

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 31 October 2017, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Matthew Cuthbert (Chair) Avril Chisholm
Brian Gallacher Stephen Fenwick
Lawrence Henderson Jim Lang
Ken Parry Mark Purvis
Pauline Thompson Tom Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

FGS 17/756 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors, Victor Bridges, Marjorie Chambers, Nicola Chambers, Lynne Grimshaw, Kris Lavery, Liam Lavery, Ely Turnbull and Bob Walkinshaw

FGS 17/757 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no personal and prejudicial interests to disclose.

FGS 17/758 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 October 2017, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGS 17/759 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGS 17/746 Funding Support for Ashington Rugby Cricket Club.

The Town Clerk informed members that a formal letter of thanks had been received from Ashington Rugby Cricket Club for the funding support agreed by the Town Council. Members were informed that the financial support had been recognised on the club's website and that a formal sign had been ordered for the club's premises advertising the Town Council support for the club.

FGS 17/760 5. ANNUAL FUNDING SUPPORT TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS 2017/18

• WANSBECK VALLY FOOD BANK

The Chair introduced Mr Sean Fugill who gave a detailed presentation on behalf of Wansbeck Valley Food Bank.

Mr Fugill explained that the main aim of the food bank was to provide emergency food parcels to those in need and that food parcels were targeted to properly referred individuals and families awaiting outcomes from their benefit applications and assessments.

Mr Fugill presented statistics to members demonstrating the considerable increase in referrals and applications for support from the food bank. Mr Fugill informed members that a total of £33,000 worth of food had been distributed in Ashington alone over the last year and that the town accounted for the highest level of referrals to the service.

The Fugill gave a summary of the challenges facing the organisation and the operational changes that would need to be addressed including:

- The acquisition and refurbishment of new larger premises
- Vehicle costs and the potential need for an additional vehicle; and
- The possibility of employing a full time member of staff

Mr.Fugill outlined the financial support received from other town and parish council's within Northumberland and informed members that all financial support was pooled and was not simply targeted at food and service delivery within each area.

The Chair thanked Mr Fugill for his detailed presentation. It was agreed that the matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Finance and General Services Committee in order to allow members to fully consider and discuss any continued financial support and whether to agree a fixed funding period.

• NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BANK

Cllr.Thompson presented a detailed written report members following the full presentation to Finance and General Services Committee on 3 October 2017 and a subsequent further visit to the Community Bank to specifically discuss financial details and funding.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) Northumberland Community Bank be recognised as an important and effective organisation operating within Ashington in the best interests of residents in addressing financial inclusion,**
- (ii) Ashington Town Council agrees financial support for Northumberland Community Bank in the form of an annual subsidy of £7,000 for the financial year ending 31 March 2018,**
- (iii) That subject to regular quarterly reporting and the development of the ongoing relationship with Northumberland Community Bank, a similar sum of £7,000 be agreed at this time as an annual subsidy for the financial year 2018/19 to allow the organisation to effectively plan ahead with some known degree of secure financial support and certainty; and that**
- (iv) The Town Council looks to positively assist in helping promote the Northumberland Community Bank in its aims and objectives through both the Town Council website and all communication methods available to the Town Council.**

FGS 17/761 6. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

To consider and discuss applications for financial support receive from:

- **Evergreens Over 60's Club**

The purpose of the grant was to support the costs of a 40th Birthday lunch for the evergreen Over 60's Club that will take place at the White House Unique Social Club.

- **Great North Air Ambulance**

A request was received for general funding support towards the work of the charitable organisation.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The funding application from Evergreens Over 60's Club be not agreed; and that**
- (ii) A donation of £100 be made to Great North Air Ambulance.**

FGS 17/762 7. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 19 September to 26 October 2017.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the period 19 September to 26 October 2017 be formally agreed and approved.

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

FGS 17/763 8. BUDGET REPORT.

The Clerk presented a budget report for the Period 1 April to 26 October 2017. Members were asked to review the budget statement in detail in preparation for the budget discussions for 2018/19.

The Town Clerk reported that expected shortly to receive details of the indicative 2018-19 Council Tax Base that would enable work to commence on the setting of the budget and consideration of the precept level for 2018-19.

FGS 17/764 9. ALLOTMENTS WORKING GROUP

In the absence of the Chair (Cllr.L.Grimshaw), Cllr.Gallacher gave a report on the Allotments Working Group that had taken place on 24 October 2017. Members were informed that the meeting had been very productive and had included detailed scrutiny of the Town Council's duty, policies, financial budget provision and the considerable work that had been undertaken over the last three years of the council.

Cllr.Gallacher presented a detailed motion for the consideration of the Committee.

Resolved:

That;

- (i) The Town Council recognises the valuable work undertaken to date since 2011/12 in improving the allotment sites through a planned and effective capital programme making best use of external funding opportunities wherever and whenever possible,**
- (ii) The capital programme work for 2017/18 and 2018/19 be targeted at the renewal of the water systems on those allotment sites where water costs are currently being borne by Ashington Town Council,**
- (iii) The Town Clerk be authorised to obtain estimates for the renewal of water supply systems and associated works at:
 - Woodhorn Road Allotment & Smallholding Site**
 - High Market & Wansbeck Road Allotment Site**
 - 6th Avenue (Seaton Hirst) Allotment Site****
- (v) The Town Clerk be requested to seek quotations for a preferred supplier for skip hire for all allotment sites in order to maximise economies of scale, available discounts and best use of revenue resources,**
- (vi) That the current capital programme allotment site works be deferred pending the full review of available external funding including requests for contributions from Allotment Associations and the Local Members Small Improvement Scheme Budgets; and that**
- (vii) Officers continue to work closely with the Allotment Associations in the development of best practices and funding application advice and assistance.**

FGS 17/765 10. ENVIRONMENT & AMENITIES WORKING GROUP

Cllr.Lang reported on a meeting of the Environment and Amenities Working Group that had taken place on 24 October 2017. Members were informed that discussion had taken place around the options for

entrance features in the town, tree maintenance, the bus shelter work programme and general environmental improvement schemes.

Resolved:

That:

(i) Northumberland County Council be asked to develop the tree planting and environmental enhancement schemes at:

- ASDA Roundabout (Lintonville Terrace/A197)
- Woodhorn Roundabout

Such costs to be borne from the 2017/18 Environmental Enhancements budgets,

(ii) A Landscape Architect be appointed to develop and present ideas and concepts to the Working Group for proposed new entrance features at:

- B1334 Entrance off North Seaton Roundabout
- A196 Entrance at Wansbeck Bridge

(iii) The Northumberland County Council Tree Officer be requested to provide details of the current plan of work for 2017/18 tree maintenance in Ashington and that he attends a future meeting of the Working Group to outline the development of future planned Tree Maintenance schemes,

(iv) Replacement Bus Shelters, in the approved and appropriate style, be procured for the final two locations off North Seaton Roundabout identified in the 2017/18 maintenance programme and risk management work; the cost of the work to be met from the 2017/18 Bus Shelters budget provision,

(v) The access provision work to the Briardene Bus Shelter, including improvement to disabled access, be approved and that the estimated cost of £4,000 to be met from the 2017/18 Bus Shelters budget provision,

(vi) A new bus shelter, in the approved and appropriate style, be procured for Remscheid Way,

(vii) The quotations received for the major repair and improvement work to the A197 safety fence (Old Fire

Station to Maxwell's DIY) be refreshed and that the scheme be properly referred to Finance and General Services Committee for full discussion; and that

(viii) The following schemes be referred to the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board for consideration and inclusion in the development of the planned work schedule:

- The development of a planned programme of floral improvement features (flower cascades/pots) in the "Hirst Avenues" former improvement scheme areas,**
- Floral enhancement to the existing entrance schemes at A197 Woodhorn and Bothal**

The Leader of the Council thanked the staff and members of the Town Council for the considerable work that had been undertaken in both of the recently established working groups.

FGS 17/766 11. PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk outlined the requirement for the new council to appoint members to an established Personnel Sub-Committee to consider such matters as staff appraisals, review of policies and procedures and the review of job descriptions in the light of the service enhancements.

The Town Clerk reminded member that the Personnel Sub-Committee would report to Finance and General Services Committee.

Resolved:

That the membership of the Personnel Sub-Committee be agreed as:

- The Leader and Deputy-Leader of the Council**
- The Business Chair and Vice-Business Chair of the Council**
- The Chair and Vice-Chair of Finance & General Services Committee.**

FGS 17/767 12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no other matters of urgent business.

FGS 17/768 13. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The date, time and venue for the next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 28 November 2017, at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington.

The Meeting ended at 7.30pm