

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 27 June 2017, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Matthew Cuthbert (Chair)	Marjorie Chambers
	Nicola Chambers	Avril Chisholm
	Stephen Fenwick	Brian Gallacher
	Lawrence Henderson	Kris Lavery
	Liam Lavery	Ken Parry
	Mark Purvis	Ely Turnbull
	Tom Wilson	

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

FGP 17/716 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors, Victor Bridges, Lynne Grimshaw, Pauline Thompson, Jim Lang and Bob Walkinshaw.

FGS 17/717 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllrs M. Chambers and N. Chambers disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item, "Nursery Park Allotment Rents".

FGS 17/718 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Subject to the following amendment the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30 May 2017, were agreed and signed as a true record.

"FGP 17/694 Cllr. Wilson requested that the Council give consideration to fully enclosing the Mining Wheel feature with adequate security fencing to avoid any vandalism and to also minimise risks of injury to any persons climbing on the wheel. Members did not feel this was appropriate and agreed that no amendments be made to the work programme or original design plan to incorporate security fencing for this purpose. Cllr. Wilson requested that his views be formally minuted".

FGS 17/719 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGS 17/703 6. MATTERS ARISING ENTRANCE FEATURE – ROTARY PARKWAY.

The Town Clerk reported that the draft licence had been progressed by Northumberland County Council and Heads of Terms were now with the Highways Solicitors for further internal consultation and approval. The Town Clerk advised members that it was still hoped that on-site work would finally commence in mid-July.

FGS 17/709 12. ACQUISITION OF INTERACTIVE SPEED SIGNS

Cllr Gallacher informed members that discussions were ongoing with highways management staff regarding the placement and specific locations of the signs within wards and the formal permissions required from Northumberland County Council for either lamp column placement or the erection of dedicated retaining posts.

FGS 17/720 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Applications for financial support were received from Ashington Colliery Band and Friends of Bothal Primary School.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) A donation of £1,300 be awarded to the Ashington Colliery Band to pay for the transport costs to the British National Championships to be held in Cheltenham; and that**
- (ii) A donation of £500 from the 150th Anniversary Budget be awarded to the Friends of Bothal Primary School to support the costs of the Summer Fayre to be held on Saturday 15 July.**

FGS 17/721 6. 150th CELEBRATION EVENTS

The Town Clerk reported that contact had been received from the combined Ashington Bowling Clubs (Hirst Park, Ashington, Alcan and the Ladies Club) wishing to establish a new Annual Bowling Pairs Competition Trophy, to be held on the final weekend of the season and to be known as "*Ashington Hirst Celebratory Cup*".

The Town Clerk informed members that all the clubs now operated from Hirst Park with a combined 80 members. The joint secretaries had

suggested that given the new operating base, further to the closure of the Institute Building, the new trophy would replace all former competitions run by the individual clubs. The Town Clerk reported that the Clubs had requested that the Town Council consider being the annual sponsor of the new competition.

Cllr.Fenwick informed members that there had previously been a Wansbeck Trophy many years ago and he felt that now was an opportune moment to support such an annual event with the closing of the old sports centre and the relocation of the bowling clubs to Hirst Park. Members were unanimously in favour of supporting the idea of sponsoring an annual competition. The Town Clerk advised that there would be an initial cost of acquiring a new trophy, thereafter the annual budget would be the required the prize money for the event.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Town Council agree to the sponsorship and annual support of the bowling competition to be known as the “Ashington Hirst Celebratory Cup”,**
- (ii) That a sum of £750 be agreed from the 150th Anniversary Budget in 2017/18 to cover the cost of acquiring a new trophy and providing prize money for the 2017 event; and that**
- (iii)The “Ashington Hirst Celebratory Cup” competition be added the list of annual events funded and facilitated by the Town Council.**

FGS 17/722 7. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS. (Appendix 2)

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 26 May to 22 June 2017.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the period 26 May to 22 June 2017 be formally agreed and approved.

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

FGS 17/723 8. TOWN CENTRE CCTV PROVISION

Cllr.Gallacher and Cllr.Cuthbert reported that, at the request of the Council they had met with a representative of Reay Security Ltd to carry out a site visit of Station Road in order to identify suitable locations for the erection and installation of Town Centre CCTV camera provision. Members were informed that appropriate building locations had been identified although formal permissions would be duly required from both Northumberland County Council and the premises owners or landlords if tenanted. In addition, the installation of an appropriate aerial within the Town Hall was also required.

The Town Clerk informed members that under the lease and operational proposals received, the Town Council would be the management and monitoring body for the CCTV system. The Town Clerk reported that, further to full discussion and review of the financial options, the acquisition of equipment via lease, which included maintenance and annual service costs, represented the best value. Members were informed that while installation was relatively straightforward, Reay Security Ltd had advised that experience had shown that landlord permissions were usually where delays were experienced but once received the installation and set up work usually took place over a two week period. Cllr.Gallacher and the Town Clerk undertook to seek to acquire the permissions to move this process forward at the earliest opportunity.

Members were advised that the annual cost of an initial 5-year lease was £477 (plus VAT) per month. Members thanked Cllr.Gallacher and Cllr.Cuthbert for the work undertaken in relation to this matter.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Town Council agree the acquisition and funding of Town Centre CCTV Provision ,**
- (ii) Reay Security Ltd be approved and appointed as the preferred partner for the provision and installation of the CCTV equipment**
- (iii) That the acquisition of CCTV equipment via an initial 5-year lease be agreed at a monthly sum of £477 plus VAT; and that**
- (iv) The appropriate permissions be duly sought for the installation of all required equipment required to enable the operation of a Town Centre CCTV provision.**

FGS 17/724 9. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Town Clerk presented a draft Social Media Policy for the consideration of the Committee and outlined the benefits of clear guidance for individual members in their use of social media sites including, but not restricted to, facebook, twitter, linkedin and personal blogs and websites.

Members were reminded of the Council's current communications protocol and the need to carefully manage and balance individual comments made in a personal capacity with the public role as a duly elected member of the Town Council. The Chair reported that he had requested and agreed the development of the policy at this time in order to establish clear guidance and to give members "ground rules" and some do's and don'ts when using social media. The Chair advised members that the Social Media Policy was designed to be a helpful document for personal use and to compliment the code of conduct and guidance.

Resolved:

That the Social Media Policy be formally approved, adopted and implemented with immediate effect.

FGS 17/725 10. MOBILE PHONE ALLOWANCES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Cllr. Gallacher referred to an earlier discussion regarding the growing works programme of the Town Council, the new streamlined Committee Structure and the resultant increased workload on the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Business and Committee Chairs. There was general agreement that the use of personal phones for this purpose would give rise to additional costs that were currently not reimbursed. The Town Clerk recommended that, rather than seek to provide dedicated contract work phones, a phone allowance similar to that provided to staff would be more appropriate at this time.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) A mobile phone allowance of £30 per month be awarded to the Leader of the Town Council,**
- (ii) A mobile phone allowance of £15 per month be awarded to the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chair of Finance & General Services Committee; and that**

(iii) The sum be paid as an annual allowance together with the allowance for printing and stationery expenses.

FGS 17/726 11. NURSERY PARK ALLOTMENTS – RENTS 2017/18

The Town Clerk reported on the management and maintenance costs of the site, which was directly managed by the Town Council, and recommended to members that the rents be maintained at the current annual level.

Resolved:

That the allotment plot rents for the Nursery Park site for 2017/18 be agreed at £65 per plot with a 25% discount for plot-holder's over the age of 65.

FGS 17/727 12. ASHINGTON GARDENS COMPETITION 2017

The Clerk reported that the entry date for the Gardens Competition was due to close on 30 June 2017 and that arrangements needed to be now put in place for the judging.

In answer to questions regarding the level of entrant numbers the Town Clerk reported that while entries had not increased significantly, even after extensive advertising and promotion, the competition was still much valued amongst the keen gardener's in the town. Cllr.Chambers reminded members that the presentation evening was always well attended and always received press coverage and positive reporting.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) Cllrs Avril Chisholm, Tom Wilson, Marjorie Chambers and Ely Turnbull be appointed judges for the Garden Competition,**
- (ii) An appropriate and timely judging timetable be drafted for mid July 2017; and that**
- (iii) The presentation evening for the competition be arranged for September 2017.**

FGS 17/728 13. ENVIRONMENTAL & AMENITIES IMPROVMENT PROGRAMME

Requests were considered from members for the following environmental and amenity improvement works;

- Cllr Parry requested a new bus shelters for Woodhorn Road, opposite the East End Allotments Site, just past the roundabout
- Cllr Parry requested the Manley View/Barnston bus shelter be replaced, as the roof was in a poor state of repair
- Cllr N. Chambers requested a pathway be laid from the entrance of the bus shelter on Briardene, as complaints from elderly people had been received that they were having to walk on grass to enter and exit the shelter
- Cllr Wilson requested a new pavement be laid from the old churchyard at St John's to the new churchyard at North Seaton
- Cllr Wilson requested new notice boards for the Central and Hirst Wards and a new notice board for Station Road

Resolved:

That:

- (i) Two new bus shelters to be purchased for Woodhorn Road and Manley View/Barnston,**
- (ii) An inspection of Briardene bus shelter be undertaken and issues addressed regarding paving and access**
- (iii) New notice boards be purchased for suitable agreed locations in the Central and Hirst Wards and that a new notice board be acquired for the Town Centre.**

FGS 17/729 14. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- **Ashington Fayre Day** - Cllr Turnbull thanked the staff for the excellent organisation of the Annual Ashington Fayre Day that had been a successful and well-attended event.
- **Funding Awards** - The Town Clerk reported that thank you letters had been received from Ashington Cricket Club and Ashington Rugby Club for the recent funding awards for 2017/18.

- **Neighbourhood Services Partnership** - Cllr Gallacher reported on recent changes made by NCC to strengthen the management of the Ashington Neighbourhood Services Team in order to address Town Council concerns regarding the current performance levels and work programme.

Cllr Gallacher informed members that NCC Senior management had accepted that service standards had fallen in recent months and there was an urgent need to review the work patterns and priorities and to establish a much clearer reporting process for the benefit of all Town Council members.

Cllr.Gallacher reported that a wholesale review of the current Neighbourhood Services Partnership was to be undertaken in the coming weeks to establish clear protocols and to seek to address the required work schedule and procedures for planned works programmes. Members were informed that the arrangements for Town Centre floral displays would be re-visited and that the financial contribution level and frequency of payment would also be addressed. Cllr.Gallacher reported that he had also recently met with the management of Bernicia Housing in order to establish and understand the arrangements they had in place with NCC particularly for grass cutting on their housing estates and related land.

FGS 17/730 15. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The date, time and venue for the next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 1 August 2017, at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington.

The Meeting ended at 7.55pm