

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 23 January 2018, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Matthew Cuthbert (Chair) Marjorie Chambers
Nicola Chambers Avril Chisholm
Stephen Fenwick Brian Gallacher
Lynne Grimshaw Lawrence Henderson
Jim Lang Liam Lavery
Mark Purvis

IN ATTENDANCE: Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer (minutes)
Members of the Public - 0

FGS 18/780 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Victor Bridges, Kris Lavery, Ken Parry, Pauline Thompson, Bob Walkinshaw, and Tom Wilson.

FGS 18/781 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests.

FGS 18/782 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28 November 2017, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGS 18/783 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGS 17/773 ANNUAL FUNDING SUPPORT TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that letters of thanks for funding contributions agreed by the Town Council had been received from Wansbeck Valley Food Bank, Northumberland CVA and the Great North Air Ambulance.

FGS 18/784 5. DRAFT BUDGET 2018/19

The Town Clerk presented in full detail the draft budget for 2018/19 prepared by the Budget Working Group for the consideration of the

Committee. The Town Clerk highlighted the proposed changes and amendments for 2018/19 primarily to reflect known information and plans as well as the changes to the core budget for new Town Council funded services introduced in 2017/18 including CCTV provision and highways interactive cameras. The Town Clerk informed members that the draft budget as presented reflected a 1.5% increase in the precept requirement for 2018/19 and a band D charge of £103.81 representing an annual increase of £1.53 over 2017/18.

Cllr Grimshaw thanked the Town Clerk for the thorough and detailed work he had carried out on the budget and thanked him for the clear and concise report presented to members. Cllr. Grimshaw presented a detailed motion outlining recommendations for the 2018/19 budget, for discussion and the consideration of the Finance and General Services Committee.

Resolved:

That further to full consideration and discussion, Finance & General Services Committee resolves and recommends to Full Council that:

- (i) The 2018/19 gross budget expenditure of £797,050 inclusive of the specified use of £62,450 from the General Reserves balance, be agreed,**
- (ii) Ashington Town Council's precept requirement from Northumberland County Council in respect of the Financial Year Ending 31 March 2019, be agreed at £734,600**
- (iii) The planned use of the General Reserves balance, subject to (i) above, be further considered at the Full Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 6 March 2018,**
- (iv) The Precept (Council Tax) increase for 2018/19 be agreed at 1.5% for a Band D property in Ashington, equivalent to an annual increase of £1.53; and that**
- (v) While recognising that the government intends to defer the setting of referendum principles ("capping") for Town and Parish Council's for three years, commencing in 2018/19, Ashington Town Council resolves to take all available steps to mitigate the future need for Council Tax increases, including:**
 - the responsible use of non-earmarked general reserves,**
 - maximising external funding opportunities; and**
 - examining "invest to save" projects and options that will lower on-going costs.**

FGS 18/785 6. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

WANSBECK DISABILITY FORUM (WDF)

The Chair reminded members that the application had deferred from the November 2017 meeting in order to acquire full financial details. Members were concerned that the application was to fund room and office rental costs.

The Chair reminded members that the organisation had received previous aggregate funding of £2,750 from the town council for rental costs and on the last occasion the Council had agreed not to fund future rental costs.

Resolved:

That the funding application be not agreed.

FGS 18/786 7. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 23 November 2017 – 18 January 2018.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the period 23 November 2017 to 18 January 2018 be formally agreed and approved.

The full schedule of payments is attached to the minutes as schedule 1

FGS 18/787 8. PEOPLE'S PARK – PROPOSED PLAY AREA SCHEME

The Town Clerk informed members that he had asked for this item to be included on the agenda for an early decision as to whether the Town Council wished to project manage and deliver the scheme or whether members were happy for the scheme to be managed by Northumberland County Council (NCC) as the principal authority.

The Town Clerk reported that NCC were happy with either option but, were the Town Council to deliver the scheme, there would be a required formal application process to access the agreed S106 funding and additional amount agreed by the developer as part of the planning application and decision.

Members unanimously agreed that the project would be an excellent scheme for the Town Council to project manage whilst NCC focused on the emerging major capital scheme at Hirst Park.

The Town Clerk informed members that he would need to enter into early discussion with NCC Officers to clarify the funding process and also establish whether any formal planning application or land transfer was required. Members were informed that this was essential in order to timeline the project and also avoid the unnecessary delays previously experienced with both the Mining Wheel and Memorial Garden Projects.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) Ashington Town Council agree to be the project lead for the for the new proposed Play Area at People's Park; and that**

- (ii) The Town Clerk be delegated to enter into discussion with Northumberland County Council regarding the available funding from the developer and the process of land acquisition.**

FGS 18/788 9. GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN

The Clerk informed members of the upcoming National Great British Spring Clean scheduled for 2-4 March 2018. Members were reminded that the Town Council had taken part in the event in 2017 and had, together with community partners and volunteers organised a number of community clean-ups at identified locations in the town.

Members agreed to participate again this year and arrange another weekend of litter picking for the event.

Resolved:

That the Town Council agree to participate in the Great British Spring Clean Event scheduled for 2-4 March 2018, and to work to facilitate and co-ordinate community events.

FGS 18/789 10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.

There was no other urgent business.

FGS 18/790 11. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The date, time and venue of the next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 27 February 2018, at 6.00pm, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington.

The meeting ended at 7.00pm.