

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Planning & Regeneration Committee meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 14 April 2015, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington, NE63 8RX

PRESENT:

Councillors: Mark Purvis (Chair) Keith Chambers
Marjorie Chambers Stephen Fenwick
Liam Lavery Wyn Stewart
Pauline Thompson Ely Turnbull
Louis Brown (*Ex Officio*)
Vicky Brown (*non-Cttee Member*)
Avril Chisholm (*non-Cttee Member*)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer
Members of the Public – 0

P&R15/79 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Les Alderson, Victor Bridges, Lawrence Henderson and Bob Walkinshaw.

P&R15/80 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest.

P&R15/81 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the former Planning & Amenities Committee meeting held on 10 February 2015 were agreed and signed as a true record.

P&R15/82 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

P&R14/66 Proposed Housing Development at North Seaton (Planning Application No. 14/03715/OUT): The Town Clerk

reported that the County Council was waiting for the results of the consultation exercise before considering this application.

P&R15/83 5. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – FORMER A2 BUS SERVICE

The Town Clerk referred members to the resolution made at the meeting held on 10 March 2015, which agreed to the operation of a pilot community transport scheme on the former A2 bus service route.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the pilot scheme had been promoted through the Town Council newsletter, which was delivered to every household in the town. Members were informed that the scheme had been running for two consecutive Tuesdays and that only eight residents had joined the as members and were eligible to use the service. Members were reminded that it had always been the Town Council's intention to hold an early review if the demand for the scheme was low.

Members were informed, since the decision had been taken to operate the pilot scheme, Arriva had re-introduced bus services in North Seaton, which meant that residents in that area were extremely unlikely to join the pilot community transport scheme.

The Town Clerk stated that the pilot scheme was due to run over a 13-week period and it was unreasonable to suspend it after only two weeks. The Town Clerk suggested that an early review be carried out after a further two weeks of operation and that a further report be made to the Finance & General Purposes Committee at the end of April.

Following a lengthy discussion a proposal was made that, because of the lack of demand for the scheme, it should be brought to an end with immediate effect.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) The Town Clerk contact Watbus to cease operation of the pilot community transport scheme with immediate effect.**
- (ii) Arrangements be made to reimburse those residents who had paid the £10 fee to become members of the scheme.**

P&R15/84 6. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL PROPERTY REVIEW AND TOWN PLANS

The Town Clerk reported that Northumberland County Council (NCC) had recently carried out a review of all NCC property which had been published along with their plans for all of the towns in the county.

The Town Clerk stated that the initial plans had indicated that the new Leisure and Community Facility was due for completion in November 2015 and that the new NCC corporate headquarters in Ashington were stated as achievable by the spring of 2018, subject to the formal decision of NCC to relocate to Ashington.

Several members expressed concerns regarding the future of the old leisure centre buildings and site. The Town clerk reminded members that the current Leisure Centre was subject to dual ownership between Ashington Leisure Partnership and Northumberland County Council.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the Town Council contact Northumberland County Council to formally welcome the proposals made in the NCC Property Review and Town Plans document regarding Ashington.

P&R 15/85 7. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL PLANNING SERVICE REVIEW

The Town Clerk referred members to a letter from the Leader of Northumberland County Council regarding a review of the County Council's Planning Service and summarised the contents of the document including the planned introduction of new planning protocols.

The Town Clerk informed members that the County Council was carrying out the review as it was widely felt that the County's Planning Service was not operating as it should. Members were informed that, in 2009, measures had been put in place to speed up the planning process, but these had proved ineffective and had not led to an improved service.

The Town Clerk added that the County's new proposals indicated a clear requirement and need for town and parish councils to work

closely with County Council members particularly in relation to objections and requests for matters to be dealt with at committee level.

The Town Clerk informed members that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had produced a planning training guide in January 2015 which was available online; all members were encouraged to read the document.

In response to a remark made by members that the “delegated decision” system operated by the County Council was flawed, Cllr. Chisholm stated that this process was explained in detail in the DCLG planning training guide referred to earlier by the Town Clerk.

P&R 15/86 8. NEW LEISURE CENTRE – PROPOSED 30MPH SPEED LIMIT EXTENSION

The Town Clerk reported that Northumberland County Council was proposing that the 30mph speed restriction on the A197 be extended from the Asda roundabout to the Roundhouse roundabout (adjacent the entrance to the new Community & Leisure Facility) as a result of the expected increase in the amount of traffic in that area. It was proposed to erect a 30mph speed restriction sign at the “Roundhouse” roundabout as traffic approached from the east.

It was agreed that this proposal be supported.

P&R 15/87 9. ASHINGTON INVESTMENT PLAN: STAKEHOLDER MEETING

The Town Clerk reported that he had been informed that ARCH had organised a stakeholder meeting on 25 March 2015, to which Town Councillors were invited. It was expected that information regarding the proposals for the de-pedestrianisation of the main shopping area would be outlined in principle. In addition, it was expected that details of the proposals regarding the development of the new NCC Corporate HQ in Ashington would be given.

The Town Clerk reminded members that Ashington Town Council had indicated that it supported the proposed de-pedestrianisation of the main shopping area and had requested that this be carried out as a priority. It was agreed that the Town Clerk contact NCC confirming that the Town Council looked forward to receiving the full planning application for the proposed works.

P&R 15/88 10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no other urgent business.

P&R15/89 11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Planning & Regeneration Committee was agreed for Tuesday 16 June 2015, in the Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.