

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 24 February 2015, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Vicky Brown (Vice-Chair)	Les Alderson
Keith Chambers	Avril Chisholm
Glyn Davies	Liam Lavery
Wyn Stewart	
Mark Purvis (Ex Officio)	Louis Brown (Ex Officio)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer
Cllr. Marjorie Chambers – Non-Committee Member
Members of the Public - 0

FGP 15/507 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Victor Bridges, Stephen Fenwick, Lawrence Henderson, Maggie Lang and Kris Lavery.

FGP 15/508 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests. Members were reminded that any disclosures could also be made during the meeting should matters arise during discussion or debate.

FGP 15/509 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2015, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGP 15/510 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

14/466 Budget Report 2013/14 (Re Ashington Neighbourhood Partnership Agreement): The Town Clerk reported that at a special meeting of the Environment & Amenities Committee, the Northumberland County Council (NCC) Neighbourhood Services

Management Team had indicated that there would be a saving of approximately £25,000 from the 2014/15 budget as a result of both not filling the vacant post and also operational running costs.

Members were reminded that it had been agreed at that meeting to use some of the identified savings to employ extra enforcement officers on a pilot scheme to be reviewed after three months. Members were further informed that the vacant post was to be filled at the earliest opportunity, subject to NCC advertising requirements, with the cost of the post to be met from the 2015/16 budget.

FGP 15/511 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Town Clerk reminded members that the following matters had been deferred from the Committee meeting held on 20 January 2015 subject to the arrangement of site visits. Members who had attended the visits were invited to report on their findings to the meeting:

Real Deal Plus (Ashington Life Centre): A site visit had taken place on 3 February 2015 and had been attended by Councillors L Brown, V Brown, V Bridges, K Chambers, M Chambers, A Chisholm and L Henderson.

The members commented that the visit had been very interesting and informative and had given the opportunity to both ask further questions and acquire details as to the current and future plans of the organisation. Cllr. M Chambers had been interested to see the various range of activities taking place (volunteering, clothes bank, food bank and other activities).

Wansbeck Disability Forum (WDF): This organisation was based at the Ashington Life Centre and members had met a representative during the visit on 3 February 2015 who had provided additional information regarding the group's financial position. Cllr. L Brown commented that the organisation was trying to resume and build on the advice and information service previously delivered from their former accommodation in Station Villa.

Cllr.L.Brown reminded the Committee that in 2010, the Wansbeck Disability Forum had received start up grants of £1,000 from the Town Council and £10,000 from Awards for All. That funding had covered the group's expenses for 5 years and they were now looking for funding as they established themselves in new premises.

Ashington Community Development Trust (ACDT): A meeting arranged for 19 February 2015, had been attended by Cllrs. L Brown, V

Brown, A Chisholm and M Lang. Members reported that at the time of the meeting, the Trust was holding a community event to celebrate the Chinese New Year, one of a number of workshops running during the school half-term holidays.

Cllr. L Brown commented that he was particularly impressed with the public access computer provided which gave local residents an opportunity to take the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). The funded training project was aimed at people aged 35-55 and included assistance to complete job applications electronically.

The Town Clerk reminded members that they must apply the same criteria to the Development Trust as had been applied to other considered "infrastructure" organisations receiving an annual subsidy (e.g. Wansbeck CVS; Citizen's Advice Bureau, South East Northumberland Credit Union, Wansbeck Valley Food Bank and Northumberland YMCA.). The Town Clerk pointed out that the Town Council had never previously attached specific conditions to any of the annual subsidies or grants made to the infrastructure organisations in the town.

Members were reminded that organisations receiving an annual subsidy were invited to the annual Community Feedback Day to give formal presentations, but that consideration had since been given to inviting the individual organisations to committee meetings at intervals to provide progress reports and feedback on their work, outcomes and real challenges faced.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) A grant of £750 be made to Wansbeck Disability Forum,**
- (ii) A grant of £995 be made to Real Deal Plus,**
- (iii) A grant of £6,000 be made to Ashington Community Development Trust for 2015/16; and that**
- (iv) Ashington Community Development Trust be invited to attend a future 2015/16 meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee to give an update report on the project work of the Trust.**

FGP15/512 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments, made in accordance with Council and Committee resolutions, for the period 15 January 2015 – 17 February 2015.

