

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 25 September 2018, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Lynne Grimshaw (Chair) Eleanor Armstrong
Marjorie Chambers Nicola Chambers
Avril Chisholm Matthew Cuthbert
Brian Gallacher Lawrence Henderson
Mark Purvis Ken Parry
Pauline Thompson Bob Walkinshaw
Tom Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

FGS 18/875 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillors, Victor Bridges, Stephen Fenwick, Jim Lang, Kris Lavery and Liam Lavery.

FGS 18/876 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

There were no disclosures of interest.

FGS 18/878 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 31 July 2018, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGS 18/879 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

FGS 18/865 5. ANNUAL FUNDING SUPPORT TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS 2018/19.

The Town Clerk reported that, further to the award of Town Council funding, letters of thanks had been received from:

- Northumberland CVA
- The 7th Ashington (St Andrew's) Brownies
- North Seaton with Ashington WI

FGS 18/880 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING SUPPORT.

- **Northumberland Church of England Academy (Police Cadets)**

The Project & Funding Officer informed members that The James Knott Campus had developed a project, with the Ashington Neighbourhood Policing Team, to form a 'Mini-Police Force'.

Members were informed that the aim of the project was to build positive relationships between pupils and the local Police at an early age which would give the children the opportunity to learn about how to ensure their safety, as well as how the Police work within the community to keep everyone safe.

A request of £400 had been submitted that would go towards the cost of uniforms. Members were informed that a launch event was planned to take place later in the year that would hopefully bring significant media coverage.

- **Northumberland County of Sanctuary**

Members were informed that the Northumberland County of Sanctuary was set up and established in 2016 to support asylum seekers and refugees, primarily in the Ashington area.

A grant of £500 had been requested to support the costs of room hire at St Andrews Church. The hall would be used to provide English lessons and a women's craft group for asylum seekers and refugees. Members were informed that the Red Cross had also committed to support a weekly drop-in to be held at St Andrews Church hall.

- **Ashington Neighbourhood Policing Team**

Members were informed that a funding request had been received from the Ashington Neighbourhood Policing Team to help with the purchase of two Hybrid Bicycles at an estimated total cost of £1,000.

The Project & Funding Officer reported that, if successful the grant would enable Northumbria Police to patrol the Ashington area on bicycles, primarily targeting the areas of anti-social behaviour where young people were actively using bicycles through narrow roadways, alleyways and footpaths for minor crimes and nuisance activity.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) Northumberland Church of England Academy (Police Cadets) be awarded a grant of £400,**
- (ii) Northumberland County of Sanctuary be awarded a grant of £500; and that**
- (ii) Ashington Neighbourhood Policing Team be awarded a grant to a maximum sum of £1,000 for the purchase of two Hybrid Bicycles.**

FGS 18/881 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 26 July – 20 September 2018.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the financial period 26 July to 20 September 2018 be formally agreed and approved.

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

FGS 18/882 7. PROPOSED NEW ASHINGTON ENTRANCE FEATURES.

Cllr. Gallacher introduced the item and reminded members of the recent decision of the Committee not to proceed with the development of two further major entrance features due to both the significant financial cost and also the dissatisfaction with the design styles presented.

Cllr. Gallacher informed members that, in his view, it was important that the idea of entrance features was not forgotten or overlooked and it was possible that more appropriate schemes in terms of both cost and design could be agreed, not just for entrances but perhaps also for key areas and recognised estates with the town.

Members agreed and recognised that it was now apparent that any further environmental enhancement to the town was clearly going to be driven forward by the Town Council. The Chair requested that the matter of entrance and estate features be agreed in principal, discussed and given full consideration as part of the budget discussion regarding environmental enhancements for 2019.

Resolved:

That;

- (i) The development of a scheme of entrance and estate features and signage for the town be agreed in principle; and that**
- (i) The locations, design and cost be discussed and agreed as part of the Environmental Enhancement planning and budget process for 2019/20.**

FGS 18/883 8. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP.

Cllr. Gallacher updated members on the recent discussions that had taken place with senior officers of Northumberland County Council (NCC) regarding the potential development of a new Neighbourhood Services Partnership agreement to be effective from 2019.

