



Ashington Town Council
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ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 9 July 2019, at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Project & Funding Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer
Members of the Public – 1

C19/846 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Nicola Chambers, Brian Gallacher and Kris Lavery.

C19/847 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest from members present.

C19/848 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS.

The minutes of the last meeting held on the Tuesday 18 June 2019, were agreed and signed as a true record.

C19/849 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 June 2019.

C19/850 5. CIVIC HEAD'S REPORT.

Cllr. L.Henderson reported on events he had attended since taking up the position of Civic Head of Ashington:

- Saturday 18 May - Annual Celebration Concert, Ashington and District Male Voice Choir,
- Thursday 6 June - Armed Forces & D-Day Event,
- Friday 7 June - Peoples Park Play Area official opening,
- Friday 7 June - Northumbrian Water Launch Event, Wansbeck General Hospital,
- Saturday 8 June - Northumberland Miners Picnic, Woodhorn Museum,
- Saturday 15 June - Ashington Art Group Art Exhibition, St Aidan's Church,
- Friday 28 June - Ashington Grange Care Home Open Day, Moorhouse Lane,
- Friday 5 July - BBQ, to welcome neighbouring Civics to Northumberland, held at Northumberland County Hall,
- Wednesday 10 July - Northumbrian Water's Innovation Festival 2019, at Newcastle Racecourse.

C19/851 6. LEADER'S REPORT.

Cllr. M.Cuthbert informed the meeting that he had recently been appointed as the new Leader of the Town Council Labour Group and had therefore now taken up the position of Leader of the Town Council.

Cllr.Cuthbert reported that Cllr.L.Lavery had recently been appointed as the Deputy Leader of the Town Council Labour Group and had also therefore taken up the position of Deputy Leader of the Town Council.

Cllr.L. Lavery informed members that, further to his appointment as Deputy-Leader of the Council, he would be standing down as Business Vice-Chair and that Cllr. M Chambers would be taking up that role.

Members joined with Cllr.Cuthbert in thanking Cllr.Stephen Fenwick for the excellent work he had undertaken in his four years of leading the Town Council, highlighting a number of key issues that had been properly addressed and projects that had been successfully delivered and welcomed by residents including:

- The review of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership and, environmental enhancement programme,
- Town Centre CCTV installation on Station Road,
- Litter bin installation and renewal programme,
- Installation of Interactive Speed Signs,
- Mining Wheel Project,
- Peoples Park Play Area,
- Ashington Memorial Garden.

Cllr.Fenwick thanked members for their support during his time as Leader and wished the new Cllr.Cuthbert the very best in taking forward the work of the Town Council in challenging times for the Town.

Cllr.Cuthbert reported that the first Neighbourhood Services Partnership meeting since the signing of the new partnership contract was due to take place during the week commencing Monday 15 July 2019. Councillor members with any specific issues to raise were asked to report to Cllr Cuthbert before that date.

Resolved:

That:

Further to the recent changes within the Town Council Labour Group and in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Town Council:

- (i) Cllr.Matthew Cuthbert be duly appointed as the Leader of Ashington Town Council,
- (ii) That Cllr.Liam Lavery be duly appointed as the Deputy Leader of Ashington Town Council; and that
- (iii) Cllr.Marjorie Chambers be duly elected as the Vice Business Chair of the Town Council.

C19/852 7. ANNUAL FUNDING SUPPORT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2019/20.

The Town Clerk presented a detailed report and reminded members that the town council had, since 2011/12, provided annual subsidy funding to recognised outside bodies based within Ashington. Members were informed that from an initial aggregate sum of £17.5K in 2011/12 to two organisations, for the past years the average aggregate sum for six organisations has exceeded £34K.

Members were reminded that the agreed budget for 2019/20 contained the earmarked sum of £38,000 for Annual Subsidies. Members were further informed that a summary of the total funding over the eight year inclusive period 2011/12 to 2018/19 revealed that the total sum distributed by Ashington Town Council over the period was £260,260. Cllr.Grimshaw commented that, although not checked formally, it was highly unlikely that any other individual Local Council in Northumberland over the same period would have been so generous across such a wide range of organisations.

