

The Town Clerk informed councillors that the new office is now open, the phone line and broadband is live. The office is Room 5, at 27 Fenkle Street which also contains NCC staff including the Registrar's service, Public Protection, Building Control, Parking Services and Land Charges as well as Lionheart Radio. Once the email system is set up, publicity will be given to the new office location and the new address/number used on correspondence and the website etc.

The Council needed to consider the opening times of the office for the public. With one full time and one part time (up to 10 hours per week) it was not feasible to give continuous cover during normal office hours, particularly when other tasks needed to be completed away from the office, e.g. at the cemetery, allotments, play areas etc. He explained that the staff had looked at opening times for other local councils and

felt that they could offer access to the public Tuesday to Thursday 10.30am to 3pm and at other times by appointment. He asked councillors for their views.

Councillor Castle asked if the building had a receptionist. The Town Clerk said it didn't but that there was an intercom system and a phone on the reception desk.

Councillor Symmonds said he knew how much work the officers did and suggested Tuesday and Thursday 10.00 to 3.30pm would give enough access for the public.

Councillor Harrington asked that if everything was now being done at the office if people turned up they would be seen. The Town Clerk confirmed that they would. Councillor Harrington also asked what people might come to the office for? The Town Clerk said it could be a range of things such as to make payments, allotment holders with queries or suppliers delivering goods.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the Town Council should be pleased that they have a presence in the town centre and that the amount of public availability can be reviewed later in the year.

Councillor Farrar asked if there would be signage on the building? The Town Clerk confirmed there would be signage on the building and include opening hours.

Councillor Castle felt the Town Council should advise NCC staff at Greenwell Lane of the opening times. He also asked if the office could be available to councillors for appointments. The Town Clerk confirmed it would be available to county and town councillors. Councillor Roberts felt it would be useful to clarify for councillors when the Town Clerk and the Admin Assistant are in the office and available. Councillor Holt endorsed Councillor Roberts comments.

Councillor Roberts felt opening times needed to be trialled then reviewed and agreed before money was spent on publicity.

Councillor Moore asked if Cemetery Lodge was still being used. The Town Clerk said it was still being used by the Cemetery Superintendent.

Councillor Cairns commented that the Town Council need to be very clear about when the public come in as she knew from other areas how much it can interrupt the work of officers.

Councillor Goodfellow felt that the hours being suggested were a bit long

**RESOLVED: To note the current position and agree public opening times as Tuesday and Thursday 10am to 3.30pm and for this to be kept under review.**

#### **C14/89 Feedback on County Council Matters**

a) Joint Meeting of ATC and NCC - 22nd Sept 2014

The Town Clerk briefed councillors on the Joint Meeting having issued the minutes. Councillor Farrar commented that there were several actions which had not been done by NCC. The Town Clerk said he would diarise a date to chase NCC before the next Full Council meeting and report back.

b) Town and Parish Conference

The Town Clerk gave an update. This was the 1st conference with over 100 representatives from a 3rd of the councils in Northumberland. Liaison and Communications were the key aspects of the conference.

The event started with a market place session followed by sessions by Paul Jones (Head of Neighbourhood Services at NCC) and David Nicholson (Choppington Clerk). A Local Service Charter will be sent out by NCC and will be distributed to councillor when received.

c) New Town and Parish Council Website

At the Town & Parish Council Conference the new web portal was demonstrated, which has been produced specifically as a tool to help Town and Parish councillors and clerks. It was text based which may help those with poor broadband or mobile connections. NCC welcome any feedback. Councillors were recommended to view the site especially a useful 'Who's Who of Local Services' document in the 'Town and Parish Council News' under the heading 'Latest news'.

d) Proposed Walkabout

Following the last ATC/NCC joint meeting, Bob Hodgson, new Area Manager (North) for Neighbourhood Services suggested a walkabout to look at Neighbourhood Services issues in the Town. The suggested date was originally Friday 17th October and it was recommended that a small number of councillors attend. It is suggested that the walkabout includes Swansfield Park, Glovers Green Play Areas, the Bus Station and the Public Toilets. Councillor Roberts also suggested he visit the Bullfield Community Orchard as part of his walkabout.

Councillor Roberts suggested that the date be moved a couple of weeks to allow Councillor Patience (Chair of Rec & Amenities) to attend.

Councillor Symmonds felt it was important that councillors stick to the issues around Local Services only. Councillor Roberts asked if the Town Clerk could remind councillors exactly what Local Services are exactly.

e) Joint Meeting of Northumberland Parishes with NCC

The Town Clerk advised councillors that the next round of NCC and Town & Parish Council meetings will take place in October. The Alnwick area Northern meeting is on Monday 13th October at 6pm in St James Church Rooms, Alnwick. The meetings involve representatives from a large number of parishes and normally up to two representatives from each council attend although there is scope for one or two more to attend if desired. NCC representatives will be going round tables of Town and Parish Councils. Councillor Cairns confirmed it was a good way of putting faces to names.

Councillor Roberts asked the Town Clerk if he had a list of which NCC services were attending? The Town Clerk informed councillors that there will be NCC representatives from Transport; Finance; Planning; Locality Team; Housing Services and Technical Services.

f) Public Convenience Refurbishment

The Town Clerk informed councillors that the new cubicles were being fitted week beginning October 13th.

Councillor Harrington commented that NCC need to take ownership of the works and felt that it was very urgent that the work was finished.

Councillor Goodfellow commented that he hoped the work will be done to a better standard than the work that's been done.

Councillor Broom informed councillors that people had complained about the smell of urine coming from the toilets.

Councillor G Mavin commented on the poor standard of the grouting and asked if anyone has signed off any of the work to the required standard.

Councillor Farrar felt that the Town Council should certainly withhold payment of any money until they were satisfied with the standard of work. He reminded councillors that the Town Council still have not received a breakdown of costs requested from NCC several months ago.

Councillor Cairns asked where Bob Hodgson was based and suggested that she and the Town Clerk arranged an urgent meeting with him.

Several councillors made comments about the use of other toilet facilities in the town including in hotels and restaurants and felt that this needed to be taken forward again. The Town Council advised that the Town Council speak to NCC to see what they can do. Councillor Farrar suggested that the Town Council work with the hotels/restaurants themselves through the Town Team.

Councillor Harrington reminded councillors that there are a lot of businesses who did not have toilet facilities and rely on the ones in the market place.

It was agreed that the 'Your Welcome' Scheme be discussed at the next Recreation & Amenities meeting in November.

**RESOLVED: To arrange an urgent meeting with Bob Hodgson about the toilet refurbishments.**

#### **C14/90 Minutes of Committees**

- a) Minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee Meeting (11th September 2014) were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways & Transport Committee meeting held on 11th September 2014 were agreed as a true record.**

- b) Minutes of the Cemetery Committee (18th September 2014) were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on 18th September 2014 were agreed as a true record.**

- c) Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee (25th September 2014) were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 25th September 2014 were agreed as a true record.**

Councillor Roberts commented that it would be useful to be able to make comments or ask questions about minutes of committees councillors didn't sit on.

Councillor Symmonds asked Councillor Roberts to ask her question and that the request be noted for future meetings.

Councillor Roberts (question regarding Cemetery minutes) asked if a letter had been sent to residents or a meeting held about the new cemetery area. The Town Clerk explained that a letter had been sent to residents about 18 months ago advising them about the initial ideas for the new site. Councillor Symmonds advised that this be discussed again at the November Cemetery committee meeting.

Recreation & Amenities Item 14/23 Allotment rents - the document forwarded by the Recreation & Amenities committee was tabled for approval. The Town Clerk went through the proposed increases and explained that not all rents had been increased.

**RESOLVED: To set the allotment rent levels for 2015/16 at the levels recommended by the Recreation and Amenities Committee on September 25<sup>th</sup>.**

## C14/91 Correspondence

The following correspondence had been received since the last meeting:

| Date    | Detail  | Action                              |
|---------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 15 Sept | CAN e news  | Available from the clerk on request |
| 24 Sept | NCC – Willowburn Ave/Wagonway Road Road closure now delayed until 17th Nov – 28th Nov | Available from the clerk on request |
| 1st Oct | NCC – Emergency Road closure on Narrowgate from 6th Oct for up to 21 days             | Available from the clerk on request |

**RESOLVED: To receive and note the communication**

## C14/92 Financial Matters – Payments

The following invoices had been received for payment:

|                                |                   |  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| HMRC                           | £2,073.05         | Tax and NI   |
| Wages Account                  | £5,000            |  |
| Northumbrian Water             | £1,407.22         | Water bills Cemetery (2 bills) allotments and Robertson's Pant (paid 1st Oct)  |
| BDO LLP                        | £516              | External Audit   |
| Grannies                       | £35               | Refreshments – neighbourhood plan event  |
| John Gray Ltd                  | £100.80           | Hedgecutter/Tractor repair   |
| Royal Mail                     | £9.43             | Postage – neighbourhood plan returns   |
| Azure                          | £105.60           | Display Boards - neighbourhood plan  |
| Azure                          | £96               | Posters - neighbourhood plan   |
| Azure                          | £84               | Display Boards - neighbourhood plan  |
| Playdale Playgrounds Ltd       | £64.39            | Parts for equipment  |
| W.R. Batey                     | £1,404.39         | £21 refreshments, £28.38 postage, £54 Twinning visit gift, £975.88 new office computer, £180 printer cartridges, £61.60 Books and Flags (gifts for music festival groups), office supplies £6.57 & £12.98., New telephone and ext. lead £63.98 |
| Greenlay (Grass Machinery Ltd) | £99.40            | Mower belt   |
| Greenlay (Grass Machinery Ltd) | £956.57           | Tractor driveshaft and hydraulic cylinder  |
| Greenlay (Grass Machinery Ltd) | £129.01           | Mower belt and pulley  |
| CBS World                      | £9.60             | Stationery   |
| CBS World                      | £107.96           | Box Files  |
| NCC                            | £1,953            | 3 additional grass cuts 2014/15  |
| James McLean                   | £127.26           | Tools  |
| CBS World                      | £31.60            | Stationery   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>£14,310.28</b> |  |

The following payments are now paid by direct debit and were reported for information

|        |         |  |
|--------|---------|--|
| BT     | £107.06 | Phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge<br>Paid 27 <sup>th</sup> August 14 |
| npower | £75.88  | Robertson's Fountain   |

At the last meeting an invoice for £45.20 from Wybone was approved for payment, this has now been cancelled following a discussion with the company.

The Grant payments for the following festivals are due: The amounts to be paid are the approved grants minus the contributions to the rental costs at the shared unit at Willowburn and in the case of the Music Festival, the stage/stall erection costs.

- Alnwick Spring Show £500 - £300 = £200
- Alnwick Music Festival £4000 - £650 - £2000 stage/stall erection costs = £1350
- Alnwick Food Festival £1100 - £500 = £600

Councillor Broom thought the water bill seemed high and asked if this is due to rising costs at the allotments. The Town Clerk explained that it is a little higher than usual and would be monitored.

**RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £16,460.28 and to note the direct debit payments of £182.94**

**C14/93 Feedback Local Multi-Agency Crime Prevention Initiative Meeting**

Councillor Moore had no feedback from the last meeting as he had been unable to attend. The Administration Assistant updated councillors that she had spoken to NCC who advised that locations for monitoring wires required in Alnwick be identified and forwarded to the Sarah Houghton at NCC Engineers department for action.

Councillor Roberts asked if this should go to a Planning Committee but Councillor Moore felt the process should be started now. Councillor Goodfellow felt the monitoring wires might not be useful and that cameras should be requested. Councillor Moore felt that the monitoring wires should be used whilst they are available. Councillor Swinbank felt that there certainly places in Alnwick where they would be useful.

Councillor Farrar asked if more information could be collected from NCC on the whole process of speeding.

Councillor Cairns informed the council that the LMAP meetings would no longer be held monthly but would be a quarterly meeting.

**RESOLVED: i) To email Town Clerk with suggestions for monitoring wires within Alnwick, ii) Town Clerk to forward suggestions to NCC.**

**C14/94 Any Other Urgent Business**

Councillor Roberts advise councillors about the Gardener's Questions being held on Sunday 19th October at St James's Centre between 2.30pm and 5pm. She advised councillors that she would email further details.

Meeting closed at 8.48pm