Cllr. Gallacher reported that, together with the Town Clerk, he had met with the NCC Head of Neighbourhood Services specifically to explore the option of the type of agreement that could be reached. The Town Clerk informed members that, in addition to the role and work programme of NCC, discussion had covered direct and agreed use of recognised third party external contractors, with NCC permission, for the delivery of key areas of environmental work.

Cllr. Gallacher reported that no agreement on any new partnership had been reached, nor would be, without the specific resolution of the Town Council to both the content, format and cost. Members were informed that it was however important that all options were discussed and that the discussion be driven by the requirement to see and ensure real improvement. Cllr. Gallacher submitted a detailed motion for the consideration of the Committee.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) In moving forward and seeking, together with our partner organisations, to ensure real improvement and enhancement to the environmental outlook of the town, Finance and General Services Committee,**
- (ii) Formally approve the continuation of discussions with Senior Management of Northumberland County Council (NCC) Neighbourhood Services for the development of a new Neighbourhood Services Partnership to be effective from 1 April 2019,**

(iii) Agree that any new Neighbourhood Services Partnership with NCC will recognise the key findings of the Town-wide Survey and focus entirely on:

- **Quality delivery of all year round “Core” Services**
- **Enhancement work in relation to the identified priority areas of street cleansing and litter collection**
- **Planned work on recognised and identified “hot spot” areas throughout the town,**

(iv) Recognise the clear role that third parties can make to environmental improvement and enhancement in the town,

(v) Authorise the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Partnership and Chair of Finance and General Services, with the full approved permission of Northumberland County Council in writing, to enter into formal discussion with identified external contractors for the provision of:

- **A planned programme of maintenance and improvement works; and**
- **Floral presentations and displays, and**

(vi) Agree that progress reports, including any draft NCC partnership agreements, external service agreements, work schedules and the full financial implication be presented to future meetings of the Committee for discussion and any final recommendation to Full Council.

FGS 18/884 9. REPAIR AND RENEWAL OF PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT.

The Funding and Project Officer updated members on the requirement for the provision of new items of play equipment at the Bywell Road, North Seaton and Alexandra Road play areas.

Members were informed that recent inspection reports had identified both vandalised equipment and also items of equipment that contained obsolete components and could not be adequately or safely maintained.

Members in agreeing the proposals recognised that some of the play areas identified were not under the direct control or management of the Town Council and it was important that the other organisations involved, NCC and Bernicia, made due financial contribution to any future required improvement.

Resolved:

That;

(i) The Town Council's partner organisation, KOMPAN Ltd be authorised to replace the damaged equipment at the agreed locations:

- (i) North Seaton Colliery Play Area - £7,169 plus VAT**
- (ii) Alexandra Road Play Area - £2,414 plus VAT**
- (iii) Bywell Road Play Area - £1,644 ex vat**

FGS 18/885 10. RECOGNITION OF WORK UNDERTAKEN BY "LOLLIPOP" ROAD SAFETY OFFICERS.

Cllr.Gallacher requested that Members discuss and consider the invaluable all-year-round work undertaken by the School Road Safety Officers, affectionately known as "Lollipop" and how the Town Council might formally recognise their contribution to keeping schoolchildren safe.

Members were unanimously supportive of the idea of looking at recognising and in some small way rewarding the staff for their dedication and important role, particular at a time when much was being made of busy "school run" times and traffic build ups in the vicinity of schools and nearby road and street networks.

It was agreed that Chair and Town Clerk be delegated to look at options and agree an appropriate way of recognising the work of the School Road Safety Officers in Ashington, that met with NCC agreement and approval as the employing authority.

FGS 18/886 11. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK 16-19 OCTOBER 2018.

The Town Clerk reported that, as part of the Local Democracy Week, a formal request had been received from NCC for an elected Town Council member to attend and to sit on a "Question Time Democracy Panel" to consider and respond to questions from local schools regarding Council services. Cllr Cuthbert agreed to represent Ashington Town Council at the event.

FGS 18/887 12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.

There were no other items of urgent business.

FGS 18/888 13. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

Tuesday 30 October 2018, at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington NE63 8RX.

The Meeting ended at 8:15pm.