

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 27 March 2018, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Matthew Cuthbert (Chair) Eleanor Armstrong
Victor Bridges Marjorie Chambers
Avril Chisholm Stephen Fenwick
Brian Gallacher Lynne Grimshaw
Lawrence Henderson Jim Lang
Liam Lavery Ken Parry
Bob Walkinshaw

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Projects and Funding Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer (minutes)
Members of the Public - 0

FGS 18/806 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors, Nicola Chambers, Kris Lavery, Mark Purvis, Pauline Thompson, Tom Wilson.

FGS 18/807 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillors Marjorie Chambers and Jim Lang disclosed personal and prejudicial interests in Allotments.

FGS 18/808 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27 February 2018, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGS 18/809 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGS 18/787 PEOPLES PARK – PROPOSED PLAY AREA SCHEME

The Town Clerk reported that he had received an email from a resident of Ashington enquiring about the progress of Peoples Park proposed play area scheme.

Members requested that the Town Clerk contact the resident with an update on the current position.

FGS 18/810 5. APPLICATION FOR FUNDING SUPPORT – REAL DEAL PLUS LTD

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Kath Falcus, Manager and Director of Real Deal Plus Ltd. Mrs Falcus thanked members for the financial support of £6,000 that had been provided in the financial year 2017/18.

Mrs Falcus reminded members that Real Deal Plus was an Ashington based charity offering support and advice through a number of schemes and services including:

- Furniture Scheme – support for low income families by refurbishing donated furniture and making available at a low cost to those on benefits or referred by Social Services and other agencies. A total of 31 families had received furniture in 2017.
- Homeless Support – give support to the homeless by supplying cafe food, food parcels, shower and laundry facilities and the provision of a “day room”.
- Job Club – The Club focuses on one to one support for IT and literacy skills and is regularly used by those seeking additional advice on CV preparation and interview preparation support.
- Health & Wellbeing – includes an Art Group, Craft Sessions, Community Cinema and Community Events.
- Youth Group and Teen Bar – Mainly disengaged 10-14year olds attending, up to 25 per session.
- Disability & Form Filling – working with Wansbeck Disability Forum. Support for universal credit, benefit advice/checks, disability support.

Mrs Falcus explained that referrals from organisations such as Citizens Advice, Jobcentre Plus, Children’s Services, Northumbria Police and Probation Service among others.

Members were informed that any funding received from Ashington Town Council would be used exclusively for running costs and overheads to ensure that the building remained open and available to clients and visitors for the maximum time.

Mrs Falcus confirmed that a copy of the organisations most recent accounts had only very recently been forwarded for the due consideration of Town Council

Members thanked Mrs Falcus for a very comprehensive presentation.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) 2018/19 Funding support for Real Deal Plus Ltd be deferred pending a review and consideration of the organisation's submitted Financial Accounts,**
- (ii) Consideration be given to the organisation of a day-time site visit to the Centre to see the range of activities and services provided; and that**
- (iii) The appointment of a nominated Town Council representative be considered at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council scheduled for 8 May 2018.**

FGS 18/811 6. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

(i) NORTH SEATON WITH ASHINGTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The North Seaton with Ashington Women's Institute requested financial support to help with the costs of publicity for the Ashington Show, including the event booklet.

Members were reminded that the group had organised the first 'Ashington Show' held in 2017, as part of the town's 150th Anniversary celebrations. The 2017 event ran successfully with over 400 people attending, competitions had taken place covering a mix of categories including baking, knitting, photography, arts and crafts.

Members were informed that the 2018 event was planned to take place in July and would be held at the YMCA Northumberland building. The application stated that, if successful, the Ashington Town Council logo would be included on all promotional material and the booklet and additionally, an opportunity would also be given to include other Town Council information within the booklet if required.

(ii) PARKHEAD AND WANSBECK POWER SPORTS

Parkhead and Wansbeck Power Sports requested funding to support the costs of a Disability Sports Powerlifting Competition, to be held on Saturday 5 May 2018 at the Hirst Welfare Centre in Ashington.

Members were reminded that the group had organised several events of this nature in Ashington in past years that had brought significant numbers of disabled people and their families to the town.

Members were informed that the event in May 2017 had attracted 35 competitors from all over the country.

(iii) TOWN TWINNING VISIT

– Official delegation from Remscheid City Council

Further to the Finance & General Services Committee meeting held on 27 February 2018, the Town Clerk reminded members that a self-financed visit from the City of Remscheid Council officials and their families was to take place from 10-14 May 2018. Approximately 50 people were expected as part of the planned visit.

Members were informed that the visiting delegation would be based in Newcastle upon Tyne and had arranged a number of regional visits and tours. The Town Clerk informed members that the group were scheduled to visit Woodhorn Museum on 10 May and a request had been made by the host organisation that Ashington Town Council consider meeting the cost of the visit to Woodhorn estimated to be £390 (60 x£6.50). As part of the visit an invitation has been extended to Town Councillors to meet and join the party at Woodhorn Museum.

Resolved:

That:

- (iv) North Seaton with Ashington Women’s Institute be awarded £500 towards the cost of publicity material for the Second Ashington Show**
- (v) Parkhead and Wansbeck Powersports be awarded £750 towards the cost of running a Disability Sports Powerlifting Competition, to be held on Saturday 5 May 2018**
- (vi) Ashington Town Council meet the cost of the Remscheid tour party visit to Woodhorn Museum up to a maximum £500 the cost to be met from the Town Twinning budget.**

FGS 18/812 7. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 23 February – 21 March 2018.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the financial period 23 February to 21 March 2018 be formally agreed and approved.

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

FGS 18/813 8. ASHINGTON TOWN-WIDE SURVEY 2018

Further to resolution FGS 18/799 to agree the commissioning of a Town-Wide all household survey, Cllr.Grimshaw presented a detailed motion for the consideration of the Committee.

Resolved:

That further to full consideration and discussion and in accordance with minute FGS 18/799 (Finance & General Services Committee 27 February 2018), it be agreed that:

- (i) An all household town-wide survey and community engagement study be undertaken at the earliest opportunity;**
- (ii) The aims of the survey and study be agreed as:**
 - Gathering the opinions, views and experiences of Ashington's adult and younger residents, businesses and visitors,**
 - Assessing experiences and perceptions of the general quality of life, environmental, community safety, service provision, community support/facilities and other key issues in Ashington,**
 - Identifying issues which residents, businesses and visitors feel are on-going priorities within Ashington, highlighting realistic measures to address such issues; and to**
 - Producing a report which compares the findings of 2012 with those generated in 2018, highlighting key messages and making recommendations which are highly accurate, robust detailed and usable by the Town Council and its key partners.**
- (iii) That on the basis of the previous quality of work, price and specialised nature of the project, the Standing Orders (SO 105 (e)) of the Council be suspended to allow the formal appointment of Eljay Research Ltd as the appointed contractor,**
- (iv) Eljay Research Ltd core fee of £22,945 (including expenses but excluding VAT, printing and distribution of postal questionnaires and reply paid postal envelopes) be agreed; and that**

- (v) An overall project budget of £30,000 be agreed from the General Reserves of the Council, to cover the core fee and the related costs of the printing and distribution of the questionnaire, business reply service and the results newsletter.

FGS 18/814 9. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP 2018/19

Cllr Gallacher reported on recent meetings of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership. Cllr.Gallcher reported that discussions in the Partnership had been detailed and thorough and that the wide-ranging motion for consideration reflected the delivery obligations and responsibilities now expected of the Town council, including floral presentations, related Town Council investment in the Service Level Agreement for Environmental Enforcement and also the limited funding available to the Town Council.

Resolved:

That:

- (vi) The financial contribution to the Neighbourhood Services Partnership for the financial year 2018/19 be agreed at £200,000
- (vii) The Neighbourhood Partnership Group be authorised to Continue discussion with senior management of Northumberland County Council around the development of a new neighbourhood services agreement from 2019/20,
- (viii) The Neighbourhood Services Group undertake to prepare a core "*Ashington Service Standard*" for consideration as the basis for the neighbourhood services agreement from 2018/19 onwards,
- (ix) Recognising the decision of Northumberland County Council that "*floral displays sit outside the partnership agreement and therefore outside of the budget enhancements*", the Town Council via the Neighbourhood Services Group further explore and look to develop the relationship with Wyevale Garden Centre (Heighley Gate) for the provision of floral displays,
- (x) An initial sum of £10,000 be agreed from the Environmental Enhancement budget for:

- The purchase of tiered and floral planters from Amberol Ltd for entrance feature and town-centre use; and
 - the provision of floral planting by Wyevale Garden Centre; and that
- (xi) Neighbourhood Services progress reports and all expenditure requests be brought to Finance & General Services Committee for discussion and due consideration.

FGS 18/815 10. ALLOTMENTS WORKING GROUP

Cllr Grimshaw reported on a recent meeting of the Allotments Working Group and informed members that recent site visits had been carried out to assess the extent of the remaining capital programme works.

Members were informed that work was ongoing in relation to the remaining schemes for the installation of new water supplies and that costs were awaited for the due consideration of the Working Group.

Resolved:

That further to Minute FGS 18/802 (ii) (Finance & General Services Committee – 27 February 2018) and after full consideration and discussion, it is recommended to Committee that:

- (xii) The work to clear long-term redundant allotment plots and to carry out improvements to the roadways at North Seaton Colliery be agreed,
- (xiii) W.L.Straughan & Son Ltd be appointed as the approved contractor for the improvement scheme; and that
- (xiv) The sum of £4,000 be approved from the Council's Allotments Budget to fund the work, being the scheme cost of £6,700 less agreed external funding contributions from:
 - £2,000 - Cllr.Jim Lang (Northumberland County Council Members Local Improvement Schemes; and
 - £700 - North Seaton Colliery Allotments Association

FGS 18/816 11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- (i) The Town Clerk informed members that a date would be arranged for a special meeting to discuss a planning application submitted by Ascent Homes for the construction of 143 dwellings on land South West of Portland Terrace, Ellington Road (Application 18/00779/FUL).

FGS 18/817 12. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

Tuesday 24 April 2018, at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington NE63 8RX.

The Meeting ended at 7.35pm