

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 28 April 2015, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.**

**PRESENT:**

Councillors: Stephen Fenwick (Chair)	Vicky Brown (Vice-Chair)
Louis Brown	Avril Chisholm
Glyn Davies	Mark Purvis (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  
Cllr. Pauline Thompson – Non-Committee Member  
Members of the Public - 0

**FGP 15/526 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors L.Alderson, V.Bridges, K.Chambers, L.Henderson, M.Lang, K.Lavery, L.Lavery, W.Stewart.

**FGP 15/527 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 15/528 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2015, were agreed and signed as a true record.

**FGP 15/529 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**FGP 15/510 Budget Report 2014/15 (Re Ashington Neighbourhood Partnership Agreement):** The Town Clerk reported that a meeting with Northumberland County Council (NCC) Officers had been arranged for Friday, 1 May 2015. Cllr. K Chambers, Cllr. L Brown and

the Town Clerk would be attending the meeting on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Clerk confirmed that the following items were likely to be raised at the meeting:-

- (i) *Financial Position:* It was expected that clarification would be given regarding the situation regarding NCC recharges for the year 2014/2015 and any savings made as a result of the current vacancy on the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Team.

The Town Clerk stated that if the savings from the previous year were confirmed as £24,000 as initially indicated by NCC Officer, Ashington Town Council had agreed that these savings would be allocated as follows:-

- £10,000 towards cost of capital works in Hirst Park
- £10,000 towards the Memorial Garden Project
- £4,000 to cover the cost of the Enforcement Pilot Scheme

- (ii) *Current Vacancy:* In respect of the current vacancy, the Town Clerk informed members that it was likely that any NCC employees whose current job may be at risk would have to be considered for the post, in line with NCC personnel policies. Members were informed that NCC had indicated that all vacancies had to be advertised both internally and externally and that, even though the post was externally funded (i.e. by the Town Council), the approval of the NCC Director of Finance was required.

## **FGP 15/530 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Town Clerk reported that the Northumberland Miners' Picnic had been confirmed for Saturday, 13 June 2015. Members were reminded that in 2014, the Town Council had made a contribution of £1,800 towards the cost of a headline act for the event, which had been booked and arranged by the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk suggested to members that the Northumberland Miners' Picnic be included in the Town Council's annual event calendar for financial support, making it clear that any contribution, if so agreed, was to be made to the wider community activities.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- (i) A contribution of £1,500 be made towards the overall cost of the 2015 Northumberland Miners' Picnic to be funded**

from the 2015/16 Music & Arts Events budget,

(ii) The Northumberland Miners' Picnic be added to the list of events in the town to receive annual funding support from the Town Council; and that

(iii) The annual contribution for 2016/17 be considered and agreed as part of the Town Council budget setting process.

## FGP15/531 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments, made in accordance with Council and Committee resolutions, for the period 28 March – 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015.

<b>Resolved:</b>	
<b>That the full schedule of payments for the period 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015, be agreed as set out below:</b>	
Otterburn Memorial Hall (Room Hire - War Memorial Project, School's Visit 25 March)	50.00
Parkhead & Wansbeck Powersports (Small Grant - British Special Olympics - Powerlifting)	500.00
Skills Force (Small Grant to War Memorial Project - Schools' Work & Research)	500.00
Friends of Bothal & Wansbeck (Small Grant - Summer Fair)	250.00
N.C.C. (Fuel Costs/Neighbourhood Services Van)	107.59
N.C.C. (Fuel Costs/Neighbourhood Services Van VAT only inv. 108429)	9.77
Ashington Town Team (Reimbursement of Telephone Call Charges - Vo.No. 309 refers)	-101.98
We Got Tickets (On-Line Ticket Sales - Martin Simpson Event - 7 March 2015)	-120.00
Geneva Digital (2015/16 - Web Hosting, SLA Support & Data Base)	1,800.00
Ashington Community Football Club (2015/16 Annual Sponsorship)	3,000.00
Ashington Cricket Club (2015/16 Annual Sponsorship)	3,000.00
Ashington Rugby Club (2015/16 Annual Sponsorship)	3,000.00
Wansbeck Centre for Voluntary Service (2015/16 Contribution)	6,000.00
Credit Union for South East Northumberland Ltd (2015/16 Contribution)	6,000.00
Wansbeck Citizens Advice Bureau (2015/16 Contribution)	6,000.00
Wansbeck Valley Food Bank (2015/16 Contribution)	6,000.00
Northumberland Federation of YMCA's (2015/16 Contribution)	6,000.00
Ashington Community Development Trust (2015/16 Contribution)	6,000.00
Bad Apples North East CIC (2015/16 Contribution)	1,000.00
Beverly Rose (Ashington Crier Retainer)	300.00

