

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 30 May 2017, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Victor Bridges
Nicola Chambers
Matthew Cuthbert
Lynne Grimshaw
Jim Lang
Pauline Thompson
Tom Wilson
Marjorie Chambers
Avril Chisholm
Brian Gallacher
Lawrence Henderson
Ken Parry
Bob Walkinshaw

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer
Members of the Public - 0

FGS 17/698 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved:

That Cllr.M.Cuthbert be duly elected as Chair for the Finance and General Services Committee for the Civic Year 2017/18.

Cllr.Cuthbert thanked members and assumed the Chair.

FGS 17/699 2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved:

That: Cllr.L.Grimshaw be duly elected as Vice-Chair for the Finances and General Services Committee for the Civic Year 2017/18.

FGS 17/700 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors, Stephen Fenwick, Kris Lavery, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis and Ely Turnbull.

FGS 17/701 4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllrs M.Chambers and N.Chambers disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest in the closed agenda item.

FGP 17/702 5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28 March 2017, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGP 17/703 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGP 17/694 7. ENTRANCE FEATURE – ROTARY PARKWAY. The Town Clerk reported that work was in progress to acquire a logo from the Northumberland Branch of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) order to complete the artwork and interpretation. Members were in agreement with the Town Clerk's suggestion that, although the NUM was not in a financial position to donate funds to support the project, the Union should be formally recognised given the heritage nature and significance of the project.

The Town Clerk reported that although planning permission had been granted and notified on 12 May 2017, internal responses from the Highways Section of Northumberland County Council (NCC) had indicated the need for a further agreement under S278 of the Highways Act 1980. The Town Clerk outlined that the S278 agreement allowed a developer carry out works to the public highway and was generally necessary where planning permission had been granted for a development that required improvements to, or changes to, public highway.

The Town Clerk informed members that, although he had made representation to NCC that the S278 agreement was disproportionate to the scheme and would further delay the work commencement; the NCC view was that a S278 agreement was required. The Town Clerk advised that it was his view that a simple licence alongside the formal lease would suffice given that no highway amendment was being proposed at the outlined location with all alterations taking place on the grassed area. The Town Clerk outlined for members that S278 agreements were also noted for being lengthy in both content and discussion and also often included the need for payment of a bond.

Members recognised the importance of complying with all statutory requirements but expressed frustration that the scheme was being held up internally at NCC and through no fault of the Town Council as the applicant. The Town Clerk reported that his information from NCC was that no objections were to be received and that Heads of Terms for the lease agreement were moving forward. On that basis and in order to progress work in readiness, the Town Clerk reported that, after a

measured risk assessment, he was making arrangements for the mining wheel to be collected and for agreed refurbishment work to be undertaken. Work on the interpretation panel was also being finalised for the retaining plinth.

Members were asked to confirm preference for the wheel colouring and agreed that the design should be black and silver. The Chair thanked the Town Clerk for the detailed update and hoped that permissions would be forthcoming in the near future.

FGS 17/704 7. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT (Appendix 1)

The Funding & Project Officer presented a request for funding from The 2nd Ashington Rainbows (Girl Guiding).

The sum of £420 had been requested to support the transport costs of Rainbow Guides (aged 5-7) to attend a Rainbow Rally Sleepover Event taking place at Flamingo Land in September 2017. A detailed quote was submitted with the application.

The applicant advised that children from the North East were to attend the event including the children from the 2nd Ashington Group.

Resolved:

That a donation of £420 be awarded to the 2nd Ashington Rainbows Group to support the transport costs to the event.

FGS 17/705 8. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS. (Appendix 2)

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 25 March to 25 May 2017.

Resolved:

That: the Schedule of Payments for the period 25 March to 25 May 2017 be formally agreed and approved.

The full schedule of payments is attached to the minutes as schedule 1.

FGS 17/706 9. BANK SIGNATORIES

The Town Clerk advised members that, further to the recent elections and the “retirement” of two former Council members who were authorised bank signatories, two new signatories were needed. The Town Clerk proposed to members that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the

Finance and General Services Committee become authorised bank signatories.

