

Alnwick Town Team

Minutes of the meeting of Alnwick Town Team meeting held at 6pm on Tuesday 8th November 2017 at The Pavilion, Alnwick Garden.

Present: Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Chairman), Mark Brassell (MB) (Alnwick Garden), David Lovie (DL) (Civic Society), Elizabeth Jones (EJ) (Alnwick in Bloom), Carlo Biagioni (CB) (Chamber of Trade). Tim Kirton (TK) (Alnwick Town Council)

1. Apologies for absence

None received.

2. Minutes of the last meeting, held on 11th October 2017

These were approved as a true and correct record.

3. Matters Arising

MB reported that he had received only four items in response to his appeal for material to be included in the Lantern Parade leaflet; this was a missed opportunity but The Alnwick Garden had tried very hard to involve the town centre traders. This was noted and agreed.

CB regretted the poor response from traders but reported that as Chairman of the CoT he was working with PA to produce a joint leaflet for the events of the 17th and 18th.

4. "More in Morpeth" Website and suggestion of similar in Alnwick

TK had met with CB upon CB's return from holiday to discuss the proposal to contact the Morpeth Chamber of Trade for further investigation into this.

CB advised the meeting that his initial feeling is that the Alnwick Chamber of Trade will be reluctant to take this further however he will raise it for discussion at the Chamber's next meeting next Tuesday, 14th November. Creation of the site would not be so much a problem as maintaining and updating it regularly. CB felt that having a similar website for Alnwick would require a lot of work and he was aware that Morpeth Chamber has staff of the Sanderson Arcade working on the website constantly.

MB reminded the meeting that grants are available to non-profit-making bodies to create websites and suggested that if each Alnwick Chamber of Trade member could each contribute £5 to £10 per month this would be more than sufficient to pay someone to maintain the site.

CB will take this to the Chamber meeting next Tuesday and report back to the Town Team's next meeting.

5. Updates

a) Town Council (Tim Kirton)

Fingerpost signage and Lectern map: All the fingers and the fingerposts were delivered in black and the lettering and edging on the fingers is currently being painted gold prior to installation which will now probably be after Christmas owing to the painter's workload.

Business Forum Meeting, November 21st: TK reminded all that the next Business Forum meeting will be held on Tuesday November 21st with registration at 5.30pm for a 6pm start. Copies of the agenda were circulated; all Town Team members are welcome to attend. The four presentations will centre on employability, apprenticeships, training, connection to superfast broadband and grants to enable businesses to obtain all these.

b) Alnwick in Bloom (Elizabeth Jones)

The “It’s Your Neighbourhood” presentations in Gateshead were very well attended. Alnwick had submitted 15 entries and the Royal Horticultural Society had assessed 6 of these as “Outstanding”, 8 as “Thriving” and 1 as “Developing” plots.

c) The Alnwick Garden (Mark Brassell)

MB reported the Garden has had a very busy season in 2017 and all-round the year has been very positive. The Alnwick Garden is up for two major awards having reached the final of the North-East Tourism Award where it is up against Beamish and Kielder and the National Social Enterprise Awards in London.

(d) County Council

No report

(e) Civic Society

DL reported on the launch of the “Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes” booklet the previous Friday which had been attended by 50 people and hosted by the Mayor. Copies of the document were circulated to Town Team members. DL said that The Mayor’s letter of support and Cllr. Castle’s support had both made a great difference to securing grant funding for the publication and he again expressed thanks for this. Comments on the publication received so far were all very positive.

The Chairman said the publication was a commendable, accessible and scholarly booklet which was easy reading but in which the detail and history is significant. The artwork reinforces the narrative significantly. The publication is outstanding and he offered congratulations to the Civic Society. The Chairman also said that the fact that they won the grant required shows the drive of the group and that this is a significant production.

The Chairman also reminded the meeting that the next heritage activity would be the unveiling of the William Davison Blue Plaque, to which a great many people had contributed, at the Specsavers property at 47 Bondgate Within at 2.30pm on 16th November.

(f) Chamber of Trade

CB reported that the Chamber of Trade members had had a very positive summer, one of the best trading seasons ever.

The B&Bs have had a “fantastic” summer and are having a busy November. Accommodation providers are now reaching the point in extending the season which they were aiming for three years ago.

MB thought that Brexit and the weakness of the pound had attracted more overseas visitors and at the same time Northumberland is becoming far more well known as a holiday destination, with TV programmes such as Vera and Robson Green’s Northumberland being helpful. It has been noticeable how many more Dutch visitors have been coming off the ferries while there had been a 500% increase in Chinese visitors over the last 2 years. The Chairman reminded the meeting that Alnwick’s town leaflet had been translated into Dutch and Chinese on the Council’s website.

CB is working with PA on producing a Christmas leaflet to promote businesses, to be distributed at the Christmas lights Switch-on and the Lantern Parade.

A line of cherry trees has been planted by the Alnwick The Garden Town group along the footpath in the Column Field running alongside Denwick Lane. Over 30 people had attended to plant the trees including several from The Alnwick Garden for which CB expressed thanks to MB.

A Ceilidh night and supper will be held on Friday 26th January (the night after Burns' Night) in Northumberland Hall to raise money for Alnwick the Garden Town. Tickets are £15 per head.

The Alnwick Garden Town group is working on the possible installation of an arch entrance to the Column Field, to mirror the arch across the road leading into Barter Books. Most of the finance is already in place to pay for this and it is hoped that the balance will be secured by January 2018. However, the structure will need a planning approval from NCC. DL asked CB whether he could supply any images of the proposed arch for the Civic Society to look at. **Action: CB.**

It is also proposed to install a Sensory Garden at the Hospital end of the Column Field and to install a seat, a lectern and an interpretive plaque underneath the column at a point to look over the Capability Brown landscape.

CB also said that he felt that Column Field should be renamed "Column Park" to reflect its change from a simple field to a proper park for the enjoyment of residents and visitors; CB is investigating whether this renaming could be done, for example Northumberland Estates as the owner and NCC as the Leaseholder would probably need to approve the change.

(g) Local Living/Alnwick Markets

No report

6. Any Other Business

DL advised that the Alnwick branch of the Northumberland and Durham Family History Society would like to share its programme of speakers with members of the Town Team and their organisations. DL will email an electronic version of the programme to TK for email circulation to all. **Actions: DL and TK**

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 6th December 2017 at 5.30pm at The Pavilion, Alnwick Garden.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm