



## Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 via Zoom at 6.30m

- Present** Cllrs L Wearn, S Allcroft, L Aynsley, P Broom, G Castle, P Edge, B Gridale, J Humphries, M Harrington, J Lyford, S Patience, M Swinbank, 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.

### **C20/71 Questions from the public**

The Town Clerk advised that the following question had been received:

Would the Council consider producing an Annual Report to be distributed to households and businesses in the town? It might cover the calendar year, financial year or other twelve-month period deemed appropriate and would consist of a description of the activities and achievements of the Council over the last year, together with a summary of income and expenditure and an outline of its priorities for the forthcoming year. Professionally produced, and written in a lively style, the report would encourage civic engagement with the work of the Council, particularly if comments and suggestions for future work were sought. And, when it becomes once more possible, the report would provide the basis for an annual Open Meeting in which Councillors and local people could exchange their experiences of the town, its services and facilities, and aspirations for the future.

#### Councillor comments:

Councillor Allcroft thought it would be a good way of informing the town what the Town Council were doing She was unsure of the costs and time it might take.

Councillor Gridale felt the new website would do everything an annual report could do.

Councillor Aynsley felt the Town Council was undervalued a many people did not know what the Town Council do.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell thought it was a good idea and that an A4 sheet might be sufficient.

Councillor Swinbank thought that external communications with residents was important and that a report would be a very good step forward.

Councillor Patience supported the previous comments. The Town Council had started something similar with the COVID newsletters and these could be carried on a quarterly basis then an Annual Report produced.

Councillor Humphries agreed that the new website would help with resident communications. He also felt that better use could be made of the Town Council's noticeboard and that additional noticeboards could be installed.

Councillor Harrington felt that some paperwork was produced unnecessarily. He felt that the website would be most people of first port of call so the newsletters could be done quarterly in The Cryer.

Councillor Watson agreed that it was a good idea and that the website be used to present Town Council news. He advised that annual reports take a lot of time and that perhaps the Chairs of the Committees could write them.

The Town Clerk advised that he was supportive of a Town Council Annual Report but that it needed to be linked to the budget process.

Councillor Lyford thought that quarterly newsletters were useful as they could reflect both forwards and backwards. She felt that that an e-bulletin could be sent linked to the website.

Councillor Grisdale explained that Chairs of the Committees may not have the necessary writing skills. He felt the Town Council needed to decide what the reports are for and what the message is.

Councillor Allcroft agreed that a quarterly report, on the website, would be good and that she could do notes as Chair of Finance & Policy for the report.

Councillor Castle felt that the report needed to be agreed by Full Council before distribution and that the Town Council need to agree how they would present the report.

Councillor Patience thought the Communications Working Group could discuss this further.

Councillor Broom advised that as all Town Council minutes are published on the website the report need only be a summary of those.

Councillor Wearn said she agreed in principle and that it go to the Communications Working Group for discussion then a report brought back to Full Council for agreement. She felt that the report should not just rely on the website.

**RESOLVED: i) To respond to the resident ii) To discuss at a Communications Working Group and bring back recommendations to Full Council.**

**C20/72 Apologies for absence**

Councillor Symmonds.

**C20/73 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Castle declared a non-pecuniary interest in all County Council matters.  
Councillor Wood-Mitchell declared a pecuniary interest in Item 15a) Payments.

**C20/74 Approval of the Minutes of the Last meeting (8<sup>th</sup> October 2020)**

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were agreed as a true record.**

**C20/75 Matters Arising**

C20/59 Councillor Castle advised that Lindisfarne Gym had been decommissioned and was no longer accessible to the public.

**C20/76 Councillor Resignation**

The Mayor advised that she had received a resignation from Alan Waton which meant that there was vacancy on Castle Ward.

The Town Clerk advised that a notice would be published giving 14 working days for 10 signatures to be submitted to NCC requesting an election, which would take place in May 2021. If an election was not called then co-option could take place.

**RESOLVED: To note the resignation and the update on the process for new councillors.**

**C20/77 Committee and Advisory Group Vacancies**

The Town Clerk explained that due to the resignation of Councillor Waton there were a number of vacancies.

The Town Clerk advised that Councillor Wood-Mitchell had expressed an interest in filling the vacancy on Finance & Policy.

Councillor Patience felt that the vacancies should be left unfilled until a new councillor was appointed and given the opportunity to select committees.

