

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 7 June 2016, at the Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

## PRESENT:

### **Councillors:**

Avril Chisholm (Chair)  
Louis Brown  
Marjorie Chambers  
Stephen Fenwick  
Kris Lavery

Victor Bridges  
Vicky Brown  
Glyn Davies  
Lawrence Henderson  
Pauline Thompson

## IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer  
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer  
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer  
Members of the Public – 2

### **C16/626 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Les Alderson, Keith Chambers, Maggie Lang, Liam Lavery, Mark Purvis, Wyn Stewart, Ely Turnbull and Bob Walkinshaw.

### **C16/627 4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest from Members present.

### **C16/628 9. CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV) PROVISION IN NORTHUMBERLAND**

The Chair agreed to take the presentation relating to Item 9 on the Agenda at this point and welcomed Mr Philip Soderquest, Northumberland County Council (NCC) Head of Housing and former Head of Public Protection) to the meeting.

The Town Clerk reported that a Briefing Note had been received from Northumberland County Council regarding the CCTV Provision in Northumberland with a covering letter indicating that NCC Officers would welcome the opportunity of presenting the information to Town &

Parish Councils. A copy of the Briefing Note had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting.

Mr Soderquest explained that up until 2009, the six District and Borough Councils throughout Northumberland had received funding from Central Government to be invested in CCTV systems across the County. In 2009, five of those systems had been brought under the management of the County Council, with the exception of Tynedale which has managed and maintained by Northumbria Police.

Mr Soderquest reported that since 2009, there had been no further investment by either the district or county councils adding that many of the cameras were now at least 10 years old and that a recent review undertaken in conjunction with Northumbria Police had confirmed that many of the current locations were no longer considered to be a priority and had limited benefit.

Mr Soderquest stated that there was a generally held belief that fixed cameras merely displaced, rather than solved, many of the problems experienced. Members were informed that the use of deployable cameras had been assessed in different locations across the County and that the flexibility and responsiveness they provided had proved to be far more beneficial than fixed cameras.

Mr Soderquest stated that the County Council was looking at how it could work alongside the Town & Parish Councils in order that an integrated approach to CCTV might be adopted on a county-wide basis. He outlined the following 3 options for consideration by the Town Council:-

- (i) Remove the old cameras and assess the need and benefit of deployable cameras by using equipment on loan from the County Council,
- (ii) Employ the Highways System endorsed by NECA (North East Combined Authority), although this was basically to monitor traffic management/movement, or
- (iii) Leave existing cameras in place (even those currently not working) in order to at least reduce the fear of crime

In response to comments from Town Council members, Mr Soderquest confirmed that:-

- (i) The County Council would strive to maintain those cameras across the County there were currently in working order, but that

in many cases, the technology was extremely outdated and the imagery provided was poor.

- (ii) Connection costs were prohibitive at approx. £3-3.5k per camera and that revenue costs such as maintenance, warranties, connectivity differed.
- (iii) There would be no live monitoring although images were stored for up to 28 days and were normally retrievable on request.
- (iv) NCC currently had 20 deployable cameras.

Mr Soderquest asked that Ashington Town Council consider whether or not it was mindful to provide CCTV and suggested that this decision be taken after consultation with the Police and the business community.

The Chair thanked Mr Soderquest for his presentation and he left the meeting.

The Town Clerk asked Members to consider the points made in Mr Soderquest's presentation and give their views on how to take the matter forward.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was reluctantly accepted that the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of any CCTV system within the town had fundamentally shifted from the County Council to the Town Council. Members agreed that more information was needed regarding the options available (i.e. fixed or deployable cameras), locations, costs involved, requirements of the town and the source of the best possible advice. It was agreed that the focus should remain on the town centre where the lack of CCTV provision had been a cause of concern to both residents and traders.

It was agreed that the matter should be discussed at a future meeting when the current town centre regeneration works were nearing completion, given that the built environment of the town centre was changing significantly with new planned public realms. Members agreed that meeting, likely to be in September should involve the Police, the County Council and Arch.

**C16/629 3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair informed members that she had attended three events since the last meeting:-

- Launch of the Town Centre Improvement Works on 9 May.
- Ashington Male Voice Choir Annual Concert on 11 May
- Alligator Klub event on 27 May

The Chair added that she had received invitations to the forthcoming Northumberland Miners' Picnic on 11 June and the Royal British Legion events arranged for 19 June and 1 July.

**C16/630 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes from the meeting held on 3 May 2016 were agreed as a true record.

**C16/631 5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 3 May 2016.

**C16/632 6. LEADER'S REPORT**

The Leader reported that May had been a fairly quiet month. He added that he would be attending the next meeting of the Arch Stakeholders Group on 9 June.

The Leader informed Members that the Royal British Legion had extended an open invitation for members of the Town Council to attend the following events in the Memorial Garden:-

- British Armed Forces Day : 10am, 19 June
- Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme : 10am, 1 July

**C16/633 7. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – FINANCIAL YEAR 2015/2016**

The Town Clerk presented the Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members for information. The report had been prepared by Mr Peter Basnett, the Town Council's Internal Auditor. Mr Basnett's covering

letter stated that he was satisfied that the Town Council's robust systems of financial and administrative management continued to operate effectively and efficiently and provided a sound audit trail. There were no issues to that needed to be raised and brought to the attention of the Town Council.

The Town Clerk stated that, in addition to the Internal Audit Report, he would like the Town Council to formally request that Mr Basnett carry out a separate audit of the recently completed Ashington Memorial Garden Project. Members were informed that the scope of the work would include the full planning, management, financial and reporting of the detailed project and informed members that such a piece of work would be helpful when seeking future external resources for major projects.

