

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

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

## PRESENT:

Councillors:	Vicky Brown (Chair)	Louis Brown
	Keith Chambers	Marjorie Chambers
	Avril Chisholm	Glyn Davies
	Stephen Fenwick	Lawrence Henderson
	Liam Lavery	Mark Purvis
	Pauline Thompson	Ely Turnbull

## IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer  
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer

## FGP 15/557 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Les Alderson, Victor Bridges, Maggie Lang, Kris Lavery, Wyn Stewart and Bob Walkinshaw.

## FGP 15/558 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 15/559 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2015, were agreed and signed as a true record.

## FGP 15/560 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

**FGP 15/534 Ashington Memorial Garden** : The Town Clerk informed members that the final piece of work on the Memorial Garden had been completed on the morning of Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> November, when the six

interpretation panels had been installed prior to the Re-Dedication Service arranged for that afternoon.

The Town Clerk reported that many positive and supportive comments had been received from both residents and funders regarding the work done on the project.

Members were informed that a late request had been received from the Northumberland Royal Hussars to have a further memorial seat within the Memorial Garden. The Town Clerk stated that the request had been received after the closing date for memorial seats and that to allow one additional seat would have impacted on the landscaped design of the garden and caused an imbalance in seating provision. The Town Clerk stressed that he had sought to find a solution to the issue and also had assured the Royal Hussars representatives that the issue would be brought to the attention of Council members.

The Town Clerk suggested that the Town Council might also wish to now sponsor a memorial seat within the garden stating that, if agreed, two additional seats could be placed within the Memorial Garden, keeping the uniformity of the design, whilst at the same time giving the Town Council the opportunity of recognising those from the town who had given their lives while serving in H.M. Forces.

The Town Clerk also suggested that two further interpretation panels be designed and placed in the garden. The first giving a short descriptive history of the Memorial Garden Project and recognising the financial support provided by funding organisations and the second on the history of the town's war memorials.

Members were fully in support of the Town Clerk's request.

In response to members' comments, the Town Clerk confirmed that the event on 6 November 2015, had been a Re-Dedication Service and not an official opening of the garden which was likely to take place in spring 2016, when the garden and landscaping had settled and any contract issues had been remedied.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- (i) The Town Clerk be authorised to commission the development and manufacture of two additional interpretation panels for the Memorial Garden,**
- (ii) The Town Clerk be authorised to purchase two additional Memorial seats for the garden,**

**(iii) The wording and inscription on the Town Council Memorial Seat be delegated to the Town Clerk; and that**

**(iv) The cost of the related work be met from the dedicated budget for the Memorial Garden Project.**

**FGP 15/561 5. APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT: WANSBECK MUSIC FESTIVAL**

The Town Clerk reminded Members that, it had been agreed to include a contribution of £350 to Wansbeck Music Festival to come each year from the annual “Events” budget. Members were informed that the Music Festival organisers had now requested that the Town Council consider providing an annual bursary of £600 to offer the opportunity for an “outstanding musical student” from Ashington to attend the European Youth Summer Music (EYSM) summer school event held in Surrey each year.

The Town Clerk explained that, should the Town Council approve the request, an amount of £600 from the budget would be ring-fenced, but only drawn down and expended should an Ashington student be offered a place at the summer school based on their musical prowess and further potential. The Town Clerk informed members that, it was his understanding, that the EYSM summer school was a prestigious invite-only event attended by recognised gifted musical students from throughout the United Kingdom.

**Resolved:**

**That an amount of £600 be earmarked within the 2016-2017 budget, to be used in the event of an Ashington student being identified as eligible to receive an invitation to attend the European Youth Summer Music event.**

**FGP15/562 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments, made in the period 25 September to 18 November 2015.

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

## FGP 15/563 7. BUDGET REPORT 2015/2016

The Town Clerk presented details of the Budget Report for the period covering 1 April to 18 November 2015.

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

- An amount of approx £81,360 had been allocated within the budget for the Ashington Memorial Garden,
- A provision of £12,000 had been made for the expected "Town Hall Service Charges", although the County Council had not yet fully identified or requested payment.

The Town Clerk reported that he had commenced preliminary work on the draft budget for 2016/17 and requested that the Town Council consider the establishment of a Budget Working Group to oversee the development of the draft budget for submission to Finance and General Purposes Committee in January 2016.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Working Group would be a "time bound" group, have no delegated decision-making powers and would simply oversee and develop budget options, capital schemes and financial projections for full consideration of both the Committee and Full Council.

### **Resolved:**

**That:**

**(i) A Budget Working Group be established to oversee the development of the draft budget for submission to Finance and General Purposes Committee in January 2016; and that**

**(ii) Membership of the Group be:**

- **Leader/Deputy Leader of the Council**
- **Chair/Vice-Chair of the Council**
- **Chair/Vice-Chair of Finance & General Purposes Committee**
- **Chair/Vice Chair of Environment & Amenities Committee**
- **Chair/Vice-Chair of Planning and Regeneration Committee**

## **FGP 15/564 8. PARISH PRECEPTS**

The Town Clerk reported that he had received a letter dated 29 October 2015 from the County Council regarding the time-table for notification of the Parish Precepts and Council Tax. Members were informed that the Town Council had been requested to submit formal notification of the 2016/17 precept by Monday 1 February 2016.

The Town Clerk added that the Budget Working Group would be meeting to begin the budget preparation process during December 2015, and that, barring any unforeseen or last minute items, the timetable did not seem unachievable.

## **FGP 15/565 9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Cllr. Ely Turnbull reported that he had recently made nominations in two of the categories of the Newcastle building Society Community Awards. Cllr. Turnbull informed members that he had nominated the Wansbeck Valley Food Bank in the category for groups, but that they had been unsuccessful.

Cllr Turnbull was however delighted to announce that his second nomination had been successful. Cllr. Pauline Thompson had received an individual award in recognition of the work she had carried out with the Alligator Klub.

Cllr. Turnbull explained that the Alligator Klub was an organisation that Cllr. Thompson had continued to run for a number of years supporting young people with learning difficulties and their carers. Members congratulated Cllr. Thompson on her recognition. Cllr Turnbull informed members that the Council were invited to attend the next meeting of the Alligator Klub on Friday, 27 November 2015, when he would be presenting the award to Cllr. Thompson.

## **FGP 15/566 11. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

The date and time of the next meeting was yet to be arranged.

**The meeting ended at 7.15pm.**