

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 29 November 2016, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Vicky Brown (Chair)	Louis Brown
	Kris Lavery (Vice-Chair)	Victor Bridges
	Marjorie Chambers	Avril Chisholm
	Glyn Davies	Liam Lavery
	Mark Purvis	Ely Turnbull
	Nicola Chambers	Bob Walkinshaw
	Matthew Cuthbert	Pauline Thompson
	Lawrence Henderson	Lynne Grimshaw

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Members of the Public - 1

FGP 16/657 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Stephen Fenwick.

FGP 16/658 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest.

FGP16/659 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Town Clerk reported that a request for financial support had been received from Morpeth Mental Health Group and that a copy of their request had been circulated for information.

The Chair welcomed Audrey Anderson, Centre Manager from Contact Morpeth Mental Health Group, to the meeting and invited her to make a presentation in support of the funding request.

Mrs Anderson stated that the group had been established in Morpeth 30 years ago and provided drop in services to meet the changing needs of the its users. She explained that CONTACT worked with

people to improve their mental well being, providing non-medical intervention, in a safe and supportive environment.

Members were informed that staffing for the Centre consisted of two paid staff, seven qualified volunteer counsellors as well as 23 volunteers who helped run the centre on a day to day basis. The Centre covered South East Northumberland, with 17.8% of service users coming from Ashington.

In response to members' questions, Mrs Anderson confirmed that the Centre needed an approximate annual income of £95-£100k to continue to provide their full level of services outlining that £40,500 of that amount covered salary costs for two paid staff and that the annual rental for the premises was £13,500. Mrs Anderson confirmed that training was provided for counsellors – they were all Northern Guild trained – and that other volunteers received First Aid, Food Hygiene and Health & Safety training as appropriate.

The Chair thanked Mrs Anderson for her presentation and she left the meeting at this point.

During a short discussion, it was recognised that Contact Mental Health provided a much needed service to the local community. The Town Clerk reminded members that the organisation had asked for a one-off contribution rather than an annual subsidy and stated that there was currently a balance of £4,500 in the Small Grants budget. It was agreed that the Town Council would make an award of £1,500 to Contact Mental Health.

Resolved:

That a grant of £1,500 be awarded to Contact Morpeth Mental Health Group Ltd.

FGP 16/660 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2016, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGP 16/661 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGP 16/620 Ashington Memorial Garden – The Town Clerk reported that the demolition of the former library building was due for completion on 17 January 2017

FGP 16/633 Casual Vacancy – The Town Clerk reminded members that, following the sad passing of Cllr. Keith Chambers, the end of the formal statutory period for co-option applications in the Haydon Ward was 13 December 2016. The Town Clerk confirmed that as the full Council local election was scheduled for May 2017, the “six-month” rule meant that a by-election could not be called.

The Town Clerk advised members however that the Council was free to consider a co-option to the Haydon Ward vacancy should it wish to do so adding that any applications for co-option would need to be considered at a future meeting of Full Council.

FGP 16/662 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, during the financial period 21 October to 24 November 2016.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the period 21 October to 24 November 2016 be formally agreed and approved.

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

FGP 16/663 7. AQUISITION OF LITTER BINS

The Town Clerk presented a report informing members of the opportunity to implement a planned programme of installing new litter bins, the cost to be jointly funded with Northumberland County Council (NCC) via the Members Local Improvement Schemes Initiative.

In his report, the Town Clerk stated that the responsibility for the acquisition of litter bins in Ashington lay with the Town Council under the provisions of the Litter Act 1983 (ss 5,6). The report also stated that the Town Council currently carried an annual budget provision of £6,000 for the provision of new and/or replacement litter bins and that the current year spend to date was £4,560

The Town Clerk explained a review of litter bin provision had been carried as part of the early discussions regarding the Neighbourhood Services Agreement. For a number of reasons, not least of which the financial requirement, those initial discussions had not led to an agreed programme of planned work; it was however the view of

elected members that the current bin provision was outdated, was not strategically managed and was overdue a comprehensive review.

The Town Clerk stated that, following a successful £6,000 pilot scheme in the Haydon Ward, which had been 100% funded from County Councillor Brian Gallacher's Local Improvement Schemes allowance, four of the remaining Ashington County councillors were now keen to provide similar schemes within their own wards.

The Town Clerk added that the aggregate amount of proposed funding from NCC members for the provision of litter bins was £8,000, which would acquire a further 40 bins. The Town Clerk advised members that a £20,000 investment would acquire approximately 90 new ground-mounted litter bins which would mean that the level and standard of bin provision in each of the town's six wards would be significant and should impact considerably in reducing current overflowing problems.

The Town Clerk requested that that the Town Council give consideration to the provision of a further scheme contribution of £12,000, to be met from the General Reserves balances.

Resolution:

That:-

- (i) The £8,000 investment in bin provision from NCC Elected Members, via the Northumberland Local Improvement Schemes Initiative, be supported and welcomed**
- (ii) The Town Council invest a sum £12,000 in the scheme from the General Reserves balances of the Council; and that**
- (iii) The planned work programme and fitting of the new bins be delegated to the Neighbourhood Services Group Partnership Group**

FGP 16/664 8. ENTRANCE FEATURE – ROTARY PARKWAY

The Town Clerk reported that the leader of the Council had been made aware that an opportunity had arisen to acquire a "Mining Wheel" from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), currently being stored at the County Council's Works Depot.

Members were informed by the Town Clerk that the Town Council had often been approached by residents and others over the years with enquiries as to whether it would be possible to site any feature, or features, that would respectfully commemorate the mining heritage of the Town.

The Town Clerk stated that he believed that an appropriate location for such of a “Mining Wheel” feature would be at Rotary Parkway/Booths Road roundabout, which was adjacent to the entrance to the former Ashington Colliery site and also close the Mining Heritage Trail.

Members commented that they agreed that this would be an ideal location and that the “Mining Wheel” would not only mark the site of the former Ashington Colliery but would also constitute an attractive entrance feature to the town.

The Town Clerk reported that there would be investigation work and likely permissions to be sort but that such a project could also sit alongside the celebration of the Town’s 150th Anniversary in 2017. The Town Clerk reported that, with the support of the Committee for such a project, he would look to present an early report to Finance and General Purposes Committee in 2017 for full consideration.

Resolved:

That Town Clerk be authorised to carry out enquiries regarding the Mining Wheel project validity and to prepare a report for consideration of the Committee in early 2017.

FGP 16/665 9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Sue Coulthard, Senior Administration Officer, who was to retire at the end of December 2016, invited members and staff to her leaving party arranged for 17 December 2016.

Mrs.Coulthard thanked the Council members for their support and stated that her time of office had been both enjoyable and rewarding, particularly during the early years of the new Council’s establishment and development.

On behalf of the Committee, in wishing her well in her retirement, the Chair thanked Mrs Coulthard for her work, commitment and not least, always cheerful demeanour.

FGP 16/666 10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was to be confirmed at a later date, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm