

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 29 September 2015, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Vicky Brown (Chair)	Louis Brown
	Marjorie Chambers	Avril Chisholm
	Glyn Davies	Stephen Fenwick
	Lawrence Henderson	Maggie Lang
	Mark Purvis	Wyn Stewart
	Pauline Thompson	Ely Turnbull
	Bob Walkinshaw	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer

FGP 15/547 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors L Alderson, V Bridges, K Chambers, K Lavery and L Lavery.

FGP 15/548 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 15/549 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGP 15/550 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGP 15/533 Town Twinning: The Town Clerk reported that the visit to Remscheid for the purposes of formalising and signing the new

“Charter” between Ashington Town Council, Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council and Remscheid City Council had taken place in August and had been extremely successful. Members were informed that a signed, framed copy of the new Charter was now on permanent display in the Remscheid Room in the Town Hall.

FGP15/534 Ashington Memorial Garden: The Town Clerk informed members that the contractors had given an assurance that the work would be completed during week commencing 26 October 2015. Members were informed that, in accordance with Royal British Legion protocol, the re-sited Memorial needed to be “re-dedicated” before the service on Remembrance Sunday and that a “re-dedication” ceremony was to be arranged for Friday, 6 November 2015.

FGP 15/551 7. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Applications for financial support were considered by the Committee from the following organisations:-

- Growing for Gold (Ashington Life Centre)
- 7th Ashington Brownies

Members noted that “Growing for Gold” was an environmental project developed by Real Deal Plus (the organisation responsible for activities within the Ashington Life Centre) and that the Town Council had previously made a substantial grant to that organisation. The application was for an amount of £650 to purchase a greenhouse.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was proposed that a grant of £650 be made to “Growing for Gold” with the proviso that the organisation be informed that any future application to support activities at Ashington Life Centre would be carefully scrutinised.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) A grant of £650 be made to “Growing for Gold”**
- (ii) A grant of £360 be made to 7th Ashington (St. Andrews) Brownie Unit**

FGP15/552 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments, made in accordance with Council and Committee resolutions, for the period 26th June – 24th September 2015.

The schedule and payments were formally approved and are attached to the minutes as Schedule 1.

FGP 15/553 7. BUDGET REPORT 2015/2016

The Town Clerk presented details of the Budget Report for the period covering 1st April to 24th September 2015. Members attention was drawn to underspend identified for the provision of bus shelters and reminded members that it had been agreed to replace three shelters, the current position being as follows:

- Newbiggin Road (The Elephant): had now been completed.
- Briardene : groundworks were currently being carried out in preparation for the erection of the shelter at Briardene.
- Northern Social Club: groundworks were currently being carried out in preparation for the erection of the shelter at the Northern Social Club.

The Town Clerk added that a contribution of £1,000 had been made by NCC Cllr. K Parry from his Small Schemes Fund and that NCC Cllr. J Lang had indicated that he may be in a position to make a similar contribution towards the cost of the new shelter at the Northern Social Club.

In response to a question regarding an amount identified for the “Use Our Loo” Scheme, the Town Clerk explained that Northumberland County Council had recently carried out a county-wide review of public conveniences, the results of which were to be presented to a meeting of Northumberland County Council on 23rd September 2015. Members were advised that any recommendations for the provision of public conveniences in Ashington would be discussed at the Town Council’s Environment & Amenities Committee scheduled for 20th October 2015.

FGP 15/554 8. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2014/15

For information only, the Town Clerk presented a report from the Audit Commission regarding the Town Council’s Final Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015.

Members were informed that, on the basis of the External Auditors review, the information in the annual return was in accordance with proper practices and no matters had come to attention giving cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

The Town Clerk reported that, as part of the audit work, information had been sought regarding the payments made to Northumberland County Council relating to the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Partnership. The Town Clerk reported that while the auditors were satisfied with the information provided and explanation regarding the intention to enhance the service provision, there would be a likely requirement to provide financial detail of the full partnership budget and spend i.e. not only that element pertaining to the Town Council contribution.

Members were advised that a comprehensive partnership financial report from the County Council regarding neighbourhood services expenditure was yet to be received and the matter would be addressed at the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the Leader (Cllr. S Fenwick), the Deputy Leader (Cllr. M Purvis), Vice-Chair of Environment & Amenities (Cllr. M Chambers) and Cllr. A Chisholm would be attending the next meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board.

Members welcomed the external auditors report and thanked the Town Clerk for the comprehensive financial work he carried out during the year and for the quality and format of the reports provided to the Committee and the Full Council.

FGP 15/555 10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no other urgent business.

FGP 15/556 11. 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, 27 October 2015 at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

The meeting ended at 7.55pm.