

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Tuesday, 2 February 2016, at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Members of the Public – 0

C16/592 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Les Alderson, Keith Chambers, Maggie Lang, Wyn Stewart and Bob Walkinshaw.

C16/593 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures made of personal and prejudicial interest with regard to any item on the agenda.

C16/594 3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair informed members that he had attended the following Mayoral events since the last meeting:-

- Re-dedication of Ashington War Memorial
- Remembrance Day Service at Ashington War Memorial
- Remembrance Day Service at Bothal War Memorial
- Ashington Christmas Lights Switch-On Event
- Prize Giving Evening at Northumberland CoE Academy
- Woodhorn Care Home Christmas event
- Ashington Male Voice Choir's Christmas Concert

C16/595 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from the meeting held on 3 November 2015 were agreed as a true record.

C16/596 5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

C15/584 *Ashington Workers' Memorial Garden:* The Town Clerk reported that work to improve the Garden was now complete in preparation for the Workers Memorial Event planned to take place in April.

C15/584 *Remembrance Sunday:* The Town Clerk informed members of the visit of the family of Sgt Hugh Cairns DSM VC to Ashington. The family had travelled from Canada for the Re-dedication of the Ashington War Memorial and Remembrance Sunday Service. Members were informed that the family also visited Bothal School where Hugh attended as a child. The Town Clerk reported that, further to the visit, the School are planning to commence an annual "courage" award in memory of Sgt Cairns and a request has been made for the Town Council to considering sponsoring this award. The Town Clerk suggested that, in keeping with current arrangement's with School's awards evening's, the Town Council should consider the purchase of a small trophy as well as providing vouchers to the value of £25 once the school had finalised its plans. Members were fully in support of the Town Clerk's request.

C16/597 6. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported on the following issues:-

- ***Hirst Park Revival Project:*** The Leader reported that Northumberland County Council's bid to 'Parks for People' (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund & Big Lottery Fund) for £138,000 has been successful (Round 1). The funding would allow the development of detailed plans for a significant Round 2 bid for the complete development of the Park. Members were informed that the proposed bid would likely be in the region of £2.3m and was due for submission by Autumn 2016. The Leader reported that the Town Council was a major partner and that, on its behalf, both Town Clerk and Funding and Projects Officer were likely to have a significant role and workload in helping to develop and submit a strong funding bid.

- **Budget Working Group:** The Leader thanked the appointed group members and Town Clerk for their work in developing the detailed budget papers for consideration of both Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Full Council.
- **Arch Stakeholder Group:** The Leader reported that, together with Cllr.M.Chambers and the Town Clerk, he was continuing to attend and play an active role in the Arch Stakeholder Group for town centre regeneration. Members were informed that Northumberland County Council would be considering its own budget on 24 February 2016, when a decision on the re-location of a new corporate building to Ashington was due to be made.
- **Ashington Leisure Centre:** The Leader reported that he would be attending the official opening of the Ashington Leisure Centre, with the Chair and Town Clerk, on the 5 February 2016.

C16/598 7. BUDGET & PRECEPT 2016/17

The Leader presented the Final Budget and Precept report and highlighted the final changes that had been requested following discussions at the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 26 January 2016. The Leader of the Council commended the 2016/17 budget to the Town Council and formally presented the full recommendations for consideration and support. The Leader informed members that, if so agreed, the 2016/17 budget would see an increase in the Council Tax level of 1.97% and an annual Band D increase of £1.94 per annum..

Resolved:
<p>That:-</p> <p>(i) The 2016/17 budgeted gross expenditure of £675,750 be agreed,</p> <p>(ii) Ashington Town Council's precept requirement from Northumberland County Council in respect of the Financial Year Ending 31 March 2017, be agreed at £675,750 and that</p> <p>(iii) The planned use of the General Reserves balance of the Town Council be considered at the Full Council meeting scheduled for 3 May 2016.</p>

C16/599 8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE CONTROLS

The Town Clerk presented the Register of Risk Management and Effective Controls for consideration. Members were informed that there were no new plans for further transfer of assets and/or services in the coming year. The Town Clerk reminded members that the review of risks was a corporate Council responsibility and should be regularly reviewed for reassurance purposes. The leader stated that, while the Town Council was satisfied that all risks were adequately assessed and managed and that appropriate insurance cover was in place, there was a need for all members to have a full awareness of the Council's responsibilities and duties. It was agreed that a comprehensive review of the register be undertaken and the document reported back to the Full Council for approval.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) The Register of Risk Management and Effective Controls be formally accepted and approved as presented; and that**
- (ii) A mid-term comprehensive review of the Risk Register be undertaken prior to 30 September 2016.**

C16/600 9. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY GROUP

The Town Clerk reported that, as members were aware, the Neighbourhood Services Partnership had been discussed at length at the Finance & General Purposes Meeting held on 26 January 2016.

