

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday
3 September 2019, at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Station Road,
Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Mark Purvis (Chair)	Victor Bridges
	Marjorie Chambers	Avril Chisholm
	Matthew Cuthbert	Stephen Fenwick
	Brian Gallacher	Lynne Grimshaw
	Lawrence Henderson	Ken Parry
	Pauline Thompson	Bob Walkinshaw
	Tom Wilson	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Project & Funding Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer
Members of the Public – 1

C19/855 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs.Eleanor Armstrong, Nicola Chambers, Jim Lang, Kris Lavery and Liam Lavery.

C19/856 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest from members present.

C19/857 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS.

The minutes of the last meeting held on the Tuesday 3 July 2019, were agreed and signed as a true record.

C19/858 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.

C19/852 7. ANNUAL FUNDING SUPPORT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2019/20.

The Town Clerk reported that he had received letters from the following outside bodies thanking the Council for the continued annual funding support;

- Northumberland Community Bank

- Citizens Advice Northumberland
- Wansbeck Valley Foodbank
- Real Deal Plus
- YMCA Northumberland

Members were informed that Northumberland CVA had requested feedback on the funding application submitted that had not received the support of the Council. Members were informed that clarification had also been sought as to the role of the appointed Town Council representative to the organisation.

Members requested that the Town Clerk respond in writing setting out the Council reasons for not financially supporting Northumberland CVA in the financial year 2019/20. Members also requested that the organisation be reminded that the Council had provided funding of £47,235 towards core costs over the period 2011/19, by far the largest financial support of any Northumberland Local Council.

The Town Clerk informed members that, while it was understandable that the CVA would be disappointed at this time, the earlier letter had made it clear that the decision not to fund at this time did not preclude the organisation from any future funding application towards any specific Ashington based projects that may arise in the future.

Cllr.Chisholm informed members that, as the formally appointed Council representative to Northumberland CVA, she would be more than willing to stand down should the organisation resolve not to have a Council representative attend its meetings.

C19/859 5. CIVIC HEAD'S REPORT.

Cllr. L.Henderson reported on events he had attended since taking up the position of Civic Head of Ashington:

- **Friday 26 July** – Alligator Klub, 50th Anniversary for Moon Landing Celebration, at Ashington Masonic Hall,
- **Wednesday 31 July** – Action for Children's 150th Birthday Party at Ashington Children's Centre,
- **Saturday 3 August** – Fun Day and Dog Show at Hirst Park. The event was well attended and went well,
- **Wednesday 21 August** – Ashington Community Services Event at Hirst Park,
- **Monday 26 August** – Ashington Civic Award presentation to Mark Wood, at Ashington Cricket Club, in recognition of being a member of the England Cricket team that won the 2019 World Cup.

C19/860 6. LEADER'S REPORT.

Cllr M. Cuthbert reported on the following items;

(i) Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board Meeting Thursday 18 July 2019.

Matters discussed in the meeting included;

Operational matters and issues

- Grass cutting
- Weed spraying programme to date
- Rapid Response Team, work programme and hot spot areas
- Operational issues and exceptional items
- Schedules for grass cut areas/litter bin routes and hot spot areas

Autumn and winter works programme

- Review of 2018/19
- Initial thoughts and planned work for 2019/20

Floral presentation and displays

- Memorandum of Understanding for 2019/20
- Recent works
- Maintenance work and watering
- Station Road improvements, including site visit and options
- Wansbeck Square enhancements

Performance management reporting

- Monthly reports
- Development of key performance indicators

Financials

- Budget reporting
- Invoicing schedule

(ii) Meeting with John Johnston and Michael Farr of Bernicia on Thursday 8 August 2019.

The Leader had attended with the Chair of Finance & General Services and the Town Clerk for an informal and informative chat about Bernicia's widening range of responsibilities and future projects.

(iii) Neighbourhood Services Partnership Board Meeting (ATC Members only).

To discuss Station Road floral enhancements and options for moving work forward. Members were informed that, further to a full site visit and advice from Northumberland County Council, it had been agreed to approach a local Garden Designer and Horticulturist with a view to procuring a condition survey and options report on which to build a proper improvement programme. Members were

informed that the Leader was hopeful that a report would be available in October 2019 for member consideration.

C19/861 7. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES.

This item was deferred to the November 2019 meeting of the Full Council in order to consider the formal quarterly reports from the outside organisations requested as a condition of funding support.

C19/862 8. REVIEW OF THE TOWN COUNCIL SMALL GRANTS AND DONATIONS FUND.

The Town Clerk referred members to the full report that had been circulated and in particular the recommendations for changes to the management and operation of the Small Grants and Donations Fund.

Members were advised that, while the scheme has operated successfully since 2009/10, recent changes to organisational governance structures and some wider general changes in the voluntary sector required the Town Council to review the scheme guidance criteria and notes for applicants at this time.

The Town Clerk reported that, together with the Funding & Projects Offer, he had recently met with and taken general advice from the Social Enterprise Unit of Northumberland County Council (NCC) regarding current structures and eligibility for public sector funding.

Members were reminded that, whilst most applications to the Town Council had been within the "*small grants spirit*" of the fund, a number of applications over recent years had been for sums comfortably in excess of £1,000 with a smaller number of applications submitted being in excess of £2,500. Members agreed that regular applications of such size had not been envisaged or foreseen when the scheme was established.

Members suggested that it may well be that the Town Council was a victim of its own previous funding generosity or maybe even the fact that, unlike some neighbouring local councils, Ashington Town Council had never specified a maximum sum payable from the fund nor has the council ever made distinction between spending of a capital or revenue nature.

Members had expressed some concern in recent months that a smaller number of applicants did appear to have viewed the Town Council as a potential funder of both the "first and last resort" with a clear expectation of a positive funding award. In some cases it

had also emerged that the Town Council had been viewed as the sole funder of a major scheme or project where the benefits were clearly to a wider designated and specified area than Ashington alone.

Furthermore, elected members had noted and commented that, where the applicant on the face of it was providing a service to South East Northumberland, no funding applications appeared to have been submitted to other local Town or Parish Councils. Cllr.Grimshaw reminded members that the Town Council at this point was facing a number of its own competing challenges for limited funding across a growing range of service delivery and was committed a full value for money review of its overall budget in commencing the 2020/21 budget discussions.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation for new criteria and guidance and requested that the changes be implemented with immediate effect.

Resolved:	
That the Town Council:	
(i)	Agree the new criteria and guidance as to the organisations or group structure types that could and could not apply for funding via the Small Grants and Donations Fund,
(ii)	Agree the introduction of a maximum grant sum of £750 except in exceptional circumstances so agreed by the Town Council,
(iii)	Agree the introduction of criteria that, where the application to the Town Council is as part of a wider funded scheme or project, any sum so agreed by the Town Council will only be paid on evidence that the full overall project funding has been secured; and that
(iv)	The agreed changes to the Small Grants and Donations Fund be effective with immediate effect.

C19/863 9. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Full Council was scheduled for 7:00pm, Tuesday 5 November 2019 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington NE63 8RX.

The meeting closed at 8:05pm