Councillor Castle offered to stand down from Finance & Policy should the new councillor wish to sit on the Finance & Policy Committee. He also offered to fill the vacancy on the Cemetery Committee if needed.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell felt sure that councillor would stand down if the new councillor wanted a committee place where there were no vacancies

**RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Wood-Mitchell to the Finance & Policy committee.**

The Town Clerk explained that the resignation of Councillor Waton had also left a vacancy for a Chair of the Housing, Economy and Employment Working Group which Councillor Lyford had expressed an interest in filling.

**RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Lyford as Chair of the Housing, Economy and Employment Advisory Group.**

**C20/78 Mayor's Report**

The Mayor reported that she, and the Deputy Mayor, had attended the Remembrance Sunday ceremony at 11am on Sunday November 8<sup>th</sup>. She felt that the ceremony, held adjacent to the civic flagpole in Column Field, although very reduced in numbers had been very dignified.

She had also attended a short ceremony on Wednesday November 11<sup>th</sup> at 11am which had also been attended by a small number of veterans.

**C20/79 Updates**

**a) County Council issues**

Councillor Castle reported that there would be £43 mill reduction in NCC's budget over the next 3 years with an £8mill reduction in year 1. A consultation would go out shortly.

He reported that the 20-mph speed limit zone had been installed in the town centre and that there had been consultation about yellow lines in Lisburn Street.

A report of broken glass and rubbish near to Peter's Mill bridge had been dealt with.

Councillor Grisdale asked if the budget cuts would affect Alnwick and if the Town Council should increase its precept and be more creative and hands on with what they do.

Councillor Castle advised that one of his objectives since the demise of the District Council was to enhance the role of the Town Council. He said that NCC has no issue with The Town Council wanting to take expand their role. NCC are trying to balance the books so the Town Council might want to think about taking on more services and what they want the town to offer in the long run.

Councillor Harrington reported that he had been contacted by a resident about the Customer Services offices being open. NCC's website states that the customer service offices are still open which is incorrect. Councillor Castle advised he would report this.

Councillor Swinbank asked if Councillor Castle knew any specifics for Alnwick and if the consultation was out at present. Councillor Castle advise that the consultation was sent to the Mayor. Councillor Castle also confirmed that there were small grants for businesses which he had sent to the Chamber of Trade.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council were always ahead of NCC in setting its budgets and precept.

Councillor Castle reported that money had been set aside to improve the toilets in The Shambles.

Councillor Wearn said she like to know how NCC takes decisions to allocate money to Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Watson thought the Town Council should be careful in agreeing to take over services.

Councillor Edge agreed that the Town Council shouldn't take things on for the sake of pride in having and felt that the more in advance cuts in NCC budgets were known the better it would be for planning their Town Council budgets.

Councillor Humphries felt that if the Town Council took on any additional services from NCC they would need to be given the decision-making authority and powers.

### **b) Alnwick Forum**

The Town Clerk updated on several items:

New Car Park - a new car park for Alnwick was in NCC's budget.

Lindisfarne School site – development would start in January and that the details were on the Planning Portal and suggested councillor had a look.

Greenway – a project to create an official walking / cycling route was being developed.

The Cobbles – the two designs being developed further should be available to the Forum in February 2021 and will then be bought to the Town Council for comment.

Councillor Castle advised that the Greenway had a lot of support but there had been some issues with ownership which Julie Parkinson had provided a map for. He added that Colin Barnes form Northumberland Estates would welcome a discussion.

**RESOLVED: To receive the updates and the Town Clerk to organise a meeting with Colin Barnes to discuss the Greenway.**

### **c) Advisory Groups**

#### **i. Town Centre and Retail**

Councillor Harrington reported that the Town Centre Advisory Group would be getting funding for additional Christmas Lights in the town centre. He also advised that there would be no Christmas Market.

Councillor Broom reported that he had received reported that the new seats under the fish market end of Northumberland Hall had been causing litter. Councillor Harrington advised that a bin would be installed shortly.

#### **ii. Sustainable Travel**

Councillor Swinbank reported that the group had worked on the LTP priorities. They had also been involved in a traffic flow survey and at reinstating some footpaths in the town. NCC 4 limited routes – 2 cycling and 2 walking.

The Alnwick Greenway would be very useful, and he hoped that it could be made accessible to everyone including wheelchair users.

Councillor Broom reported that the footpath from Stobhill was currently being widened. Councillor Castle advised that NCC had received the requested the previous year.

Councillor Patience asked what the reason was for the loss of footpaths. Councillor Swinbank advised that it was an historic issue.

