

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 13 July 2021, at YMCA Northumberland, North View, Ashington.

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Lynne Grimshaw (Chair) Caroline Ball
Michelle Brannigan Louis Brown
Vicky Brown Marjorie Chambers
Avril Chisholm Matthew Cuthbert
Jim Lang Sophie Robinson
Pauline Thompson Bob Walkinshaw

IN ATTENDANCE: Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey- Assets & Facilities Manager
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer (minutes)
Lesley Silvera – Groundwork North East & Cumbria
Alan Fairholm – Cambois Rowing Club
Members of the Public - 0

FGS 21/073 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR.

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

Resolved

That Cllr. Lynne Grimshaw be duly elected as Chair of the Finance and General Services Committee for the year 2021/22.

FGS 21/074 2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR.

Cllr. Grimshaw invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Services Committee for the Town Council.

Resolved

That Cllr. John Tully be duly elected as the Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Services Committee for the year 2021/22.

FGS 21/075 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eleanor Armstrong, Victor Bridges, Lawrence Henderson, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis and John Tully.

FGS 21/076 4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest.

FGS 21/077 5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 May 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGS 21/078 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

FGS 21/079 7. GROUNDWORK NORTHEAST & CUMBRIA – RIVER WANSBECK PROJECTS.

Ms Lesley Silvera, Community Projects Manager for Groundwork North East & Cumbria, supported by Mr Alan Fairholm of Cambois Rowing Club, provided detailed proposals on the Wansbeck Barrage and Green Recovery Challenge Estuaries projects to members. Members were advised that in developing the projects Groundwork had been working closely with Northumberland County Council groups who regularly used the river including Cambois Rowing Club.

Members were informed that the barrage project projects aim to improve water quality and biodiversity and reduce the build-up of sediment on the estuary. Ms. Silvera outlined that river flow modelling had been carried out by Hull University with sediment samples analysed for contaminants, the shoreline ecology mapped and the barrage mechanisms reviewed. Members were informed that further work is planned to take place in coming months

Ms. Silvera and Mr Fairholm reported that build up of sediment and associated materials, over a number of years, has caused concern for users of the River Wansbeck including the Rowing Club, Sea Scouts, Canoe Club, Paddle Boarder Club as well as local ornithologists and anglers.

It was reported that In recent months, an initial phase of leaving the barrage gates open to allow the flushing of sediment had taken place to identify an optimum opening regime to be evaluated. It was envisaged that frequent short periods of gate opening, or longer periods timed to take advantage of large fluvial flows or flood events would take place in future.

Ms.Silvera informed members that the barrage gates were slow and awkward to operate and the sluice gate were now non-operational with significant work likely to be needed to address this issue moving forward.

Ms Silver also provided information on Groundwork's Green Recovery Bid, to the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which, if successful, would be an 18-month project to work on six estuaries (in the North East and Yorkshire) to improve natural habitats and biodiversity. Members were informed that the Wansbeck together with the Blyth, Tyne, Wear, Tees and Esk estuaries were included in the proposals. Ms. Silvera stated that funding from DEFRA would meet 70% of the costs of the project with the remaining 30% of funding to be secured from other partners.

It was reported that if the bids are successful in due course, the project would provide paid employment to young people who would gain recognised qualifications to improve the six estuaries; a decision on the funding bid to DEFRA was expected in coming weeks.

Ms Silvera informed members that a 'Wansbeck Users Partner Group' had been developed to work on the projects and would welcome a formal representative from the Town Council.

The Chair thanked Ms Silvera and Mr Fairholm for attending the meeting and for providing very informative and detailed presentations.

FGS 21/080 8. APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.

Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway Society

The Assets & Facilities Manager presented an application for funding support from Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway Society.

The Society had requested the sum of £1,800, to purchase insurance cover for 12 months (£1,600) and diesel to run the narrow-gauge locomotives (£200). Members were informed that the Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway Society had been active since 1994 and provide a heritage passenger rail service between Woodhorn Museum and the parking area outside of Woodhorn Grange Hotel. Members were informed that the group had a management committee of six members who oversee three locomotives.

The group estimate that 80 people access the railway on an average day with this figure significantly increasing when special events take place at the Museum. Members were informed that the group required financial support to get activities up and running following the Covid-19 pandemic which had significantly reduced the organisations income.

Duke's Secondary School (Northumberland Church of England Academy (NCEA))

The Assets and Facilities Manager presented an application for funding support from Duke's Secondary School – part of the NCEA.

The school had requested the sum of £100 to support the costs of an interactive Covid-19 exhibition, to be held at YMCA Northumberland, during August 2021. Members were informed that the science-based

exhibition had been developed by the students under the direction of Dr Jodi Harrison and focused on recordings of thoughts from students, NHS workers and contacts from around the world. The exhibition will include interactive activities including X-Rays (to demonstrate healthy vs lungs infected by Covid-19), an experiment demonstrating the lateral flow test and a montage of photographs taken during the lockdown.

