



Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday 14th January 2021 via Zoom at 6.30m

- Present** Cllrs L Wearn, S Allcroft, P Broom, G Castle, P Edge, B Grisdale, J Humphries, M Harrington, J Lyford, S Patience, M Swinbank, A Symmonds, G Watson and L Wood-Mitchell.
- In attendance** P Hatley, Town Clerk & Chief Officer; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer.
- C20/102 Questions from the public**
None.
- C20/103 Apologies for absence**
None
- C20/104 Declarations of Interest**
Councillor Castle declared a non-pecuniary interest in all County Council matters.
- C20/105 Approval of the Minutes of the Last meeting (10th December 2020)**
The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 10th December 2020 were tabled for approval.
- RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2020 were agreed as a true record.**
- C20/106 Matters Arising**
C20/93 Advisory Groups – Councillor Swinbank asked when the next Alnwick Partnership meeting would take place. Councillor Wearn advised that his was planned for the beginning of February.
- C20/107 Mayor's Report**
The Mayor reported that she had undertaken any additional activities other than attendance at meetings. She advised that it had been agreed that the prescription delivery service would be offered again and would be covered in more detail later in the meeting.
- C20/108 Updates**
- a) County Council issues**
Councillor Castle reported that he had received several questions about travelling during COVID including to Alnmouth beach for exercise. He explained that whilst the law does not prevent this the guidance from the police was to exercise locally.
- Councillor Broom reported that some of the footpaths around Alnwick were in a very bad state and asked if NCC could look at them.
- Councillor Castle advised that an email could be sent to Cussins about the state of the footpath at Peter's Mill.
- Councillor Patience explained footpaths were always more of an issue in January and February due to the weather.
- b) Advisory Groups**
- i. Retail and Town Centre
Councillor Harrington reported that the group had a catch-up meeting on January 6th. He reported that the link between Alnwick Garden and the town had certainly helped increase footfall in the town. He explained he had posted on Facebook about the Retail / Town Centre Advisory Group showing the Town Council were active in the town.

He explained that the new digital Town Trail system was progressing and would hopefully be available shortly.

ii. Environmental

Councillor Watson advised the next meeting would be after this Full Council meeting.

iii. Sustainable Travel

Councillor Swinbank reported that an Alnwick Greenway site visit had taken place. The group were also working with the Ramblers to hopefully get some of the lost footpaths around Alnwick reinstated.

Councillor Harrington reported that he had walked up the old railway line to Rugley Bridge and that this was a very good local walk.

iv. Housing, Economy and Employment

Councillor Lyford reported that she had done some scoping work on a focus for the group. This would include looking at the Broadband need within the town including for visitors. She explained that the Housing Needs survey was 5 years old so a new one needed to be done. A LinkedIn group had been suggested for the group and she was looking for more people to join the Advisory Group.

RESOLVED: To note the updates.

C20/109 On-Line Banking – Update

The Town Clerk advised that the first on-line payments had been made for December's approved payment list. Councillor Grisdale had done the final on-line approval and it the plan going forward that signatories would take it in turn to do this. All payments had been done online except for two which had been paid by cheque.

He explained that Councillor Symmonds was helping with the Lloyds investment and that The Town Clerk would be made a signatory for the Santander investment.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

C20/110 Access to IT for learning – Financial Support

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council had agreed money to the four Alnwick schools for additional IT facilities to help during Covid. (DCHS £2,000; St Michael's, St Pauls and Swansfield Park £800 each).

Councillor Humphries asked if the Chromebooks would be used at home or at school. The Town Clerk advised that they would be used at home to help those with no access to IT.

Councillor Grisdale passed on thanks from Swansfield Park School for the support.

Councillor Broom asked if Swansfield Park School could make use of more support.

Councillor Grisdale advised that they were okay at the moment.

Councillor Lyford asked if the schools did household surveys about the lack of data.

Councillor Grisdale advised they did and that he would speak to Swansfield Park School.

Councillor Lyford advised that the Town Council could consider buying data for people to use at home.

RESOLVED: To note the update and spend of £4,400.