<b>Resolved:</b>	
<b>That:-</b>	
<b>(i)</b>	<b>The Internal Audit Report for the Financial Year 2015/2016 be formally accepted and approved.</b>
<b>(ii)</b>	<b>The services of Mr Peter Basnett as the Town Council's Internal Auditor be retained for the next financial year (2016/2017).</b>
<b>(iii)</b>	<b>The Internal Auditor be asked to undertake a full programme audit of the Ashington War Memorial Garden Project.</b>

**C16/634 8. ANNUAL RETURN & FINAL ACCOUNTS 2015/2016**

The Town Clerk presented the Final Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for the Financial Year ended 31 March 2016 for consideration and approval. The information presented included the Internal Audit Report.

The Leader of the Council presented a motion to the Council regarding the Annual Return & Final Accounts for 2015/2016, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda, and asked the members consider and discuss the information provided.

**Resolved:**

**That:-**

- (i) The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 of the 2015/16 Annual Return) be formally approved.**
- (ii) The Accounting Statements for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, (Section 2 of the Annual Return) be formally approved; and that**
- (iii) The use of Council's Financial Reserves Balance of £294,080-19 as at 31 March 2016 be agreed as follows:**

	£
Town Council Election Costs 2017	12,000-00
Replacement of Christmas Features	10,000-00
IT Replacement Programme	35,000-00
Play Area Refurbishments	30,000-00
Town Hall – Service Charge Provision	22,000-00
Memorial Garden – Contract Retention	3,900-00
Hirst Park – Heritage Lottery Bid	5,000-00
General Reserves Provision*	<u>176,180-19</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>294,080-19</u></b>

**C16/635 10. ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL – QUALITY & SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Town Clerk presented a draft Quality & Service Standards Statement, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. Members were requested to consider the formal adoption of customer service standards as contained in the document.

The Town Clerk added that, in relation to customer service matters, Town Council staff currently acted within recognised good custom and practice guidelines. The leader of the Council stated that it would be appropriate for the Town Council to now formally adopt a Quality & Service Standards statement which would then be made readily available to members of the public and other stakeholders.

**Resolved:**

**That the Quality & Service Standards document dated 2 June 2016, be formally adopted with immediate effect.**

**C16/636 11. MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

The Town Clerk reminded Members that a request had been made to those external organisations receiving annual funding contributions from the Council to consider Town Council representation on their respective Management Boards.

The Town Clerk explained that, with the exception of the Citizens Advice Bureau, all of the organisations had agreed to this request. The CAB had, however, agreed to provide the Town Council with quarterly reports. Members were asked to nominate representatives to each of the following organisations:-

- Credit Union of South East Northumberland
- Wansbeck Valley Food Bank
- Northumberland YMCA
- Real Deal Plus
- Northumberland CVA

**Resolved:**

**That representation on the management boards of those organisations receiving annual funding would be as follows:-**

<b>Credit Union of South East Northumberland</b>	<b>Pauline Thompson</b>
<b>Wansbeck Valley Food Bank</b>	<b>Louis Brown</b>
<b>Northumberland YMCA</b>	<b>Ely Turnbull</b>
<b>Real Deal Plus</b>	<b>Lawrence Henderson</b>
<b>Northumberland CVA</b>	<b>Vacancy</b>

## C16/637 12. ASHINGTON 150<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATION EVENTS

The Town Clerk presented a document outlining the background regarding the forthcoming 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ashington in 2017. Members were asked to consider and discuss early arrangements and plans for a celebration event or range of events to be held in the town next year.

The Town Clerk explained that, following research by a local historian, it had been confirmed that the significant date of 1867 was clearly represented and shown in a quotation from the 1926 Ashington Coal Company Ltd handbook which stated that:

*“The activities of the present Ashington Coal Company date from when the first shaft “The Bothal” was sunk at Ashington. Since this date the development has been rapid and continuous.....Ashington Colliery proper started in 1867 with the sinking of the Bothal Shaft....from this small beginning was to grow one of the biggest mines in the world.”*

The Town Clerk added that the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2017 would therefore be taking place at a critical time in Ashington’s future development and certainly sat with the recently adopted logo, developed by the Town Team, of *“Ashington – Proud Past, Bright Future”*.

Members were invited to consider and discuss the contents of the report with a view to accepting the recommendations as follows:-

- (i) That the Town Council establish a “150<sup>th</sup> Events Working Group” to oversee the management and subsequent delivery of an agreed range and mix of events to celebrate the anniversary year,
- (ii) That the 150<sup>th</sup> Events Working Group, consisting of representative community groups and delivery organisations, be chaired by either the Chair of the Council or a nominated Town Council member,
- (iii) That Ashington Town Team be asked to develop a formal 150<sup>th</sup> brand and logo for use in all events, publicity and promotional materials; and that
- (iv) That the Council agree an initial “150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” budget of £20,000 for special events to be met from the General Financial Reserves of the Town Council.



Following a short discussion and at the request of the Leader of the Council, it was agreed that discussion of the recommendations be deferred until the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

**C16/638      13. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

**Ashington Gardens Competition** : Cllr. M Chambers informed members that the closing date for entries into the Gardens Competition was 19 June and requested nominations for the Judging Panel. It was agreed that Cllrs. M Chambers, R Walkinshaw and P Thompson would act as judges and that the Snr. Admin. Officer be asked to invite an independent judge to take part.

**C16/639      14. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Full Council was scheduled for Tuesday, 6 September 2016, at 6:00pm, in the Council Chamber.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm.