



**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on  
Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016  
at the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Councillors A Symmonds (Chair), S Allcroft, P Allcroft, W Grisdale, S Mavin and G Mavin.

**In attendance:** B Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer and Councillor P Holt.

**FP 15/40 Apologies**

Councillors P Broom, G Castle and S Patience.

**FP 15/41 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**FP 15/42 Budget update 2015/16**

The Town Clerk circulated the committee budget as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. This showed expenditure of £88,400.25 and included the payments approved at March's Full Council meeting. This was reviewed line by line with the following highlighted by the Town Clerk:

ADMINISTRATION – slightly down on budget.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – original budget was £6k + a grant of £2,659.

TOWN TWINNING – Increased in 2016/17 to cover the costs of the visits by Voerde and Time Kommune.

AUDIT FEE – Higher than 2014/15 as the Town Council are now in the next audit band.

PROJECT & FUNDING OFFICER – Well under budget as not appointed until Nov 2015.

MISC/CONTINGENCY – Over budget due to Gallery Youth contribution.

INCOME – Currently £3,145.49 and includes Neighbourhood Plan grant and Mechanics Institute insurance contribution.

End of year expenditure – £88,400.25

Budgeted expenditure – £114,780

The Town Clerk explained that the main reason for the budget underspend was due to the Project & Funding Officer post starting later in the year than budgeted and no Community Action Plan costs in the year.

**RESOLVED: To accept the budget update.**

**FP 15/43 Consideration of the new Grant applications**

The Town Clerk advised that one new grant application had been received. This was reviewed by the committee and the following comments and recommendations made:

Alnwick Detachment (Northumbria Army Cadet Force) - The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that they had applied for a grant of £500 towards the costs of a new projector/screen. She also confirmed that they had provided financial information.

Councillor S Allcroft felt this was a very worthwhile project and proposed giving them the full £500 requested. Councillor G Mavin agreed but said that even the full £500 would not buy all the equipment they needed.

A unanimous decision was taken to offer them £500.

**RESOLVED: To offer Alnwick Detachment (Northumbria Army Cadet Force) a grant of £500.**

## **FP 15/44 Town Council Pension scheme**

The Town Clerk explained the councillors that the Town Council needed to have a scheme in place by August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. He reminded councillors that the Town Council had five employees two of whom had a 6.6% contribution paid into existing personal pension schemes.

He added that there were lots of schemes available including:

Local Government Pension Scheme – very expensive for smaller councils and only larger councils are looking at this as an option.

NEST (National Employer Savings Trust) – set up by the government.

People's Pension (B & CE) - £500 entry charge for employer.

He advised that his recommendation would be to go with the NEST Scheme as this was better on governance, accountability and security. He added that the Town Council would offer 6.6% to each employee.

He advised that Councillor G Mavin had suggested looking at hybrid schemes but that were not offered to local councils. He also felt that the town council should take legal advice before making the final decision.

Councillor G Mavin commented that lots of people were moving into offering pension schemes and felt that the Town Council should go with the Government Scheme. He also advised talking to a professional pension advisor.

**RESOLVED: To recommend the NEST Pension Scheme to the Full Council meeting in May or June subject to consultation with a professional advisor.**

## **FP 15/45 Economic Development in Alnwick**

A paper had been circulated by the Project & Funding Officer giving an overview of the history and current situation of economic development in Alnwick. He advised that historically Alnwick had benefitted from dedicated economic and tourism development under Alnwick District Council but this had ended with the dissolution of Alnwick District Council in 2009.

The Rural Development Commission funding was also used within Alnwick but this reduced when they became part of the Countryside Agency which itself ceased to exist in 2006.

The loss of Alnwick Development Trust had also reduced economic and tourism development in the town.

ARCH are active in Alnwick but has a brief to prioritise its activities in Berwick and South East Northumberland.

The majority of funders are now looking for fewer and bigger projects to support meaning that smaller or more rural areas often miss out.

Although Alnwick Town Council has no powers of its own to undertake economic development activities could be delivered under the heading of Well Being. It is essential that the Town Council work with other people encouraging them to focus resources on Alnwick.