The Town Clerk commented that the town council funding over the period had been predominantly, if not wholly unrestricted, had rarely been targeted at specific projects or defined outcomes and had predominantly been used to fund the “core” operational revenue costs of each organisation.

The Town Clerk reminded members that, over the period in question, the town council had tried through various methods and forums to establish for itself how the organisations linked or worked together and to also identify whether opportunities existed to best maximise and target town council funding. Cllr.Grimshaw commented that the town council was now seeking to move to a more structured and better informed approach than to simply divide the budget sum equally between the organisations in order to be simply seen as acting equitably.

The Town clerk reminded members that recent years had again seen a more “ad-hoc” approach to the funding with the reporting emphasis placed firmly on appointed town council representatives to the organisations. It had been hoped that the appointed representatives would act as conduits for the exchange of regular two-way information and communication in order to establish a better understanding of the organisational role and financial health for the benefit of all members. In the Town Clerk’s view, for a number of reasons this arrangement had again had limited or “mixed” practicable success.

Members were firmly of the view that what had become clear was that the town council continued to be viewed as an annual funder of first resort almost to the point of “expectation”.

The Town Clerk reminded members that in recent years many of the organisations had structurally changed and moved from a previous Wansbeck to a recognised Northumberland status including Northumberland Community Bank, Citizen’s Advice Northumberland, Northumberland CVA.

Members also openly expressed previous concern that it was now apparent that other local councils were not funding core costs or

alternatively were choosing in preference to commission specified “one-off” projects or work.

The Town Clerk reported that organisations were now also making sizeable bids for funding often for specific employment posts and it was quite clear, from recent annual awards, that the Town Council had set priority funding aside for particular organisations namely Northumberland Community Bank, Citizen’s Advice Northumberland and Wansbeck Valley Food Bank. Cllr.Grimshaw stated that it was arguable that a “first tier” and “second tier” level of priority was emerging.

As Chair of Finance and General Services Committee, Cllr.Grimshaw reminded members that the town council at this point was facing a number of its own competing challenges for limited funding and that difficult decisions would need to be made both in 2019/20 and moving forward.

Members discussed in detail the points that had been raised and agreed that Northumberland Community Bank, Citizen’s Advice Northumberland and Wansbeck Valley Food Bank should be viewed as first tier priority organisations for the foreseeable future. It was also agreed that all organisations in making application should be able to demonstrate their other sources of funding and clear evidence that other local councils, particularly those in South East Northumberland had been formally approached for core service funding; it should no longer be the sole role of Ashington Town Council to fund organisational core services.

Members further agreed that it was the agreed role of duly appointed members elected as organisation representatives to develop and maintain an effective relationship with the individual organisation. It was agreed that the town council would review the role of elected representatives and continually monitor the effectiveness in gaining a better and wider understanding of the changing role and funding sources.

Resolved:

That annual subsidies for 2019/20 be agreed as follows:

- (i) The sum of £16,000 per year for the two-year period 2019-21 be awarded to Citizens Advice Northumberland,**
- (ii) The sum of £8,000 per year for the two year period 2019-21 be awarded Wansbeck Valley Food Bank,**
- (iii) The sum of £8,000 per year for the two-year period 2019-21 be awarded to Northumberland Community Bank,**

(iv) The sum of £4,000 per year for the two-year period 2019-21 be awarded to Northumberland Federation of YMCA's,

(v) The sum of £2,000 per year for the two-year period 2019-21 be awarded to Real Deal Plus; and that

(vi) The agreed funding for 2020-21 be subject to the receipt of quarterly written reports provided to the duly appointed Town Council representative.

C19/853 8. ACQUISITION OF NEW PLAY EQUIPMENT – PADDOCK WOOD PLAY AREA.

This item was deferred.

C19/854 9. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Full Council was scheduled for 7:00pm, Tuesday 3 September 2019 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington NE63 8RX.

The meeting closed at 7:45pm