C20/111 Councillor Vacancy

The Town Clerk advised that there had been no election triggered so the current vacancy in Castle Ward could be filled by co-option. He showed councillors the co-option notice he would issue the following day noting that any co-option applications would be reviewed at February's Full Council meeting.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

C20/112 HRH Queen Elizabeth – Platinum Jubilee (a report from Councillor Watson)
Councillor Watson explained that the Queens Platinum Jubilee would be in June 2022 and that he was requesting that the Town Council set up a group to co-ordinate local group to organise events to celebrate the Jubilee.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell felt the matter could go to the Retail / Town Centre Advisory Group first. Councillor Harrington said that he would prefer if it was a separate group.

Councillor Allcroft said she was happy to be involved in the group.

Councillor Symmonds said that he supported the setting up of a group.

Councillor Castle supported setting up a working group and for them to put forward ideas to Full Council.

Councillor Broom suggested that the Project & Funding Officer was involved to look for relevant grants.

RESOLVED: To approve Councillor Watson to co-ordinate a Queen's Platinum Working Group.

C20/113 Thomas Percy Wood (a report from Councillor Watson had been circulated)
Councillor Watson explained that this had come from the Environmental Advisory Group through which the Civic Society had requested that the Town Council look at the wood. He advised that he had spoken to NCC about the works which needed to be done. He felt it was a fantastic asset to the town and advised that he would like approval to have further talks with NCC about the possibility of Alnwick Town Council taking ownership of the wood and the adjoining field. He added that he would be looking for NCC to provide an endowment fund.

Councillor Castle explained that the field still existed because Sports England wanted it left as a public green space.

Councillor Edge thought it was a great space with sea views. He felt the Town Council needed to be cautious about ownership and could have a lease agreement the same as Bullfield Community Orchard. He explained that trees work was expensive and that the space needed to be enhanced.

Councillor Swinbank supported a discussion with NCC. He felt it was a good public space and that the key would be getting local people involved in the project.

Councillor Patience welcomed and supported the proposal. She reminded councillors that all the trees on the site had TPOs and that there might still be conditions on the field.

Councillor Castle advised that he would check and report back.

Councillor Watson advised that he had a meeting with Julie Parkinson from NCC.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

C20/114 Prescription Delivery Service
The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that volunteers currently delivered around 12 sets of meds each month, including four on a weekly basis. She reported that two of the prescription team were on board so was able to offer more formalised delivery slots - Tuesdays & Thursdays at Boots and Wednesdays at Well.

She advised that if any councillors were still delivering meds themselves these could be passed back to the meds team to handle.

A post on the COVID Facebook encouraging people to email where possible and. Councillor Wearn and Watson have kindly agreed to have their phone numbers given out at Boots and Well to take any new requests.

She advised that councillors may get calls from people who contacted them previously so they should take the details and send them through to her and she would allocate accordingly. She didn't think the need would be same as in previous lockdowns as people had found alternative ways of getting their meds. So far two requests have been received with the first delivery made today.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

C20/115 Budget 2021/22 – To agree the budget for 2021/22

The Town Clerk explained that each of the Council's committees had met and had approved their recommended budgets for 2021/22. These now need to be approved by Full Council:

Proposed budgets 2021/22

Cemetery	£20,900
Recreation & Amenities	£114,850
Finance & Policy	£194,733
TOTAL	£330,483

RESOLVED: To agree an overall Budget for 2021/22 of £330,483.

C20/116 Precept 2021/22 – To agree the precept for 2021/22

The Town Clerk explained that, having agreed the budget for 2021/22, the Council must then set the precept. At the Finance and Policy Committee on 3rd December 2020, the Committee considered the extent to which reserves should be used to support the 2021/22 budget and the Committee has recommended were not used to reduce the precept in 2021/22.

He explained that the Finance & Policy Committee had also reviewed the proposed Town Council precept for 2020/21 in comparison to other larger Northumberland Town Councils:

Council	Total Precept	Band D
Newbiggin	£254,981	£173.38
Choppington	£407,202	£157.93
Pegswood	£122,280	£141.43
East Bedlington	£279,594	£138.00
Blyth	£1,287,196	£127.65
Seaton Valley	£579,890	£121.00
Morpeth	£645,037	£120.32
Amble	£211,340	£118.78
Alnwick	£329,290	£116.40
Cramlington	£947,000	£113.08
Prudhoe	£370,040	£108.93
Ashington	£796,180	£106.94
Berwick	£265,656	£77.08
Hexham	£333,000	£76.40
Ponteland	£422,018	£73.87

He advised that if a precept of £330,483 was approved this would be an overall increase of £1,193 on the 2020/21 precept. The 2021/22 Council Tax Base is 2839.13 Band D equivalent dwellings which is an increase of 10.19 on 2020/21. With this Council Tax Base, the Town Council precept for a Band D property would remain at £116.40, the same as the previous financial year. This would mean that the Alnwick Band D Town

Council precept would be around, or slightly higher than the Northumberland Town Council average.

RESOLVED: To agree a Precept for 2021/22 of £330,483.

C20/117 To receive the Minutes of the Committees

Minutes of the Planning, Highways & Transport (17th December 2020) were tabled to be received.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways & Transport held on 17th December 2020 were received.

C20/118

a) Payments

PAYEE	TOTAL	VAT	DETAILS
NCC Payroll (Aug 20)	£11,265.66	£5.00	Payroll (Aug 2020)
Northumberland County Council	£2,700.00	£0	Rent for Greenwell Lane (qtr3)
Northumberland County Council	£2,700.00	£0	Rent for Greenwell Lane (qtr2)
Northumberland County Council	£214.80	£35.80	Sign repairs
Diamond Business Group	£7.73	£1.29	Copying charges (Oct 20)
Chubb Fire & Security Ltd	£202.92	£33.82	Annual contract for Cemetery
Starboard Systems Limited	£876.00	£146.00	Annual licence for Scribe Accounts software
Electratest Northern Ltd	£54.00	£9.00	PAT Testing at Cemetery
Glasdon	£416.38	£69.40	New locks for Brunel bins
J Pibworth	£492.62	£80.61	Bulbs and planting
J Pibworth	£480.93	£80.15	Hand sanitiser, gloves and masks
Davidson & Son	£21.46	£3.58	Replacement light
Living Wage Foundation	£72.00	£12.00	2020 Accreditation fee (replacement)
James N McLean	£132.50	£22.08	Materials & tools (Nov)
Blackshaws	£329.00	£54.83	Van service
James N McLean	£174.28	£29.05	Materials & tools (Dec)
Alnwick Freeman	£475.00	£0.00	Painting Town Hall passageway
Northumberland County Council	£11,591.28	£5.00	Payroll (Dec 2020)
APS Wood Works	£1,528.23	£0.00	Construction ramp at ACC for COVID vaccinations
Total	£33,734.79	£587.61	

* Indicates LGA 1972 s137 Expenditure

The Town Clerk reported that the following Covid support payments had been made:

Alnwick Food Bank £500

Community @NE66 £500

CAB Northumberland £500

Alnwick & Denwick Relief in Need £500

The following invoices were paid by direct debit & were reported for information:			
Barclays Bank charges	£24.15	£0.00	Bank charges Oct/Nov
Barclays	£24.00	£0.00	Charges for 4 Card Readers
British Gas	£28.08	£0.00	Cemetery Lodge contract
Corona Energy	£315.49	£15.02	Electricity charges Oct
Biffa	£119.71	£19.95	Trade waste Oct
BT	£137.47	£22.91	Phone (Cemetery / Greenwell Lane (Nov))
Wave	£36.72	£0.00	Water charges (allotments)
Wave	£834.79	£0.00	Water charges (allotments)
Wave	£157.68	£0.00	Water charges (Cem main tap)
Wave	£12.20	£0.00	Water charges (Cem new tap)
	£990.16	£132.78	

RESOLVED: i) To approve the payments £33,734.79 and note the direct debit payments of £990.16.

b) Income & Expenditure

The Assistant to the Town Clerk reported that the Income & Expenditure sheet as at December 31st 2020 had been completed. It showed total Income of £382,103.29 and total Expenditure of £234,431.88.

She explained that the Cemetery Income was currently at £38,657.07 (includes a rebate of £332.07 from Npower) compared the 2019/20 end of year figure of £25,525. She also reported that allotment rent income was at £2,452.50 with most of the payments being made online.

The current expenditure on Covid related items was £8,053.80 and includes the £4,000 County Councillor payments.

She advised that she would email the sheet to all councillors and that if anyone had any questions they should email her.

C20/119 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Harrington requested a new bin litterbin near to York Crescent / Auger Terrace.

Councillor Grisdale asked when the new website would be ready. The Town Clerk advised that it should be ready soon and let Councillor Grisdale know when it was.

Councillor Grisdale advised that Jane Coltman had a spare day which she could offer the Town Council.

Councillor Symmonds felt the Town Council needed to promote what they do and the things they pay for.

The public meeting closed at 7.54pm.