He summarised a SWOT analysis which had been undertaken and gave details of seven economic development actions which could be undertaken. These included collating a list of all employers in Alnwick then using a standard questionnaire to ascertain their views on development / expansion; setting up a business area on the Town Council website and monthly meetings with the economic team at NCC.

Councillor G Mavin felt it was a good summary and some of the actions were ambitious but would help keep Alnwick in focus with economic agencies and staff. He supported the suggested actions in the report.

Councillor Symmonds asked if the new High School would offer any vocational courses. Councillor Griddale advised that in 2006 lots of vocational courses were offered and people had tried to keep training in the town but that unfortunately resources follow the people.

He added that in 2016/27 the school would offer three vocational courses including hairdressing. He also agreed that the Town Council needed to maintain links with ARCH on a very regular basis.

Councillor S Allcroft asked how the Town Council could engage with employers. The Project & Funding Officer felt that visiting employers to talk about what they needed would be useful and that this could start with the Chamber of Trade.

Councillor G Mavin felt that although the members of the Chamber of Trade were mostly retail businesses they certainly had a role to play.

Councillor S Mavin felt that there were still opportunities for training, especially construction, in Alnwick. She added that when the High School became an Academy it would have more money to spend on courses.

Councillor Symmonds felt that by the time all schools became an academy the money would not be there to offer more vocational courses.

Councillor Griddale advised that training had previously been tried to be set up at Jewson's.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the report highlighted some strong points including the need for networking.

Councillor Griddale asked if the Town Council had a representative on the Tourism Association.

Councillor Holt felt that there was more going on in the town than the Town Council were aware of.

Councillor Symmonds asked councillors to submit any comments about the document or action plan to the Town Clerk.

**RESOLVED: To adopt the action plan as set out in the report by the Project & Funding Officer.**

#### **FP 15/46 Updates on:**

##### **a) Housing Needs Survey**

The Project & Funding Officer gave an overview of the document which had been circulated. He reminded councillors that the Housing Needs Survey had been identified as one of the Community Action Plans in the Neighbourhood Plan. He advised that he and the Town Clerk had worked with NCC's Senior Housing Policy Officer on selecting a consultant to devise and undertake the survey. Two bids had been received and Arc4 had been selected as the contractor.

The aim is for a 25% return so would need support from councillors to ensure this was achieved. He advised that the total cost of the survey would be £9,158 for a 15% return and £9,665 for a 25% return so the Town Council's contribution would be £4,592 (15% return) and £4,832 (25% return).

Councillor G Mavin asked if Arc4 had undertaken similar surveys before. The Town Clerk advised that they had.

Councillor Griddale asked where they were based. The Town Clerk advised they were based in County Durham and that they were carrying out the housing needs surveys in Cramlington and Hexham.

Councillor G Mavin asked how affordable housing was quantified. The Town Clerk advised that this went beyond the questionnaire itself.

Councillor Griddale asked if the questionnaire would be available as a paper version only. The

Town Clerk advised that the questionnaire would also be available on line.

**RESOLVED: To receive the update.**

#### **b) Future of CCTV in Alnwick**

The Project & Funding Officer gave an update on the meeting with NCC to discuss CCTV provision in Alnwick which had confirmed that NCC will longer provide or support fixed CCTV cameras within the town. NCC had confirmed that they would be purchasing 20 re-deployable cameras and that whilst two would be allocated to each town these would be moved to cover major events around the county such as the Blyth Tall Ships Festival.

NCC had also confirmed that the existing cameras would be removed in June/July.

He confirmed that a meeting was being arranged with Alnwick Police to discuss:

- a) What CCTV coverage is needed and where
- b) What CCTV system(s) the Police would recommend
- c) How cameras can continue to be recorded and/or monitored at Alnwick Police Station
- d) What additional sources of funding, if any are available

Councillor S Allcroft asked how often the cameras were used in court. The Town Clerk advised that this was not known. He added that it was hoped that NCC would offer advice and support in the selection of cameras but this had not happened.