Resolved:

That the full schedule of payments for the period 15 January 2015 to 17 February 2015, be agreed as set out below:

Citroen Contract Monitoring (Leasing Costs- Neighbourhood Services Van)	305.42
Marmax Products Ltd (Provision of Memorial Seat - contribution by the Family - Vo.No 197)	-374.00
Poppy Appeal (Wreaths - Remembrance Day - Reimbursement ATC Independent Member)	-17.00
Poppy Appeal (Wreaths - Remembrance Day - Reimbursement from ATC Labour Group)	-68.00
Northumberland County Council (Pay Costs - January 2015)	10,029.49
Northumberland County Council (Fuel Costs/Neighbourhood Services Van)	60.67
Wansbeck Music Festival (Small Grant/Donation)	350.00
Ashington Jazz Club (Small Grant/Donation)	400.00
De Lage Landen Leasing Ltd (Rental of Photocopier)	372.84
Viking Payments (Printing & Stationery)	100.69
Altodigital Networks Ltd (Photocopying / IT Helpdesk Support)	39.60
Altodigital Networks Ltd (Photocopying Charges)	369.59
S.M.Coulthard (Postages/Sundries/Christmas Switch-On Event)	77.87
BT Payment Services Ltd (ADSL Line - ATC Email/IT Service)	86.36
BT Payment Services Ltd (ATC Office Line)	86.36
Northumbrian Water (High Market/Wansbeck Road)	2,495.98
Northumbrian Water (Woodhorn Road Allotments Site)	610.03
National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (High Market Membership)	510.00
Cookswell Garage Ltd (Puncture Repairs - ATC Van)	19.20
Hepscott Water Systems (Water Rental Machines x 2 - Town Hall Offices)	12.60
City of Bradford MDC (Christmas Lighting 2014 - Features/Refurbishment & Installation)	15,750.00
Northumberland County Council (25% Pymnt - Neighbourhood Services - Final Bal 2014/15)	62,500.00
Northumberland County Council (SLA - Floral Displays/Play Areas)	7,014.24
WATBus (Scoping route work - Proposed Community Transport Scheme)	150.00
	100,881.94
North Seaton Colliery Allotment Association - 2014-15 Management Fees	-555.00
Woodhorn Road Allotment Association - 2014-15 Management Fees	-2,392.50
Green Lane Allotment Association - 2014-15 Management Fees	-765.00
High Market Allotment Association - 2014-15 Management Fees	-1,207.50
Hirst East End Allotment Association - 2014-15 Management Fees	-375.00
Unity Trust Bank plc (Bank Interest - At ended 31 Dec 2014)	-301.34
	-4,993.66

FGP 15/513 7. BUDGET REPORT

The Town Clerk submitted a Budget Report covering the period 1 April 2014 to 17 February 2015. Member's attention was drawn to areas where there may be likely savings; e.g. community engagement; seasonal lighting and the Neighbourhood Services Partnership. The Town Clerk added that he would be in a position to provide a true picture of the balance of reserves at the April 2015 meeting of the committee.

FGP 15/514 8. ASHINGTON MEMORIAL GARDEN PROJECT

The Town Clerk reported that a letter had been received from SITA Trust regarding the application for funding submitted to them in respect of the Ashington Memorial Garden Project. The Town Clerk read out the letter which confirmed that the application for funding had been unsuccessful. Members were reminded that the application to SITA Trust had been to support the cost of landscaping and "softer" elements of the project.

The Town Clerk stated that, whilst the news was disappointing, it was important to note that the project was not in jeopardy and that he would be looking at alternative local funding sources to make good the shortfall. Members were reminded that Heritage Lottery Fund grant together with the Town Council's own contribution, would cover the cost of the most significant feature of the Project, namely the updating of the name plaques, the work involved in designing and constructing a new plinth and re-locating the memorial to the centre of the garden.

The Town Clerk stated that the work in identifying alternative sources of funding was being explored and applications were already being drafted and submitted. The Town Clerk reported that where the Town Council was unable to apply for funding, bids would be submitted working with other key project partners namely the Royal British Legion.

The Town Clerk added that the commissioned architects working on the project (Hugh Massey Associates) had been asked to identify savings within the original project specification. Early indications were that this may be possible without any overall adverse impact on the project quality.

FGP 15/515 9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- (i) The Town Clerk confirmed that that the revised date for a site visit to the new Ashington Leisure & Community Centre was Monday, 9 March at 2:00pm.
- (ii) The Town Clerk stated that it was likely that it was likely that ARCH would be arranging a meeting with the Town Council and Town Team to provide an update and progress report on the Ashington Investment Plan. It was likely that the meeting would take place during the week commencing 23 March 2015.

FGP 15/516 10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee would be held on Tuesday, 31 March 2015 at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.