Resolved:

That Cllr M.Cuthbert (Chair) and Cllr L. Grimshaw (Vice-Chair) be added to the list of authorised bank signatories for Town Council payments and financial transactions.

FGS 17/707 10. DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2016/17 (Appendix 3)

The Town Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had that week completed both his system review programme and 2016/17 Annual Accounts assessment of compliance with all relevant procedures and controls. The Town Clerk informed members that Internal Auditor had indicated that his written report would confirm that a robust system of financial and administrative management continued to operate effectively and efficiently and provide a sound audit trail. Members were further informed that the Internal Auditor had concluded and signed off the internal control objectives required as part of the Annual Return to the External Auditors.

The Town Clerk circulated to all members a copy of the Draft Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017 and asked members to consider the accounts in full in readiness for formal discussion and approval at the Full Council meeting scheduled for 13 June 2017.

FGS 17/708 11. ANNUAL SUBSIDIES TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS 2017/18

The Chair reported that the Leader of the Council had requested that this matter be deferred to a future meeting to allow proper consideration and the opportunity for elected members to express interest in being appointed as nominated representatives.

The Town Clerk suggested that, once nominated representatives were agreed, the organisations in receipt of Town Council in 2016/17 be then duly notified and requested to arrange and host a formal visit and presentation in support of any request for Town Council funding.

FGS 17/709 12. ACQUISITION OF INTERACTIVE SPEED SIGNS

Cllr.Gallacher reported that, together with other County Council elected members for Ashington, he had discussed with Northumberland County Council (NCC) highways officers the options for acquisition and sighting of interactive speed signs at various locations in Ashington in order to help address and alleviate speeding problems. Cllr.Gallacher reported that interactive speed signs had three key objectives namely:

- To increase drivers awareness of both posted speed limit and their own speed
- To reduce speeds being driven; and
- To increase pedestrian safety

Members were informed that it had become apparent that any purchase and acquisition would have to be undertaken by the Town Council as NCC Highways were not now funding that work. Cllr.Gallacher informed members that such work could however be funded or partially funded from within the NCC Members Local Improvement Schemes. Cllr.Gallacher reported that he was personally very keen to financially support this work and to seek to progress it as a formal partnership funded scheme with the Town Council.

Cllr.Gallacher reported that together with the Leader and Cllrs.M.Cuthbert, J.Lang L.Grimshaw, M.Purvis and the Town Clerk he had met with a representative of Morelock Signs Ltd on 25 May, for a demonstration of the Interactive Speed signs and an opportunity to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the signs for use in the Town. Members were informed that there had been unanimous agreement from those present that the signs and related interactive options, including use of mobile phone applications, was exactly what was required.

Members were informed that Morelock Signs Ltd had subsequently submitted a formal proposal for services to the Town Clerk based on quantity levels of one, four or eight speed cameras. Further to discussion there was unanimous support to look to move forward with the project at an early point once specific locations were identified and highways permissions received.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) Ashington Town Council agree to the acquisition of an initial four interactive speed cameras from Morelock Signs Ltd at the agreed price of £9,029 plus VAT,**
- (ii) The net funding, after the receipt of any contributions from Northumberland County Council members Local Improvement Schemes, be met from the General Reserves of the Town Council; and that**
- (iii) Elected members be requested to identify the specific locations for the granting of highways approvals and erection of retaining posts.**

FGS 17/710 13. TOWN CENTRE CCTV PROVISION

Cllr Gallacher presented this item and reminded members that the provision CCTV systems was not a statutory responsibility of Northumberland County Council (NCC) as the principal authority and that any systems installed by NCC were therefore at the discretion of the Council. Cllr.Gallacher reminded members that NCC were clearly moving towards an approach of using deployable CCTV cameras both in response to specific issues of anti-social behaviour and on a rotational basis across Northumberland.

Cllr.Gallacher informed members that several Town and Parish Council across the County had subsequently either moved to provide, or were looking at, the option of providing CCTV provision at their own expense and through direct contract arrangements.

Cllr Gallacher reported that after discussion with the Leader of the Council, he had held preliminary without prejudice discussions with Reay Security Limited regarding the provision an indicative cost of providing a permanent Town Centre CCTV provision Station Road. Based on similar schemes elsewhere an indicative figure of £9,335.00 plus VAT had been provided for the installation and outright purchase of a standalone four camera CCTV surveillance camera system.

The Town Clerk informed members that any proposal to look at CCTV and provide coverage of public spaces to ensure the safety and security of the general public fell within the remit of the Town Council and that the Town Council had the power to spend money on crime detection and prevention measures (Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s31). The Town Clerk further reminded members that they had an overall duty to consider the impact of any decisions made on reducing crime and disorder in the area.

The Town Clerk informed members that the CCTV provision and management would be the contract responsibility of Ashington Town Council and monitoring of any system would be undertaken by a nominated person within the Town Council's structure in full compliance with the Home Office code and all Data Protection principles.

Members were asked for their comments and views regarding a CCTV installation project on Station Road with the full cost to be met by the Town Council. It was unanimously agreed and recognised that any progress in relation to CCTV provision in the Town Centre now rested with the Town Council. After discussion it was unanimously agreed to seek to move forward the project at the earliest opportunity and in the most cost effective manner.

Recommendation:

That:

- (i) The Town Council approve in principle the move toward the installation of a permanent Town Centre CCTV provision in Ashington,**
- (ii) Reay Security Ltd be appointed as the Town Council's preferred partner and contractor for the project,**
- (iii) A site visit be arranged to assess the specific technical specification, system type and camera locations,**
- (iv) The Town Clerk be delegated to identify the overall project cost and most appropriate funding packaging; and that**
- (v) An update report be provided to the next meeting of Finance and General Services Committee.**

FGS 17/711 14. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

Cllr Gallacher outlined the urgent need to review the current Neighbourhood Services Agreement in the light of member concerns and the current service standards and poor performance. Members were in agreement that services at present across all aspects of the partnership were disappointing and well below that expected.

Cllr.Gallacher reported that, as Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership, he was frustrated by the inability of Northumberland County Council to address the performance levels and to deliver improvement. Members were informed that the Town Council was entering year four of a five-year initial agreement and it was a matter of huge disappointment that the same issues were recurring including delayed grass cutting, overflowing bins, unsatisfactory weed spraying and lack of adequate weekend street cleansing cover in the Town Centre.

Cllr.Gallacher informed members that together with the Leader of the Council, the Chair and Vice-Chair of Finance and the Town Clerk he would be meeting with the NCC Director of Neighbourhood Services and South East Area Manager to raise the Town Council's concerns.

The Town Clerk confirmed that no payment had been made in respect of the Neighbourhood Services partnership for 2017/18.

FGS 17/712 15. AMENITIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk informed members that the Amenities Improvement Programme item would be a standing agenda item at each meeting to allow members to present items for consideration. Members were reminded that all items would need to be submitted to the Committee Chair for inclusion of formal meeting agendas.

- **Re-painting of roadside fencing A197**

The Town Clerk reported that an initial quotation of £27,000 had been received to repair and re-paint the full fence on the roadside of the A197. It was agreed that this matter be deferred pending investigation of further options and obtaining an alternative quotation. Cllr.Grimshaw reminded members that she had earmarked the sum of £8,618 towards this project from the County Council members Local Improvement Schemes.

- **Environmental Activities Project, purchase of a Polytunnel – Bothal School**

Cllr.Grimshaw reported that she had provided the sum of £2,000 towards this project from the County Council members Local Improvement Schemes. Members were informed that the Polytunnel situated at the Bothal upper site would benefit the school's environmental projects and it was hoped that timely delivery would enable planting for the start of the growing season.

FGS 17/713 16. Any Other Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

FGS 17/714 17. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

Tuesday 27 June 2017, at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington.

The Meeting ended at 8.20pm