The Leader stated that there was an agreed need to appoint named elected members to a new Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Group to represent the Town Council in all matters related to the effective operation and delivery of Neighbourhood Services in Ashington. Members were advised that the group, which would not have delegated decision-making powers, would primarily take forward all matters including the drafting of a new fit-for-purpose Neighbourhood Services Agreement. The Town Clerk stressed that it was important that any members appointed to the Group would need to familiarise themselves with the current agreement prior to any formal partner meetings.

Resolved:

That Cllrs. L Brown, K Chambers, M Chambers and K Lavery be appointed to the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board.

C16/601 10. LOCAL COUNCILS: FUTURE AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

The Town Clerk reported that the government was in the process of reforming the local government audit system and that, although procedures for Internal Audit would remain largely unchanged, changes were planned for External Audit, to take effect from the financial year 2017-18. Members were informed that before 31 March 2016, all local councils must decide whether to join the new arrangements which are being planned nationally, or whether to make their own external audit arrangements post 2016/17.

Members were informed that the government's Audit Commission was dissolved in March 2015, and its role has been filled temporarily by a company called Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, to whom the council's current external auditors (BDO) were now responsible. The Town Clerk reported that BDO's role would finish in Summer/Autumn 2017, on completion of the audit of the 2016-17 accounts.

The Town Clerk reported that in preparation for subsequent audits, at the invitation of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), a number of national bodies had come together to create a new audit-procurement body: Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SLAAA) with office services provided by National Association of Local Councils. Members were informed that during 2016-17, SLAAA will undertake an open procurement exercise to recruit one or more firms to undertake local councils' audit work.

The Town Clerk reported that although some of the detail was still being resolved it was likely that post- 2017 annual external audits would be very similar to the current format: i.e. 'limited assurance', with a 4-page annual pro-forma with pages to be completed variously by the council, the internal auditor and the external auditor.

Members were informed that any council, which was minded to make its own separate audit arrangements, was urged to undertake the necessary research now, in order to understand the requirements of

running an Auditor Panel, including the conducting a procurement exercise.

The Town Clerk requested that for consistency and clarity members resolve to part of the new SLAAA/NALC scheme. Members were further advised that, owing to the way that legislation has been drafted, all local councils with an annual turnover of less than £6.5million were automatically part of the new scheme unless they decide to opt out and appoint their own external auditors.

Resolved:

That, in respect of the external audit of Annual Accounts from 2017/18, Ashington Town Council formally resolve to use the external auditors procured on behalf of the local councils sector by the new procurement body, Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SLAAA).

C16/602 11. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES – ARCH STAKEHOLDER GROUP FOR TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Cllr. S Fenwick reported that he had attended (with Cllr. M Chambers and the Town Clerk) the Arch Stakeholder Group Meeting for Town Centre Regeneration on Monday 1 February 2016. Cllr. Fenwick reported that three options were considered for Station Road traffic management: enhancing the existing pedestrianised scheme; opening Station Road to two-way traffic, and a one way traffic system (from East to West).

Cllr.Fenwick reported that a public consultation event had taken place on the 26 & 27 January at Wansbeck Square with over 200 people attending. Members were advised that Northumberland County Council's preferred option was the one-way system.

Cllr. Fenwick and Chambers highlighted areas and issues that were currently being addressed including the weekly Tuesday market, the location of taxis in the town centre, the operation of buses as well as the use of Station Road for events such as the annual Fayre Day and the Christmas Lights Switch On.

The Town Clerk informed members that full information on the proposed schemes was currently available via a link on the Town Council website and the public consultation was open for comment until 5 February. Cllr.Chambers reported that it was envisaged that

agreed work on the street would commence in 2016 and be completed by March 2017.

C16/603 12. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Full Council was scheduled for Tuesday, 8 March 2016, at 7:00pm, in the Council Chamber at Ashington Town Hall.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm.