



**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on  
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016  
at the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Councillors S Allcroft (Chair), P Allcroft, W Grisdale, P Holt, J Humphries, S Mavin, G Mavin, S Patience, M Swinbank and A Symmonds

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

**FP 16/01 Apologies**

Councillors P Broom and G Castle.

**FP 16/02 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**FP 16/03 Budget update 2016/17**

The Town Clerk went through the circulated budget as at 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016. He reminded councillors that the budget for 2016/17 was £144,248 and expenditure was currently £23,248. He explained that figures in red were carry forward figures from 2015/16. The expenditure to date was reviewed with the following highlighted by the Town Clerk:

ADMINISTRATION – budget increased by £4,500 to cover additional hours approved for the Assistant to the Town Clerk.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – £2,500 added from 2015/16.

TOWN TWINNING – cost of Voerde event.

GRANTS – £500 grant made to Alnwick Detachment of the Northumberland Army Cadets.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION – includes expenditure for new desk printer and cartridges.

INCOME – Currently £487.

Councillor Holt asked who NALC were. The Town Clerk advised that they were the Northumberland Association of Local Councils and they provide useful advice and information for local councils. Councillor G Mavin commented that the NALC news was very useful.

Councillor G Mavin asked about office accommodation. The Town Clerk advised that properties had been looked at around town including Gardiners Cottage but that none were ideal. He had been advised that the Town Council may be offered accommodation at the Playhouse when the arrangements were known. Councillor S Allcroft asked what the timescale was for this. The Town Clerk advised that this was unknown at the present time.

Councillor G Mavin asked how the article in the Gazette regarding Willowburn would affect the Town Council. The Town Clerk advised that Willowburn, along with other locations, may become de-listed in the Core Strategy. This would include the unit used by the Town Council under the Local Living umbrella.

Councillor G Mavin asked if the Town Council could talk to Local Living about new premises.

Councillor S Allcroft asked if the Town Council could speak to Lord Percy to ask if he had any other units available.

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

**FP 16/04 Updates on:**

a) **Housing Need Survey**

The Project & Finding Officer advised that the last return date for the Housing Needs

Survey was June 20<sup>th</sup>. To date 751 surveys have been returned, including on-line returns, equating to a 18.7% return rate.

The Town Clerk advised that return rates for the other Housing Surveys being carried were 23% for Hexham and 16% for Cramlington. He added that the Town Council had offered prizes to the value of £400. He reminded councillors that NCC were paying half the cost of the survey.

**RESOLVED: To receive the update.**

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

The Project & Funding Officer advised councillors that NCC were replacing the current CCTV provision with re-deployable cameras and that two would be allocated to each town but would be moved to cover major events such as the Blyth Tall Ships Festival.

He advised that he had met with Alnwick Garden and Berwick Town Council to discuss CCTV provision and met with Louise Stobbard from NCC and been given NCC's guidance specification. A high definition system costs about £1 - £1.5k per camera but that the cost was higher for ones in the NCC specification. He advised that at a meeting with the police they had specified locations within Alnwick where they felt CCTV would be most useful, based on anti-social behaviour and that they had also suggested that images were sent to the police station.

The Town Clerk advised that Alnwick could be covered by 7-8 cameras. He also advised that licences would need to be organised for any new buildings / locations.

Councillor S Allcroft asked if there was any need for cameras near to the new school site. The Town Clerk advised that none had been identified at this stage.

Councillor Patience asked if Gallery Youth could be included in conversations with the police.

Councillor G Mavin asked if all the wiring was being removed in Berwick. The Project & Funding Officer advised that he had been told that all the existing systems were being used and that NCC would be paying the related electricity bills.

Councillor G Mavin said he had been told cameras need line of sight to the police station.

The Town Clerk advised that it would be difficult to design a system which included two re-deployable cameras.

Councillor Swinbank asked if it was still the plan to take out the existing systems in three months' time. The Town Clerk confirmed that it but that this would be left until the last possible minute.

Councillor Swinbank asked if any of the new CCTV system at the Alnwick Garden would cover any of the town. The Town Clerk advised that this was unknown but that their CCTV system was mainly used for claims against the Garden.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the new CCTV system would be police monitored. The Town Clerk advised that it would be.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the new system could be monitored at night. The Town Clerk advised that it could and that the police also have ANPR (automatic number plate recognition).

Councillor S Allcroft said that a small working group had been suggested in the Project & Funding Officer's report. Councillor G Mavin suggested that the Town Clerk and Project & Funding Officer liaised with the police this should be sufficient.

Councillor Holt felt that Duty of Care needed to be looked at with the new school as some pupils need to be more aware of traffic in the town. Councillor Humphries felt that this

was more of an issue now as pupils needed to change sites for lessons.

**RESOLVED: To receive the update.**

### **c) Provision of a Council Van**

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she had looked at a wide range of vans and test driven three which could be bought / serviced locally. Of the three vans test driven (Vauxhall, Ford and Nissan) the Nissan NV200 was felt to be most suitable as it had slightly more room inside and a reversing camera. It also has doors on both sides meaning better road safety for unloading.

She advised that she had looked at prices to both lease and purchase the van and that the difference between them would only be a few pounds each month. The total cost would be around £12,000 over 4 years including road tax, insurance and servicing / maintenance.

The Town Clerk advised councillors that a decision was needed as to whether the Town Council leased or purchased a van. The current minute gave permission to lease, rather than purchase.

