

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday 15th Jan 2015
in St James Church Rooms, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present Cllrs P Broom, G Castle, P Edge, D Farrar, W Grisdale, M Harrington, P Holt, J Humphries, G Mavin, S Mavin, K Moore, S Patience, R Roberts, A Shilton, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

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

C14/129 Questions from the public
There were no questions from the public.

C14/130 Apologies for absence
Cllrs P Allcroft and S Allcroft.

C14/131 Declarations of Interest
Councillor Castle declared a non-pecuniary interest in county council matters.
Councillors Grisdale and Swinbank declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 12.
School Consultation and Councillor Patience declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 17. Councillor Issue.

C14/132 Presentation of proposals for animating Alnwick Market Place – Philip Angier, Local Living

Philip Angier of Local Living gave the Council an update on the expression of interest they have submitted to Leader Coast and Lowlands. Local Living have experience of running projects and this one is for a new three year project starting in 2015 containing tourism, farming and forestry.

Best of Town Team and the ADNP features the Market Place heavily as a social and cultural hub for the town. Details of the new Leader projects are not out yet but Local Living have put in a Notice of Interest.

Tourism is likely to be the focus of the bid and would structure events and activities between the major events in the Market Place. They have already piloted Sunday markets & pop-up shops and to make it easier for micro-businesses to use the market place as a start off point e.g. sausage seller now in a shop.

Local Living is happy to put the application in but as the Market Place belongs to the town, it would like other people to be involved.

He also commented that he was pleased that Councillors Shilton and Swinbank are giving input onto Local Living's strategy for the Market Place.

Councillor Questions:

Councillor Swinbank asked what the jobs would be. Philip stated that the bid must create jobs to make it viable so to sustain pop-up and Sunday markets a post would be created in Year 1 to develop the markets. In Year 2 an additional post would be created for the purpose of putting up stalls and in 2015 they might also pilot mentoring for new traders on the market.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the Leader funding could link into the farming sector. Philip stated that it did not really fit.

Councillor Broom commented that the Recreation & Amenities meeting had discussed ideas about some of the kind of markets that could be run. Philip replied that not all the ideas had been taken on board, such as flea markets; but that they had run craft

and antiques markets. He also confirmed that some ideas had found themselves in the Leader bid.

Councillor G Mavin asked if there had been any contact regarding cultural activities. Philip replied that there had been contact with Alnwick Playhouse Band and Alnwick Ceilidh. They were still in the early stages and would expand.

Councillor G Mavin asked how the project would be publicised outside Alnwick if the Leader funding came through. Philip confirmed that banners, signage and leaflets would be used focusing on people already living in the area.

Councillor G Mavin asked if funding from ATC could cover the gap in funding. Philip confirmed that it could but if the bid is successful funding will be available from 2015.

Councillor S Mavin asked if Local Living could give local shops outside the town centre a reduced rate stall. Philip advised that he would take that forward.

Councillor Patience commented that Leader sometimes have funding left over from the last project round. Philip confirmed that all the money had been spent 15 months ago. Their new bid would request funding from summer 2015, 2016, 2017 and the first half of 2018 so would give funding across four years.

Councillor Castle stated that the Town Council were open to ideas to make better use of the Market Place. He hoped the bid was successful as he knew money was needed to make the most of it.

Councillor Holt was concerned that the bid would not ensure there was someone on site all day. Philip replied that there will be and, as currently, if someone is not on site they would be available by phone. He confirmed that the aim of the new position created in the bid would be to provide more cover.

Councillor Holt felt that Local Living should reconsider flea markets as they could be interesting.

Councillor Harrington commented that there was a lack of support from the rest of the town for things such as Sunday markets as there were no other shops open.

Philip informed the Town Council that the Leader funding could be used to develop and take this forward.

RESOLVED: To receive the update.