Members were informed that it was envisaged and hoped that the interactive exhibition will stimulate intergenerational conversations and a greater understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resolved

That:

- (i) Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway Society be awarded the sum of £1,800 to purchase insurance cover and diesel to run the narrow-gauge locomotives,**
- (ii) NCEA be awarded the sum of £100 to support the costs of a Covid-19 Interactive exhibition in Ashington, during August 2021.**

FGS 21/081 9. FUNDING SUPPORT TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS.

This item was deferred to a special meeting of the Finance and General Services Committee, to be held on Tuesday 27 July 2021.

FGS 21/082 10. INSTALLATION OF CCTV PROVISION – PADDOCK WOOD & PEOPLES PARK PLAY AREAS.

The Assets & Facilities Manager presented a report requesting members to consider the installation of CCTV at the Paddock Wood Play and Peoples Park Play Areas. The request followed a number of incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour over the last two years.

Members were informed that Ashington Town Council had responsibility for 10 play areas in the town with the County Council retaining responsibility for the provision and maintenance of play areas in the strategic parks at Hirst and Wansbeck Riverside Park. The play areas at Paddock Wood and Peoples Park had particularly suffered from vandalism and anti-social behaviour with play equipment and external fencing damaged as well as litter bins.

Members were informed that regrettably, a number of other play areas in town and parish councils across South-East Northumberland had also suffered similar damage and anti-social behaviour issues and Town Councils were increasingly looking at CCTV options to address this issue.

Members were informed that a detailed quotation has been obtained from an Ashington based security company for the installation of CCTV monitoring cameras at the two play areas for crime reduction and community safety purposes only. Members were informed that recent CCTV provision installed at Hirst Park had contributed to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and action being taken by Northumbria Police based on CCTV footage.

Members were informed that the total cost of the proposed works, at the two identified sites would will be £6,832 for a 1-year period. This cost includes full monitoring and all repairs to equipment.

Resolved

That:

- (i) The Town Council agree funding of £7,000 to enable installation of CCTV provision at Paddock Wood and Peoples Park Play Areas for an initial 1-year period,**
- (ii) The funding provision be met by a virement of £7,000 from the 2021/22 revenue budget for Bus Shelters; and that,**
- (iii) Annual revenue funding for future CCTV provision at Play Areas be considered as part of the 2022/23 budget discussions.**

FGS 21/083 11. BALLOON AND SKY LANTERN RELEASES.

Cllr. Brannigan outlined the environmental impacts and stated that it was widely known that balloon and sky lanterns released into the atmosphere had the potential to have an adverse impact on the environment with a risk to wildlife, livestock and marine life. Cllr. Brannigan reported that Sky lanterns also posed a significant fire hazard and contributed to both litter and waste on land.

Cllr. Brannigan put forward a motion for discussion and adoption that requested that:

- (i) Ashington Town Council supported Northumberland County Council's stance on balloon and sky lantern releases and formally adopted a policy that opposed the release of balloons and sky lanterns in Ashington,**
- (ii) A statement be released on Ashington Town Council's managed website and social media platforms that publicised the Council's adopted position and set out the negative environmental consequences of balloon and sky lantern releases; and that**

- (iii) An alternative list of suitable, ethical and eco-friendly environmental alternatives be published alongside the statement.

The Motion was not seconded.

FGS 21/084 12. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP.

The Chair reported that there was a need to now re-establish the Climate Change Working Group as a priority further to a period of relative inactivity as a result of the Covid pandemic.

The Chair advised that the Group would be required to lead the Town Council's work programme on both climate change and environmental works and make recommendations to the Finance & General Services Committee for projects and awareness work. Membership nominations were invited.

Resolved

That:

- (i) Cllr's, Michelle Brannigan, Louis Brown, Jim Lang, Liam Lavery and Pauline Thompson be appointed to the Climate Change Working Group,**
- (ii) An early meeting date be arranged to appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair; and that**
- (iii) The Group discuss membership and the options of third-party organisations with specialist knowledge and interest becoming members.**

FGS 21/085 13.SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income for the financial period 24 April – 8 July 2021.

Resolved

That the schedule of payments and income for the financial period 24 April to 8 July 2021 be formally agreed and approved.

FGS 21/086 14.BUDGET REPORT 2020/21.

The Town Clerk presented a detailed budget report for the financial period 1 April – 8 July 2021.

Resolved

That the budget report for the financial period 1 April to 8 July 2021 be formally agreed and approved.

FGS 21/087 15.BANK SIGNATORIES.

The Town Clerk informed members that further to the recent elections, the Town Council were required to appoint formal signatories for financial transactions.

Resolved

That Cllr's. Matthew Cuthbert, Lynne Grimshaw, Mark Purvis, Pauline Thompson and John Tully be appointed bank signatories for the Town Council financial transactions.

FGS 21/088 16.DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

It was agreed that a Special Meeting of the Finance and General Services Committee be scheduled for Tuesday 27 July 2021 at 6:00pm at YMCA Northumberland.

The meeting ended at 7:50pm.