

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 9 June 2015, at the Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Ely Turnbull (Chair)
Vicky Brown
Marjorie Chambers
Stephen Fenwick
Kris Lavery
Pauline Thompson

Louis Brown
Keith Chambers
Glyn Davies
Lawrence Henderson
Wyn Stewart

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Members of the Public – 3

OPEN SESSION

The Town Clerk informed members that information had been made available to the Town Council on the proposals for an Ashington Solar Farm, potentially to be located within the Ashington Community Woodland. Members were informed that the scheme was being proposed under Northumberland County Council's 'invest to save' policies and the requirement to look at renewable energy schemes. Members were asked to take the information packs that contained background details as well as "frequently asked questions". Members were reminded that there would be opportunities to formally respond should a planning application be formally appointed.

Cllr.Davies raised concerns regarding the number of complaints that were being reported to him by residents regarding the replacement of the street lights in the Seaton Ward. Members were informed that the majority of complaints were about the inadequacy of the replacement LED lights and the dim light provision. Cllr.Davies advised members that many older residents were very concerned that the lighting was unsuitable for certain locations and did not offer safety or security.

The Town Clerk informed members that he had been advised that Northumberland County Council was currently looking into the contract and checking the work for full compliance with the contract specification. A full update report had been requested from Northumberland County Council, which was expected in July 2015. It was also believed that some of the work had been temporarily suspended until quality checking work had been undertaken.

C15/557 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Les Alderson, Victor Bridges, Avril Chisholm, Maggie Lang, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis and Bob Walkinshaw.

C15/558 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllrs. M. Chambers and E. Turnbull made disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest with regard to any discussions pertaining to allotments.

C15/559 3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported that he had attended Ashington Male Voice Choir's Annual Concert at St. John's Church on Saturday 9 May 2015.

C15/560 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from the meeting held on 5 May 2015 were agreed as a true record.

C15/561 5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

C15/554: Ashington Memorial Garden

The Town Clerk informed members that the project had recently received a grant of £10,000 from UK Coal, via Ashington Royal British Legion, and that the capital works were due to commence on the 17 June. Members were informed that the contractors for the project, Brambledown Landscaping Services Ltd, had requested the usage of part of the old Essendene site for a storage container during the 12 week contract.

C15/555: Visit to Remscheid (14-19 August 2015)

The Town Clerk informed members that six Ashington Town Councillors would be visiting Remscheid including the Mayor, as well as two Councillors from Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council. Members were informed that Work was progressing on the new Town Twinning Charter which would be officially signed by the Mayor during the visit.

The Town Clerk thanked members for the earlier town council offer to fund 50% of the travel and accommodation costs for himself and the Funding and Projects Officer, but reported that they both intended to fully meet their own costs for travel and accommodation. Members were reminded that, with the exception of the Mayor as a formally invited guest, all Council members would be entirely self-funding their own costs for the Remscheid visit.

C15/562 6. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported that much of the recent Town Council's work had focused on the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Partnership. Cllr. Fenwick reminded members that it had been agreed at the Environment & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 12 May 2015, to invite the County Council Neighbourhood Services Management Team to attend the next meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee.

C15/563 7. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2014/15

The Town Clerk presented the Final Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for the Financial Year ended 31 March 2015 for consideration and approval.

The Town Clerk presented the report in detail and informed members that the Town Council's appointed internal auditor had formally reported that there were no issues to raise with the council following the completion of the audit.

Members were informed that the Internal Auditor had reported that:

- In his opinion the summary accounts presented fairly the income and expenditure of Ashington Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2015, and that
- The robust systems of financial and administrative management continued to operate effectively and efficiently and provided a sound audit trail.

The Chair welcomed the report and assurances provided in it for the Council. Members were reminded that the previous written reports had also given the Town Council the reassurance that there was full compliance with all relevant financial regulations, procedures and controls. The Internal Auditor had also expressed full satisfaction

with the risk management process, the asset register and the manner in which all financial and budgetary issues were managed and regularly reported to Finance and General Purposes Committee and Full Council.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) The Accounting Statements for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, (Section 1 of the 2014/15 Audit Commission Annual Return) be formally approved; and that**
- (ii) The Annual Governance Statement (Section 2 of the 2014/15 Audit Commission Annual Return) be formally approved.**

C15/564 8. ASHINGTON WORKERS MEMORIAL (CLLR. A CHISHOLM)

The Town Clerk informed members of the work carried out by Town Council Officers in the organisation of the now annual South East Northumberland International Workers Day event. Members were reminded that the event provided an opportunity for the public to commemorate the deaths of working people and took place at the Elephant Public House in Ashington. The event culminated in a wreath laying ceremony at the Workers Memorial situated within North Seaton Cemetery.

Cllr Chisholm reported that she had attended this year's event, on the 25 April, and was somewhat disappointed at the quality of planting at the Memorial. Cllr.Chisholm requested that the town council look to address the issue in future years and arrange for the planting to be carried out at half-yearly intervals.

The Town Clerk reported that the costs would be minimal and there was an opportunity to include the work within the Neighbourhood Services Partnership. Members were advised that the ownership of the Memorial was uncertain at present but if acceptable, as an interim measure the memorial could be included within the War Memorials budget of the town council for any future remedial works or maintenance.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) Ashington Town Council liaise with Northumberland County Council in order to adopt the Workers' Memorial and carry out future environmental and planting works; and that**

- (ii) The costs of future maintenance and remedial works be included within the War Memorials budget of the Town Council.**

C15/565 9. ASHINGTON TOWN CENTRE STAKEHOLDER GROUP (CLLR. L ALDERSON/CLLR M CHAMBERS)

Cllr. M Chambers reported that she attended the first Ashington Stakeholder Group meeting organised by Arch. Cllr. Alderson was unable to attend the meeting. Cllr.Chambers reported that the group was made up of two representatives from Ashington Town Team, two from Ashington Town Council and two of Ashington's Northumberland County Councillors. The Group was to meet every three weeks during the duration of the Town Centre regeneration scheme.

Cllr.Chambers informed members that, as part of the wider consultation, Arch would be providing an office on Wansbeck Square during the lifetime of the scheme to provide information, visual displays and to address enquiries and queries from both traders and residents.

C15/566 10. ALLOTMENTS CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2015/2016

A report was presented which informed members of major proposed improvement works on the Green Lane and the Woodhorn Road Allotment Site's as part of the Planned Capital Improvement Programme.

Members were informed that the Green Lane and Woodhorn Road Allotment Associations, with full Town Council assistance and support, had been successful in accessing external funding for improvement to improve roadways, development of parking bays and

the removal of fly tipping. The Town Clerk reported that the Allotment Associations had committed funds and had requested Town Council advice and support to complete the full funding package for the two schemes.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) The work to improve roadways and install parking bays at the Green Lane Allotment Site with work to be completed during 2015,**
- (ii) The agreed total sum of £4,960 be met from the Town Council's Allotments Fund to support the total improvement cost of £16,960,**
- (iii) Work to improve roadways, remove fly tipping and install parking bays at the Woodhorn Road Allotment & Small Holding Site be completed during 2015; and that**
- (iv) The agreed total sum of £2,500 be met from the Town Council's Allotments Fund to support the total improvement cost of £11,920.**

C15/567 11. APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT – TOWN TWINNING VISIT TO REMSCHEID

The Town Clerk presented a request for financial support from Northumberland Youth Service towards the overall cost of a visit to Remscheid in August 2015 to coincide with the proposed signing of the new town twinning charter. Members were informed that, if agreed, funding would support and enable eight young people from Ashington to make the visit with the aim of further strengthening the ties between the two communities.

Resolved:

That a grant of £450 be made to the Northumberland Youth Service towards the overall cost of a visit to Remscheid.

C15/568 12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Cllr. M Chambers informed members that she had attended an event at Escape Family Support at their recently refurbished building on South View in Ashington. Members were reminded that the Town Council had supported the costs of the new kitchen in the building.

C15/569 13. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Full Council was scheduled for Tuesday, 8 September 2015, at 7:00pm, in the Council Chamber.

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.