Ashington and District Male Voice Choir (2015/16 Patronage)	100.00
Zurich Municipal (Insurance Cover 2015-16)	4,796.87
Northumberland County Council (Town Hall Office Lease - Qtr Rental)	1,625.00
Citroen Contract Monitoring (Lease Charge - Town Council Vehicle)	305.92
WATBUS (50% Charge for Community Transport Scheme)	975.00
North East Regional Employer's Organisation (2015/16 Membership)	354.00
B & J.L.Mead (Heritage Work - Ashington Memorial Garden Project)	1,500.00
CNC Property Fund Management Ltd (Lease Rental - North Seaton Allotments Site)	320.00
National Sty of Allot & Leisure Gardeners Ltd (Hirst East End AA - Membership 2015/16)	125.00
BT Payment Services Ltd (Line Rental - Email/IT Service)	86.36
De Lage Landen Leasing Ltd (Qtr Lease Rental - Photocopier)	372.84
Altodigital Networks Ltd (Photocopier - Qtr IT helpdesk Support)	39.60
Northumberland County Council (Room Booking Fees - Town Hall "after hours") - 2014/15	60.00
Northumberland County Council (Pay Costs - April 2015)	10,361.69
Morrisons Glazing Services (Repairs to Bus Shelter Windows)	250.10
	<b>70,567.76</b>

## **FGP 15/532 7. DRAFT FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS 2014/2015**

The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Draft Financial Accounts for 2014/2015 for consideration by the Committee.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the following points:-

- (i) The estimated reserves balance at 31 March 2015 was likely to be in the region of £285,000.
- (ii) The proposed use of reserves in 2015/16 included £79,000 towards the cost of the New Memorial Garden Project. .

The Town Clerk informed members that the Final Accounts and Annual Governance Statements, when all transactions and account entries were completed, would be presented for approval to the Annual General Meeting of the Town Council.

## **FGP 15/533 8. TOWN TWINNING – DEVELOPMENT OF A FORMAL CHARTER**

The Town Clerk informed members that the wording for a formal charter had now been agreed with all partners (Ashington Town Council, Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council and Remscheid City Council) and a full translation into German received from Remscheid.

Members were informed that meetings had been held with local renowned calligrapher, Tom Fleming, who had agreed to produce the preliminary work and advice for the development of the new Town Twinning Charter between the three partners, the cost of which was expected to be £600.

The Town Clerk stated that from discussions it was likely that a formal invitation would be received in the near future from Remscheid City Council for a visit to Germany in mid-August 2014, in order for the charter to be formally signed by all three partners. The Town Clerk added that, as the signatory to the Charter and invited guest, it was expected that the costs for the Mayor to travel to Germany would be funded by the Town Council. The Chair stated that any other council members wishing to take part in the visit would need, and would be required, to entirely fund their own travel and accommodation costs.

The Town Clerk reminded members that anyone wishing to be included in the Remscheid visit needed to confirm their intentions to him by Thursday, 30 April. Members were advised that the trip was likely to take place from 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015, and indications were that the overall cost of travel and accommodation would be in the region of £410 per person.

## **FGP 15/534 9. ASHINGTON MEMORIAL GARDEN**

The Town Clerk reported that the overall project budget had been submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Town Clerk informed members that four of the NCC Ashington Councillors had confirmed a contribution of £5,000 each towards the total cost of the scheme.

The Town Clerk stated that, as lead partner in the project, the Town Council would be the responsible body for the project and all financial transactions, resulting in a saving of £34,000 VAT. Members were reminded that once a formal resolution was made at the annual meeting of the town council and submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund, it was likely that a project start date would then be formally agreed.

Members were informed that external funding work was still underway and that there was an expectation that further funding support would be forthcoming. The town council welcomed this news and commended the staff on the work and funding success to date on the project.

## FGP 15/535 10. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – FORMER A2 BUS SERVICE

The Town Clerk reported that, following an interim review of the pilot scheme, this item had been referred to the Committee by Planning & Regeneration for consideration as to whether continued financial support should be provided given the low level of scheme uptake.

The Town Clerk informed members that, during discussions with Watbus, it had been pointed out that the withdrawal of the service before the end of the contracted period (13 weeks) would incur a charge of 50% of the agreed cost (i.e. £975).

The Town Clerk suggested that the scheme be continued for a period of 6 weeks in total and that all members of the scheme be contacted prior to the withdrawal with an explanation for the Town Council's decision.

The Town Clerk advised members that he would ensure that the full reasons for the withdrawal of the service would be made clear i.e. lack of service users and membership. The Chair stated that it was important to stress and make clear that withdrawal of the service was no reflection on the quality of the Watbus service provision or the lack of promotion and publicity.

### **Resolved:**

#### **That:**

- (i) The pilot Community Transport Scheme be withdrawn with effect from Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015 (that being the last day of operation),**
- (ii) All Members of the scheme be contacted in person in advance of that date with the full reasoning behind the Town Council's decision; and that.**
- (iii) All Members of the Community Transport Scheme be given a full refund of the membership fee of £10.**

## FGP 15/536 11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- (i) 2015 Tour of Britain:** The Town Clerk informed members that he had been contacted by events consultants working on behalf of Northumberland County Council regarding the 2015 Tour of

Britain. Members were informed that it had been confirmed that the route for this prestigious cycling event would take in for days in Northumberland, including travelling through Ashington on 9th September 2015.

**FGP 15/537 12. 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, 26 May 2015 at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

**The meeting ended at 7.40pm.**