Councillor Gridale confirmed that Alnwick Garden are having a new CCTV system installed and had offered to share information with the Town Council.

Councillor G Mavin felt it was prudent that the Town Council had identified the need to allocate a significant budget for cameras. He confirmed that Inspector Truscott from Alnwick Police Station had offered support.

Councillor S Mavin explained that Berwick have had money Pub Watch for cameras.

Councillor Symmonds asked if NCC's re-deployable cameras would be fixed to lampposts. The Town Clerk confirmed they would. Councillor Symmonds felt the Town Council could use the infrastructure to deploy their cameras when NCC moved their re-deployable ones.

Councillor S Allcroft felt that less cameras might be needed if they were able to cover a wider area of the town.

Councillor Gridale asked if the cameras bought by the Town Council would support those put in place by NCC or the other way around. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council would need to speak to NCC and ask them not to remove any cameras from the town until the Town Council were in a position to replace.

**RESOLVED: i) To receive the update; ii) To liaise with Alnwick Police about the type of system needed; iii) To check with NCC about using their new infrastructure and asking them not to remove their cameras until the Town Council are in a position to replace them.**

Councillor Holt advised that there was a notice in Bailiffgate about drinking in the area and that a fine of £500 would be imposed and asked if there would be a camera located there.

Councillor Symmonds advised that the cameras would be deployed in priority order.

#### **e) Town Twinning visits 2016**

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that there were two Twin Town visits in 2016 and that a budget of £2,500 had been set for 2016/17.

VOERDE (Germany) are visiting in May and the Town Council are putting on a civic reception for them on May 18<sup>th</sup> at Alnwick Cricket Club. Around 30 people are expected a buffet has been

organised.

#### TIME KOMMUNE (Norway)

2016 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town Twinning and an official civic party will be visiting in August (at same time as Friends of Alnwick). The Civic party comprising seven people, including their Mayor and Chief Executive, will arrive on Wednesday August 24<sup>th</sup> and leave on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August. Town Council Officers had a meeting with representatives of the Friends of Bryne to discuss the draft itinerary. There will be some joint activities including a visit to Alnwick Castle and Gardens; an evening reception at RAF Boulmer and a visit to the Tall Ships at Blyth. The Friends of Bryne would like help the Town Council to:

- i) host a Civic Reception for the guests from Bryne, their hosts and people who were present at the Twinning ceremony. A 'Taste of the North' theme was suggested.
- ii) help with the cost of transport.

On Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August only the Civic party will be in Alnwick and thoughts are to use this day for the formal parts of the visit including a meeting between the Civic Party and members of the Town Council to discuss strategies and exchange views and ideas.

Other thoughts and ideas include each Mayor planting one of or Magna Carta oak trees in Swansfield Park and possibly unveil a new bench with plaque in the same location; if the Planning application is approved for the flagpole in Column Field the Norwegian flag could be flown during their visit; giving the civic party one of the 60 limited edition Magna Carta books the Town Council received as part of the Magna Carta Barons Project.

**RESOLVED: To commend the update.**

#### **FP 15/47 Consideration of Provision of a Council Van**

The Town Clerk advised that it would be advantageous for the Town Council to have a small van, to assist the Town Handyman with his work and for example to carry tools, materials and equipment, transport bins, slabs and seats and remove rubbish from around the town.

Councillor Symmonds felt that providing our own transport could assist in future recruitment. He also felt that it would provide good publicity for the Town Council as the vehicle would be seen around town.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk gave a summary of the information she had collated. For example, the van could be white and badged with Alnwick Town Council and logo and the cost of leasing and maintenance would be in the region of £200 per month over 36 or 48 month. The Town Clerk advised that the Committee had an unallocated budget of £1500 and that this could be used for the majority of the 2016/17 costs, the remaining 2016/17 costs could be obtained from within existing budgets.

**RESOLVED: To recommend to Full Council that in principle the Council agrees to take out a lease for a Council van, the details to be determined by the Finance & Policy Committee.**

#### **FP 15/48 Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm