

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Tuesday 26 January 2021, on-line via Zoom.

## PRESENT:

<b>Councillors:</b>	Mark Purvis (Chair)	Eleanor Armstrong
	Victor Bridges	Avril Chisholm
	Matthew Cuthbert	Stephen Fenwick
	Lynne Grimshaw	Lawrence Henderson
	Jim Lang	Liam Lavery
	Ken Parry	Pauline Thompson

## IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer  
Members of the Public – 0

### **C21/920 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Marjorie Chambers, Nicola Chambers, Brian Gallacher, Kris Lavery, Tom Wilson and Bob Walkinshaw.

### **C21/921 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.**

There were no disclosures of interest from members present.

### **C21/922 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.**

The minutes of the last meeting held on the Tuesday 17 December 2020, were agreed and signed as a true record.

### **C21/923 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### **C21/924 5. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

#### **Northumberland Rail Line**

Cllr. Cuthbert welcomed the announcement of funding, of £34m, by the Department for Transport for the Northumberland Rail Line, that will give the go-ahead to reintroduce a regular rail passenger service between Ashington and central Newcastle.

### **Play Areas**

Cllr. Cuthbert reported that further works to improve play areas in the town will take place in coming weeks.

### **Tree Planting Schemes**

Cllr. Cuthbert reported that the tree planting schemes at the Northumberland Church of England Academy and South Side will take place in the next few weeks, with works led by the Horticultural Officer.

## **C21/925 5. BUDGET AND ANNUAL PRECEPT 2021/22.**

The Town Clerk presented the 2021/22 budget and highlighted the major commitments and planned work programme carried out by the Council in 2020/21, together with policy decisions made impacting on the 2021/22.

The Town Clerk presented a comprehensive report and referred members to the detailed papers circulated for both the 2020/21 projected out-turn and a 2021/22 budget and supporting papers prepared for full discussion.

Members were reminded of the full discussion of the key growth areas had taken place at the December 2020 meeting and an outlining of the expected savings resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to date.

Key points highlighted to members included.

- Savings made on Election Casual Vacancies.
- Community events all cancelled due to pandemic with savings being re-directed to COVID-19/Winter Support Fund.
- Saving on the Hirst Park SLA which was not required in 2020/21
- Development of in-house service for town-wide floral presentations and discussions regarding the location within Hirst Park Growing Zone.
- Room hire – savings made due to on-line Zoom meetings.
- Website review to be carried out by Widescope for compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) including possible development of a new website for the future.
- Publicity and consultation, now moving towards electronic newsletters, making a substantial saving. Possibly print hard copies for public buildings etc.

Cllr. Grimshaw reminded members that the draft budget and motion had been unanimously agreed by Finance and General Services Committee and recommended to Full Council for approval. Cllr. Cuthbert commended the budget to the Town Council and made specific reference to the fact that the Town Council was both presenting a budget that reflected growth and service improvement while agreeing a Council Tax level with no increase on 2020/21.

**Resolved:**

**That further to full consideration and discussion, Full Council resolves that:**

- (i) The 2021/22 gross budget expenditure of £898,060 be agreed, inclusive of the specified use of £100,000 from the General Reserve balance,**
- (ii) Ashington Town Council's precept requirement from Northumberland County Council in respect of the Financial Year Ending 31 March 2022, be agreed at £798,060.**
- (iii) The Precept (Council Tax) for 2021/22 be agreed at £106.94 for a Band D property in Ashington, representing no increase in the charge set for the previous financial year 2020/21,**
- (iv) While recognising that in 2021/22 the Government proposes to continue with no referendum principles ("capping") for Town and Parish Council's,**

**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 all external funding opportunities; and**
- examining "invest to save" projects and options that will lower on-going costs.**

- (v) From within the proposed "*Floral Displays & Environmental Enhancements*" core 2021/22 budget of £47,000, the aggregate sum of sum of £9,000 be delegated to ward members for small environmental improvement schemes, representing the sum of £1,500 for each of the six individual wards; and that**

**(vi) Further to agreement of the 2021/22 Budget, the review of the Horticultural Service staffing options, be delegated to the Personnel Sub-Committee for a full report to Finance & General Service Committee on 23 February 2021.**

**C21/926 9. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.**

The next meeting of the Full Council was provisionally agreed for 7:00pm, Tuesday 16 March 2021. (on-line via Zoom).

**The meeting closed at 8:30pm**