Councillor Swinbank asked what the re-sale value would be on a low mileage van. The Town Clerk said that as it was a fairly new model there were no re-sale values but felt that it should be around £2,000 - £3,000 depending on mileage.

Councillor Symmonds said he had looked on the internet and felt that leasing was the better option if the mileage was high but as the mileage would be low felt that a van should be purchased. He also felt that the Town Council should easily get 10 years use from it. He agreed with the suggestion of the Nissan van as it had air conditioning and a parking camera. He advised that a 5-year warranty should be asked for.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the recommendation to purchase, rather than lease a council van be taken to the next Full Council and that three quotes be obtained.

Councillor Grisdale agreed with Councillor Symmonds with regard to purchasing a van and that he could get costs for badging the van.

Councillor G Mavin felt that the supplier could be asked to discount the van in exchange for their advertising on the van.

The Town Clerk advised that three quotes would be obtained, ideally for the next Full Council meeting, so that if a decision was taken to purchase a decision could also be made as to the supplier.

**RESOLVED: i) To take forward to the Full Council meeting in July a recommendation to purchase, rather than lease a Council van and ii) To obtain three quotes for a Nisan NV200 van in white with a 5 year warranty.**

### **d) Completion of Neighbourhood Plan for Referendum**

The Town Clerk advised that there were some changes needed to the Neighbourhood Plan following the inspectors report. He confirmed that there was a budget of £2,500 (an underspend from 2015/16) which should be enough to undertake the work involved. This would be wording changes, design work and printing costs.

Councillor G Mavin asked why the wording needed to be changed. The Town Clerk advised that the inspectors report had suggested some policies be deleted from the document and as these may be mentioned in text or may lead onto somewhere else the document would need to be appropriately amended. He added that this should be a couple of days' work. Councillor G Mavin thought that NCC would have given the corrections they wanted. The Town Clerk advised that it would be best if the Town Council did the corrections as they were more familiar with the document.

Councillor S Mavin asked if any of the Community Action Proposals (CAPs) would need to be changed as well. The Town Clerk confirmed that this might be the case.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the reworked document would be available before the referendum. The Town Clerk advised that it would and that NCC cover all associated referendum costs. Councillor Grisdale added that the website would be updated with the amended document.

Councillor Patience advised that as the document would be changed the CAPs may change as well.

Councillor Humphries asked if September would still be the referendum date. The Town Clerk confirmed that it would be.

The Town Clerk added that part of the Project & Funding Officer's role was to pick up and deliver some of the CAPs in the Neighbourhood Plan. He confirmed that a schedule of actions would be brought to the next Full Council meeting in July.

**RESOLVED: To accept the update.**

#### **FP 16/05 Consideration of the new Grant application**

The Town Clerk advised that a grant application had been received from Alnwick Music Camp.

Councillor S Allcroft advised that the company had only been formed in April 2015 and that they were looking for the cost of the hire of the piano and the hall.

The Town Clerk advised that they had an overall budget for the music camp of £11.5k and that they had some contributions in kind so the remaining event cost was just under £5k.

He advised that so far they had four applicants, of which three were from Alnwick, and that there would be eight privately funded bursaries. They would be promoting the camp in the next few weeks to local schools as well as posters and digital marketing. He confirmed that no accounts had been submitted as they had only just opened a bank account. He reminded councillors that there were specific information requested for all grant applications.

Councillor Swinbank wondered why there were no accounts as this was the fourth year they had run the music camp.

Councillor G Mavin said he did not feel comfortable about the application.

Councillor Symmonds commented that he had felt uneasy from the start and whilst the music camp might be a winner in Malaysia he was sure about Alnwick. He added that if the grant application came to the December meeting when all grant applications were reviewed it would have to comply with all the requirements with regard to financial information. He suggested that if a grant was given that it should be left to the Chair and Town Clerk decided when to give the money.

Councillor Patience felt it was a shame that the grant application had not come in sooner.

**RESOLVED: To offer £200 provided the Chair and Town Clerk are satisfied with the details of the application and the financial information.**

#### **FP 16/06 Internal Auditors Report 2015/16**

The Town Clerk advised the committee that the internal auditor had completed his audit of the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. As this was his first audit he reviewed the systems as well as undertaking compliance work. Overall he was satisfied with all our internal controls. He made seven recommendations:

1. To use a Payment Authorisation Block system for invoices.
2. That independent checks of invoices are undertaken by councillors on a regular basis.
3. To introduce a pro forma invoice for payments made in the year which are not "invoice driven". This should be used with the payment authorisation block suggested in recommendation 1. clearly stating the reason payment was made.
4. To investigate the use of the County Council payroll service for Town & Parish councils.
5. That the Town Clerk and councillors review the existing regulations relating to the number of quotes required and decide when this should be done.
6. On one occasion the cash held by officers exceeded the insurance limit and the practice should be reviewed or relevant insurance obtained, whichever is the more cost effective.
7. That Bank Reconciliation Statements are reported to Full Council quarterly.

**RESOLVED: To agree the recommendations made by the internal auditor and action where appropriate.**

**FP 16/07 Any Other Urgent Business**

Town Team – The Town Clerk advised that the Town Team group needed more structure and that at the last meeting of the Town Team a discussion document had been circulated regarding a Town Team constitution. He felt that a response was needed from the Town Council and advised that he would send the discussion paper to the members of the Finance & Policy Committee for comments.

Meeting closed at 8.31pm