Councillor Castle advised that NCC had 2 full time officers looking at this area with a view to reinstating some footpaths.

Councillor Harrington thought that the Town Council should report what they are doing so that residents are aware of what the Town Council are doing.

Councillor Patience thought it had been agreed that a press release would be issued after Full Council meetings. The Town Clerk agreed that communication was very important and that the new website (which is 2<sup>nd</sup> draft) would help with this issue.

### iii. Environmental

Councillor Watson reported on the progress towards the Environmental CAPs in the Neighbourhood Plan:

ENVCAP2 Tree planting – Councillor Edge’s project at the Community Centre will be planting 15 trees along with bulbs and wildflowers.

176 cherry trees, a gift from the Japanese Ambassador to the UK, will be delivered over the winter. Sites have already been identified but as there will be more trees than originally expected councillors can suggest additional sites.

Other sites have been identified for tree planting, including fruit trees, and phase 2 of the ribbon of trees project will be done before end of March.

Thomas Percy Wood - Alnwick Civic Society have expressed interest in being involved in a community partnership with the Town Council and NCC to manage the woods. NCC have responded positively to the suggestion and a virtual meeting will now take place to discuss this further.

ENVCAP4 Allotments - Looking at the provision of water to St George’s allotments and developing the unused land at Ratten Row.

ENVCAP5 Tree survey -a tree survey will be undertaken in conjunction with NCC. This may take some time as the available data is not in a form that can be easily used.

Councillor Edge explained that there had been signage agreed for Thomas Percy Wood and he would send details of this.

Councillor Watson advised that he had contacted Anne Marie Trevelyan about the proposed new quarry and that she would be able to get involved at this stage.

### **RESOLVED: To note the updates.**

#### **C20/80**

#### **Covid19 Support – Member’s Scheme Contribution**

Councillor Wearn reminded councillors that NCC had allocated £4,000, through their county councillors members scheme, to support Covid relate activities. £2,000 had already been distributed so there was £2,000 to distribute.

Councillor Castle recommended that the remaining money be give not the Alnwick & Denwick Relief in Need Charity (ADRIN).

The Town Clerk advised that £500 had been allocate to Alnwick Food Bank, Community@NE66, Alnmouth Parish Council and Lesbury Parish Council.

Councillor Lyford asked if Alnwick & Denwick Relief in Need Charity had a process for recognising need. The Town Clerk advised that an application form, with a means system, was already in place and that completed application forms were reviewed by the Charity Trustees.

Councillor Lyford advised that there was an issue around fuel poverty especially with social housing tenants having cards go top up. She advised that CAB run an energy

voucher scheme but was unsure of the application process which she thought might be a once a year process.

Councillor Swinbank suggested that the Mayor and Town Clerk research possible uses of the funding.

Councillor Patience thought that the CAB could be given £1,000 to use just for energy vouchers.

Councillor Castle recommended delegating authority to the Mayor and Town Clerk to decide how the £2,000 was spent.

**RESOLVED: To give delegated authority to the Town Clerk, in conjunction with the Mayor, to agree expenditure of the £2,000 Covid funding from NCC.**

#### **C20/81 Scribe Accounts**

The Town Clerk reported that the new software was being trialled and requested that the Town Council purchase the new system at a cost of £790. This would enable multiple users and allow financial reports to be done automatically saving officer time.

Councillor Watson asked what the length of the licence was. The Town Clerk advised that it was for 1 year.

Councillor Allcroft endorsed the recommendation to purchase the accounts software.

**RESOLVED: To purchase Scribe Accounting software at a cost of £790 a year.**

#### **C20/82 Constitution**

The Town Clerk explained that he had sent out an amended version of the Constitution which he recommended councillors agreed was the baseline version.

Councillor Castle recommended that councillors agreed to the Constitution sent to councillors be used as the baseline version.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell said that she did not like the use of the word etc in the document.

Councillor Swinbank asked if a timetable could be clarified. The Town Clerk advised he would advise the timetable once he had reviewed the changes needed to the Standing Orders to adopt digital banking.

The Town Clerk advised that the changes could either go to Finance & Policy or a Working Group set up for going to Full Council for approval.

**RESOLVED: To approve the format of the Constitution sent out by the Town Clerk as the baseline for changes.**

#### **C20/83 Meeting Schedule**

The Town Clerk advised that with the new lockdown in place the meeting schedule needed to be reviewed. At present on-line meetings would continue but that they:

1. Could stay as in the meeting schedule and stay as on-line meetings
2. Are reviewed at each Full Council meeting
3. Are reviewed at each Full Council but any decision needed between meetings re delegated to the Town Clerk

Councillor Wearn advised that if councillors decided to review at each Full Council meeting and things happen in between meetings

Councillor Swinbank suggested that the schedule was reviewed at each Full Council meetings.

Councillor Humphries explained that some of the decision would depend on the locations being open to us.

**RESOLVED: To continue with Zoom meeting until such time as they can be reviewed safely.**

**C20/84**

**To receive the Minutes of the Committees**

Minutes of the Planning, Highways & Transport (15<sup>th</sup> October 2020) were tabled to be received.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning, Highways & Transport held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were received.**

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020) were tabled to be received.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 were received.**

Minutes of the Cemetery Committee Meeting (5<sup>th</sup> November 2020) were tabled to be received with the proposed fee structure for 2021-22 attached.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were received.**

**C20/85**

**a) Payments**

<b>PAYEE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>VAT</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>
JRC Motors Ltd	£75.00	£5.00	MOT and repairs to van
Northumberland County Council	£12,960.00	£2,160.00	Spring & summer bedding
Northumberland County Council	£2,520.00	£420.00	Extra grass cuts (Oct & Mar)
Northumberland County Council	£5,690.41	£948.40	Additional clean of toilets
Northumberland Estates	£32.14	£5.36	Materials
Diamond Group	£102.19	£17.03	Copying / printing (Jul - Aug)
Rix Petroleum North East	£583.23	£27.77	Gas oil
James N McLean	£524.36	£87.39	Materials & tools (allotments, cemetery and play areas)
James McLean	£183.47	£36.69	
Town & Country Tree Surgeons	£2,160.00	£360.00	Lime tree pollarding at Cemetery
CBS	£875.80	£0.00	Town Maps

**£25,706.60    £4,067.64**

**The following grant payments were also presented for payment:**

<b>PAYEE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Alnwick Music Festival	£4,500.00
Alnwick in Bloom	£5,700.00
Alnwick and District Playhouse Trust	£15,000.00
Bailiffgate Museum	£2,500.00

Hospice Care North Northumberland	£4,000.00*
Northumbrian CAB – Alnwick Office	£4,000.00
Community@NE66	£1,000.00
North East Equality & Diversity Ltd	£1,000.00
Community Action Northumberland	£1,000.00
Lionhearts (Alnwick)	£850.00
Alnwick Cricket Club	£640.00
Lionheart Radio	£1,760.00
Alnwick Music Society	£1,000.00
Investing in Alnwick	£1,000.00
Loving Alnwick	£400.00

**£44,350.00**

\* Indicates LGA 1972 s137 Expenditure

The following invoices were paid by direct debit & were reported for information:			
Barclays Bank	£27.25	£0.00	Bank charges for July-Aug
Wave	£39.34	£0.00	Water (Rob Fount)
Wave	£843.96	£0.00	Water (Allotments)
Wave	£155.45	£0.00	Water (Cemetery)
Wave	£23.50	£0.00	Water (Cemetery)
British Gas	£25.63	£0.00	Gas contract Cemetery Lodge
Biffa Waste	£149.64	£24.94	Trade waste July
Corona Energy	£92.09	£4.60	Electricity charges Aug
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1356.86</b>	<b>£29.54</b>	

**RESOLVED: To approve the payments £25,706.60, grant payments of £44,350 and note the direct debit payments of £1,356.86.**

#### **b) Investments**

The Town Clerk advised that he had previously reported that two of the investments had matured. Councillors had requested he researched potential interest rates. He advised that he had spoken to an Officer at NCC who advised that the most relevant investment category would only get about 0.75%. He proposed that the investments are both reinvested for one year and reviewed after that.

Councillor Allcroft advised that she had spoken to the Town Clerk about splitting the investments to have no more than £80k in each account.

Councillor Broom asked how much money was in the Swansfield Endowment as he wanted to use some of the money on new play equipment which would not be possible if the money was reinvested. The Town Council advised that there was sufficient budget to purchase new play equipment without using the investment.

**RESOLVED: To reinvest the investments.**

**C20/86 Any Other Urgent Business**

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the Government had sent letters to the most vulnerable people so if Area Co-ordinators received any phone calls from people wanting help and they should ask them to contact her.

The public meeting closed at 8.25pm.