C14/133 Request for a Dispensation

Guidance from Northumberland County Council relating to declarations of interest when setting the budget and precept, is that all councillors should apply in writing for a dispensation to the Council to enable them to be involved and vote. The Town Clerk circulate a form prior to the meeting which all councillors present at the meeting signed (covering the application in writing).

RESOLVED: To grant dispensation to all Councillors to participate in full decisions relating to setting the 2015/16 Budget and Precept.

C14/134 Minutes of previous meeting (December 11th 2014)

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

C14/135 Matters Arising

C14/111 NCC Walkabout The Town Clerk advised that the walkabout requested by Councillor Holt had taken place. Councillor Holt reported that she had a very good meeting to discuss flooding but this did not address her concerns about parking.

C14/136 Mayor's Report

Councillor Grisdale reported that the Mayor's Report is on his blog www.alnwickmayor.wordpress.com. He thanked everyone for coming to the Civic Carol Concert which raised £373 for the Stephen Carey Fund. He also informed the council that the BBC filming in Alnwick was going well.

C14/137 Committee & Outside Body appointments

The Town Clerk advised the council that there currently vacancies on the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee, Recreation and Amenities Committee and the Finance & Policy Committee.

Councillor Edge, who was co-opted onto the Council at the last meeting, at a meeting with the Town Clerk had identified that he would like to be considered for the vacancies on the Planning, Highways & Transport Committee and Recreation & Amenities Committees. He would also like to take up the vacant position as a Town Council representative for the Mechanics Institute.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this would still leave a vacancy on Finance & Policy Committee. Councillor S Mavin was put forward for the vacancy.

RESOLVED: i) To appoint Councillor Edge to the Planning, Highways & Transport and Recreation & Amenities Committees and as one of the Town Council's representatives for the Mechanics Institute. ii) To appoint Councillor S Mavin to the Finance & Policy committee.

C14/138 Minutes of Committees

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

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

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting (18th December 2014) were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance & Policy meeting held on 18th December 2014 were agreed as a true record.

C14/139 2014/15 budget update, 2015/16 budget and 2015/16 Precept

Budget 2015/16

The Town Clerk issued the up-to-date budget figures for 2014/15 and gave an update, noting the following:

INCOME

Allotments - There are still some payments outstanding but should be slightly above the figure for 2013/14.

EXPENDITURE

Playground expenses - Has increased from 2013/14 as more new equipment has been purchased and installed.

The Town Clerk informed the Council that if all payments to go through as indicated in the committee budgets then reserves at the end of the financial year will be in the region of £124,000. This is in between the figures in the Town Council's Reserves Policy.

Councillor questions:

Councillor Holt asked why the Town Council needed a reserve. The Town Clerk advised that the auditors suggest that it is good practice that Town Councils have a Reserves Policy and Alnwick Town Council have a policy which requires four to eight months of gross expenditure to be kept in the reserve.

Councillor Holt also asked if the reserves made any money. The Town Clerk replied that they do through interest paid.

Councillor Harrington asked if there was a ceiling on the budget for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Clerk advised that the budget for 2014/15 was £16,000, some of which is covered by a grant, and for 2015/16 the budget figure is £6,000. The Town Clerk also advised that if the Neighbourhood Plan gets approved the Town Council would need to implement the actions where they are identified as the lead organisation and that provision has been made in the relevant budgets.

RESOLVED: To accept the budget update.

The Town Clerk gave an overview of the recommended budgets for 2015/16 which each Town Council committees had approved.

Committee	Net Expenditure
Cemetery	£26,555
Recreation & Amenities	£63,670
Finance & Policy	£124,130
TOTAL	£214,355

He also gave an update on some of the main changes to the proposed budgets for 2015/16.

Cemetery Committee	
Grounds work – additional budget provision	£1,000
Building Repairs – additional budget provision	£3,000
Additional fee income	£2,500

Recreation & Amenities Committee	
Additional support for events	£560
Play Area replacements	£10,000
Additional fee income - allotments	£1,200

Finance & Policy Committee	
Town Handyperson post made permanent (15 hrs. per week)	£4,781
Administration including additional hours for Assistant to the Clerk (total to be 15 per week) and new pay grades for Clerk and Assistant to Clerk	£6,610
Appointment of part time Project/Funding Officer post	£21,000
Rent for meeting venues	£800
Delivery of Community Action Plan proposals (including a Housing Needs Survey)	£10,000
Saving arising from less expenditure on Neighbourhood Plan preparation	£4,000

The Town Clerk explained that the overall recommended budget for 2015/16 was £214,355.

He advised the Council that, since the Finance & Policy Committee meeting when

staffing budget was discussed, the Council's part time operative at the cemetery has given notice and will leave on 20th February 2015. The post holder has averaged 16 hours per week this financial year and this vacancy would enable the council to combine the part-time posts of the Town Handyperson and Cemetery Operative into a single permanent 37 hour a week post. If this is done this would need an additional budget of approximately £2,500 (to cover the additional 2 hours per week, mileage and pension contributions). This would then give the overall budget for 2015/16 of £216,855.

RESOLVED: To approve the 2015/16 budget of £216,855

The Town Clerk distributed a handout from a meeting held between Paul Jones, Head of Neighbourhood Services at NCC, Councillor Patience and the Town Clerk. This was Paul's first visit to a local council. The Town Clerk gave a summary of the handout:

- a) NCC are looking to achieve significant budget savings regarding toilets.
- b) NCC are keen to explore expansion of the Your Welcome scheme and would offer incentives for businesses to take part.
- c) NCC are open to suggestions regarding current toilet facilities and future arrangements. They are not expecting Town & Parish Councils to take over looking after toilets but they may want to take over cleaning them.

At present the daily cleaning time is 1½ hours at each toilet location.

He advised that the Town Council have three options:

OPTION 1 - Do Nothing.

OPTION 2 - Ask for enhanced cleaning by NCC particularly in the summer and Easter holidays.

OPTION 3 - The Town Council could take over responsibility for the cleaning.

Councillor Castle informed the Council that there are 72 toilets across Northumberland and that a modelling exercise had been used to come up with the £240k reduction.

Councillor G Mavin felt that it would make a difference to any decision the Town Council made if they knew what was happening to the Greenwell Lane toilets. He proposed option 1 until the modelling exercise is completed by NCC.

Councillor Broom felt that the Town Council should not give any money to NCC for toilets and felt the Town Council should pay for someone to do the cleaning.

Councillor Patience agreed with Councillor G Mavin's proposal to do little at the moment. She also felt that that NCC were doing the best they could with the materials they have.

Councillor Harrington felt that the Town Council should go down the route of making the toilet facilities in more hotels in Alnwick available to the public. Councillor Patience advised that Paul Jones was very keen to take this forward.

Councillor Symmonds supported the previous speakers and thought that the Council should ensure that NCC do the job properly. The cleaners have been saying that the materials they can use have been limited by Health & Safety regulations e.g. bleach.

Councillor Symmonds also asked if there was anything at The George to say that they were part of the Your Welcome scheme and that their toilets were available for use. Councillor Harrington advised that there wasn't and that signage was needed.

Councillor Castle informed the Council that at the next meeting with Paul Jones he would need to know if the Town Council wanted to keep two sets of toilets in Alnwick.

Councillor Patience commented that Option 1 also sets out that more dialogue will take place between the Town Council Alnwick and NCC.

Councillor Roberts informed the Council that she was very wary of closing toilets because of the difficulty of re-opening them at a later stage. She also felt that it would be useful if more toilet facilities were made available, such as at the Playhouse.

Councillor Farrar thought that the Town Council needed to keep its thoughts private at this stage.

Councillor Patience advised that Paul Jones had also talked about using the toilets at Alnwick Gardens.

RESOLVED: To accept Option 1, until the modelling exercise was completed.

Precept 2015/16

The Town Clerk advised the Council that having agreed the budget they now needed to set the precept for 2015/16. He updated the Council on the Finance and Policy Committee meeting on 18th December 2014 where they Committee considered the extent to which reserves should be used to support the 2015/16 budget. The Committee has recommended reserves were not used to reduce the precept in 2015/16. In the light of this, it was recommended that the 2015/16 precept be £216,855.

Finance and Policy Committee also reviewed the Town Council precept for 2014/15 in comparison to other town councils in Northumberland. In 2014/15 the average Town Council precept for a Band D dwelling was £89.92, compared to £71.88 for Alnwick. The highest in the northern area was Morpeth at £109.61, whilst the overall highest was Choppington at £134.06.

Based on the total draft budget for the Council for 2015/16 of £216,855 and using the Tax Base figure of 2558.38, this would give a Band D equivalent Town Council element of £84.76 per annum. This would be £1.63 per week in 2015/16 compared to £1.38 in 2014/15, giving an increase of 25 pence per week.

RESOLVED: To set a precept of £216,855 for 2015/16.

Councillor Patience asked how the Town Council could allocate money to Local Living Leader Project if needed. The Town Clerk advised that there was leeway in the Recreation & Amenities budget to do this next year.

C14/140 Schools Consultation

The Town Clerk had previously circulated a copy of the Consultation document and informed the Council that NCC have asked if the Town Council wanted to make any comments. He also advised that the Consultation is open until 11th March 2015 and that there are various school meetings are being held, the last of which is at the Duchess's High School on 24th February. He advised the Council that NCC have asked if the Town Council wanted to make any comments.

Councillor S Mavin felt the Town Council should respond as usually only parents and teachers make comments and she felt that there needed to be a long term view.

Councillor Castle thought the method used was right but that the Town Council would need to have a full discussion before they should make any comments as a Town Council. He felt that it might be prudent that the Town Council as a whole should not make comments but that each councillor could make comments as individuals through

the Town Clerk or directly to NCC.

Councillor Roberts thought that the Council should attend the consultations to get more information and would need to engage more with the information that has already been sent out. She also thought that rural schools would be affected more than schools in Alnwick.

Councillor Symmonds advised that parents are always passionate about their local schools but that this can sometimes clouds their views. The decision needs to be based on whether the curriculum can be delivered effectively. He suggested that the Town Council make no opinion at this stage.

RESOLVED: i) To have no opinion or make any comments at this stage, ii) To add to the Council agenda in February.

C14/141 Review of the Constitution

The Town Clerk advised the Council that under the Council's constitution there is a requirement to have an annual review. A working group meeting was proposed, to which all councillors will be invited, to undertake the review and report back to the March or April Council meeting. The proposed date for the working group is February 26th at 7pm at the Mechanics Institute. Any councillors who cannot attend should submit comments to the Town Clerk before the meeting.

C14/142 Correspondence

The following correspondence has been received since the last meeting:

Date	Detail	Action if any
15th Dec	NCC Notification of approval of 'No waiting' at any time parking restrictions at Sawmill Cottages Alnwick	To Note
19th Dec	NCC – Core Strategy Consultation Workshops	Circulated to Councillors
19th Dec	NALC e-news	Available from the clerk on request
19th Dec	NCC – Consultation on Broadband Coverage in Northumberland – comments required by 19th Jan	Comments to clerk
29th Dec	Alnwick District WW1 Centenary Group – Invitation to events on 31st Jan (in Newcastle and Felton) and 1st Feb (Alnwick)	Mayor to attend on 1st Feb. Representatives required for 31st January
5th Jan	CAN News Winter 2014	Available from the clerk on request
8th Jan	Northumbrian CAB, New office details	To Note
9th Jan	NCC Availability of County Council's Learning Together resource to councillors and clerks (e-learning modules) (See note below)	Circulate to Councillors

The Admin Assistant gave an overview of the available e-learning modules. She will set up Usernames and Passwords and register anyone who is interested. Email request to Admin Assistant.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the communication.

C14/143 Feedback Local Multi-Agency Crime Prevention Initiative Meeting

Councillor Moore advised that one of the cones at The Peth had gone missing. He asked if there was any more information about access to Alnwick during the A1 bridge works. Councillor Castle advised that there was no more information as yet.

C14/144 Financial Matters – Payments

The following invoices have been received for payment:

HMRC	£2,240.52	Tax/NI payment for Dec
Wages Account	£5,000.00	
N Tait	£1,152.00	Fencing works at cemetery
Northumbrian Water	£855.09	Water – Allotments and Cemetery (Paid 7th Jan)
Information Commissioner	£35.00	Data Protection Registration
James N McLean	£75.49	Tools
npower	£734.92	Cemetery Chapel Electricity
Davidson & Son	£2,640.00	Parts for Christmas Lights (net cost £2,200)
E Wright	£500.00	Initial costs for Structural survey on War Memorial
Chubb	£156.83	Annual Contract
NCC	£188.14	NNDR for Room 5, 27 Fenkle Street
AFS Countrystore	£18.28	Poison
Oswald Hughes	£556.50	Robertson's pant – electrical report, electrical works and time clock
Petty Cash	£37.83	Petrol; supplies
Northumbrian Water	£40.13	Robertson's Pant
TOTAL	£14,230.73	

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

BT	£72.13	Phone bills cemetery and cemetery lodge paid 28th Dec 2014
npower	£282.20	Cemetery Store £63.56 Robertson's Pant £130.36, Town Hall Clock £88.28
BT	£22.77	Fenkle Street phone bill paid 23rd Dec 2014

The following grants have also been approved at the Finance & Policy meeting in December:

Organisation	Grant Award
Alnwick and District Playhouse Trust	£1,000
Alnwick Garden Club	£200
Northumberland Touring Theatre Company	£500
Alnwick Community Centre-Play	£500
Alnwick Branch of Arthritis Care	£150
Alnwick Young Peoples Association	£600
Bailiffgate Museum	£1,250
Lionheart Radio & Media	£500
Northumberland CAB (Alnwick Office)	£1,300
RE-NU-IT	£350
Hospice Care North Northumberland	£1,000
Alnwick & District Sports Council	£350
Mighty Oaks	£250
Alnwick Town Juniors FC	£350
Alnwick & District Choral Society	£200
Friends of Bullfield Community Orchard	£350
Friends of Abbeyfield	£250
Alnwick Wheel Sports Facility Association	£350
Alnwick Amateur Boxing Club	£400 (accounts needed prior to payment)

RESOLVED: To approve and authorise the above payments amounting to £14,230.73, to note the direct debit payments of £377.10 and to authorise the grant payments of £9,850.

C14/145 Councillor Issue - Councillor Patience, condition of former Corn Exchange building

Councillor Patience advised the Council that she was concerned about the condition of the former Corn Exchange building. Tiles have come off the roof and are on the ground. She was aware that John Rutter (NCC) Building Control was closing the right of way from that night.

Councillor Castle advised the Council that Councillor Patience was right to raise the matter. It had been raised with the Head of Public Protection at NCC who had asked John Rutter to review the situation. Repair work was due to have been completed but the weather had prohibited this from happening. It might, therefore, be necessary to close part of the car park for safety reasons.

Councillor Farrar asked if it affected the St. Michaels area? Councillor Gridale replied that that it shouldn't as there was still access via other routes.

Councillor Holt commented that she was very concerned that difficulties had prevented the Wetherspoon's application from going forward. Councillor Castle advised that full planning approval had been given and that it was only some parts of the conditions that were still being discussed.

C14/146 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Roberts requested coat hooks on the back of the toilet doors.

Councillor Castle advised that a member of the public had complained that the doors at The Shambles did not open as far as they used to, and access was difficult with a pushchair.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm