

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 28 May 2019, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

## PRESENT:

**COUNCILLORS:** Lynne Grimshaw (Chair) Eleanor Armstrong  
Victor Bridges Marjorie Chambers  
Nicola Chambers Avril Chisholm  
Matthew Cuthbert Stephen Fenwick  
Lawrence Henderson Jim Lang  
Ken Parry Mark Purvis  
Pauline Thompson Bob Walkinshaw  
Tom Wilson

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer  
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer (minutes)  
Tracey Gilles – Commercial Manager, Citizen’s Advice  
Northumberland  
Geoff Crow – Advice Session Manager, Citizen’s Advice  
Northumberland

## FGS 19/938 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR.

Cllr. Grimshaw invited nominations for the position of Chair of the Finance and General Services Committee.

### **Resolved:**

**That Cllr. Lynne Grimshaw be duly re-elected as Chair of Finance and General Services Committee for the Civic Year 2019/20.**

## FGS 19/939 2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR.

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

### **Resolved:**

**That Cllr. Avril Chisholm be duly elected as Vice-Chair of Finance and General Services Committee for the Civic Year 2019/20.**

### **FGS 19/940 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Gallacher, Kris Lavery and Liam Lavery.

### **FGS 19/941 4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **FGS 19/942 5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30 April 2019, were agreed and signed as a true record.

### **FGS 19/943 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.**

#### **FGS 19/931 NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP CONTRACT 2019-2014.**

The Town Clerk informed members that the Partnership Agreement had been formally signed as instructed by Council and that the new Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board had been appointed as follows;

Cllr Matthew Cuthbert (Chair), Cllr Marjorie Chambers (Vice Chair), Cllr Eleanor Armstrong, Cllr. Avril Chisholm and Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

### **FGS 19/944 7. ANNUAL FUNDING SUPPORT 2019/20 – CITIZEN'S ADVICE NORTHUMBERLAND.**

The Chair invited Ms Tracey Gilles, and Mr Geoff Crow to address Councillors present in support of an application for funding support.

Ms Gilles and Mr Crow presented a detailed and comprehensive update on client support and provided the following key statistics on the work of Citizen's Advice:

- Supported 2,773 people from Ashington in 2018/19 an increase from 2017/18 of 708 (34%)
- Dealt with 5,081 issues, up from 3,786 in 2017/18 an increase of 1,295 (34%)
- Undertook 9,089 activities on behalf of clients, up from 5,483 in 2017/18 (66%)
- Worked on 1,570 cases in 2018/19, an increase of 350 from 2017/18 (29%)
- Generated an income gain for Ashington clients of £267,688 in 2018/19, which is more than double the 2017/18 figure of £132,581 (102%)
- Helped £246,845 of debt written off and repayments rescheduled in 2018/19 compared to £368,166 in 2017/18.

Ms Gilles also stated that additional premises had been obtained at Jubilee Industrial Estate and Station Road reinforcing the operational role of the organisation in Ashington.

Mr Crow informed members that new volunteers had been recruited solely due to the increase in clients who had requested support to apply for Universal Credit, with numbers increasing weekly. Members were informed that the application for funding to the town council in the sum of £16,000 would, if successful, provide new PC's to be used by the public in the new premises, and also fund an additional supervisory post which would allow more clients to be seen, it would also enable advice and issues to be processed quicker.

In answer to questions from members, Mr Crow confirmed that they worked with the Wansbeck Valley Foodbank on almost a daily basis and with other organisations via the Bridge Project. Ms Gilles explained that current funding from Northumberland County Council amounted to £250,000, which had not seen any increase in recent years. It was confirmed that other, mainly large, town and parish councils contributed various amounts throughout Northumberland for specific purposes that reflected the amount and level of support services offered.

The Chair thanked Ms Gilles and Mr Crow for their informative and detailed presentation. Ms Gilles and Mr Crow left the meeting at 6.50pm.

The Chair stated that the requested funding from the organisation was a large amount which would need careful consideration and would also impact on overall funding available to other organisations requesting support.

The Town Clerk advised that, in the light of recent deferments of funding applications to outside bodies and the increasing level of application, it was perhaps now the time for the town council to review its approach to annual subsidies, set out policy and priorities and to look again at funding criteria and the specific role of appointed town council representatives.

**Resolved:**

**That the consideration of funding support for Citizen's Advice Northumberland be deferred for further consideration.**

## **FGS 19/945 8. ART & PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION – SEPTEMBER 2019.**

Cllr Chambers presented a proposal from the Music & Arts Working Group to members of the Committee.

The proposal outlined details of a Photography and Art Exhibition which would take place from Thursday 26 to Saturday 28 September. The cost of the Exhibition would include £250 for the hire of appropriate town centre premises and £100 for refreshments for the 3 days.

### **Resolved:**

#### **That:**

- (i) The sum of £350 be agreed to support the costs of holding a Photography and Art Exhibition from 26-28 September to Saturday 28 September 2019; and that**
- (ii) The sum be met from the 2019/20 Music & Arts Budget.**

## **FGS 19/946 9. PEOPLES PARK PLAY AREA.**

The Chair reminded members that the official opening of the new play area would be held on Friday 7 June 2019, at 1.30pm.

The Town Clerk reported that very recently Northumbria Police had requested the town council consider installing two new lamp columns with CCTV provision in the area. The Town Clerk reminded members that in the initial plans for the play area, councillors had specifically discussed and ruled out the use of CCTV on children's play areas. Members were informed that the police request was based on concerns regarding recent considerable damage and vandalism to play areas in other nearby towns.

Members recognised the genuine nature of the police request and agreed that before any further action be taken or agreed it was important to establish the practicalities and costs involved in providing CCTV adjacent to the play area. Cllr.Parry reported that a similar request had recently been made by the police in relation to the Hirst Park Renewal Scheme and that the request was currently also being considered by Northumberland County Council.

### **Resolved:**

#### **That:**

- (i) The Town Clerk be authorised to make enquiries and identify the costs associated in providing two new lighting columns and associated CCTV cameras; and that**
- (ii) A further report be brought back to the Committee in due course for full consideration.**

#### **FGS 19/947 10. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.**

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income

#### **Resolved:**

**That the Schedule of Payments for the financial period 26 April – 24 May 2019 be formally agreed and approved.**

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

#### **FGS 19/948 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

The Chair reminded members of a number of upcoming events;

- Armed Forces & D-Day Event – Thursday 6 June 2019, at 10.30am, in the Ashington Memorial Garden,
- Peoples Park Play Area Official Opening – Friday 7 June 2019, at 1.30pm, at Peoples Park,
- Northumberland Miners' Picnic – Saturday 8 June 2019, from 10.30am, at Woodhorn Museum.

#### **FGS 19/949 12. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.**

Tuesday 25 June 2019, at 6.00pm, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

**The Meeting ended at 7:50pm.**