

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 26 November 2019, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

## PRESENT:

**COUNCILLORS:** Lynne Grimshaw (Chair) Eleanor Armstrong  
Victor Bridges Avril Chisholm  
Matthew Cuthbert Brian Gallacher  
Lawrence Henderson Jim Lang

**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 19/996 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, Marjorie Chambers, Nicola Chambers, Stephen Fenwick, Ken Parry, Mark Purvis, Kris Lavery, Liam Lavery, Pauline Thompson, Tom Wilson and Bob Walkinshaw.

## FGS 19/997 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS.

Cllr. B Gallacher and Cllr. J Lang declared an interest in item 9 on the agenda, planning application 18/00779/FUL.

## FGS 19/998 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 29 October 2019, were agreed and signed as a true record.

## FGS 19/999 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

### FGS 19/981 11. ENTRANCE FEATURES WORKING GROUP.

The Town Clerk presented design options for the new entrance feature signs. Members were asked to consider logo, font type etc, and decide which option they would like to take forward.

### FGS 19/988 5. APPLICATION FOR FUNDING SUPPORT – ASHINGTON PANTOMIME GROUP.

The Town Clerk reported that a letter of thanks had been received from Ashington Pantomime Group, for the kind donation of £200.

## **FGS19/001 5. APPLICATION FOR FUNDING SUPPORT 2019/20.**

Members considered funding support applications from;

### **(i) Ashington Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) Social Care**

The Ashington RVS provides a social branch at Etal House. The aim of the service is to prevent loneliness and social isolation in people aged over 65 years. The group meets every Thursday for lunch and social activities such as chair based exercise and also arranged outings. The RVS had requested £500 to support costs for specialist transport to a Christmas Lunch in Amble and a pantomime at Whitley Bay Playhouse and associated refreshment costs.

### **(ii) Ashington Holy Sepulchre Church**

Ashington Holy Sepulchre Church requested the sum of £700 to help support costs of purchasing and installing two retractable bollards that would limit the inconsiderate parking of vehicles around the Church. Work would also include improvements to the parking area and the surrounding grassed area that has been affected by the parking. The total cost of the work quoted was £3,416. Other funds had been secured from local funding trusts with support from the Funding & Project Officer and a contribution from the Church.

### **(iii) Ashington Joint Welfare Scheme (AJWS)**

Ashington Joint Welfare Scheme requested the sum of £750 to support costs to decorate the Hirst Welfare Centre, internally and externally. Quotes received for the work totalled £26,240 (internal £8,480, external £17,760)

#### **Resolved:**

**That;**

- (i) The Ashington Royal Voluntary Service Social Care be awarded the sum of £500 towards the costs for specialist transport to two planned events,**
- (ii) Ashington Holy Sepulchre Church be awarded the sum of £700 to purchase two bollards and associated works, and that;**
- (iii) The request from Ashington Joint Welfare Scheme be agreed in principle for a grant of £750 to be released once the full overall funding package had been secured.**

## **FGS 19/002 6. WANSBECK VALLEY FOOD BANK.**

The Leader of the Council Cllr. Matthew Cuthbert presented members with a letter from Wansbeck Valley Food Bank requesting that the Council consider additional financial support for 2019-2021

Cllr.Cuthbert informed members that he had requested that this item be placed on the Agenda for proper consideration and discussion by the Committee further to recent discussions with Mr Sean Fugill from the Wansbeck Valley Food Bank (WVFB).

Cllr.Cuthbert reported Mr Fugill had gratefully thanked Ashington Town Council for the continued significant financial support over many years and had reported that WVFB were now experiencing an unprecedented rise in the level of demand with no indication that the trend would abate in the near future.

Cllr.Cuthbert reported that need for the services of the WVFB had widely been expected due to impending changes in the benefits system, primarily the introduction of Universal Credit in Northumberland. The Committee Members were informed that there had been a major increase in the number of food parcels being given out in late 2019, that could not be explained by the normal seasonal fluctuations. Cllr Cuthbert informed members that there had been a 49% year on year need for the service within Ashington where 10,813 person days of food, valued at approximately £65,000 had been issued over the previous 12 month period.

The Town Clerk reminded members that the Town Council's strategic thinking in setting the funding priorities for Outside Organisations for the financial years 2019-2021 had been predicated around the looming introduction of Universal Credit and it's expected negative impact on many residents of Ashington. Members were reminded that the council had consciously decided to maintain the high level of financial support to WVFB and Northumberland Community Bank and also significantly increased the level of funding support to Citizens Advice Northumberland to provide a dedicated Universal Credit advice post.

**Resolved:**

**That the Finance & General Services Committee:**

- (i) Favourably consider additional funding support for the Wansbeck Valley Food Bank,**
- (ii) Agree an additional £4,000 for both the current financial year 2019/20 and for the financial year 2020/21 ;and that**
- (iii) The £8,000 cost of the additional agreed funding support be met from anticipated and identified savings within the 2019/20 Budget.**

## FGS 19/003 7. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income for the financial 19 October 2019 – 15 November 2019.

### **Resolved:**

**That the Schedule of Payments for the financial period 19 October 2019 to 15 November 2019 be formally agreed and approved.**

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

## FGS 19/004 8. FLORAL DISPLAYS AND PRESENTATIONS.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr.Cuthbert introduced the agenda item and reminded members that, at the Finance & General Services Committee meeting held on 29 October 2019, the Committee had formally resolved to:

- (i) Accept the details and findings of the Station Road Condition Survey and Option Appraisal Report as the basis for developing a formal work improvement programme for floral presentation and displays,
- (ii) Seek to appoint a Full-Time Horticultural Officer, initially on a two-year fixed-term contract, to oversee and manage all aspects of the floral improvement work and all other botanical and horticultural issues for the Council; and to
- (iii) Identify the funding for the improvement work and resource costs, including the new employee, from the existing Environmental Enhancements budget and be discussed as part of the 2019-21 budget process.

Members unanimously agreed that, in order to progress matters in a timely manner, it was important that early steps were taken to recruit to the new post of Horticultural Officer in order to commence the planning and improvement works at the earliest opportunity.

### **Resolved:**

**That:**

- (i) The new post of Horticultural Officer, initially on a two-year fixed contract, be agreed at Local Council Grade 1 (LC1) spinal column points (scp) 15-16 at an annual salary range of £22,911 - £23,369**
- (ii) The estimated 2019/20 cost of £9,940 (inclusive of all employer overheads) be met from the Environmental Enhancements Budget,**
- (iii) Any underspend on the 2019/20 Environmental Enhancement Budget be ring-fenced to fund the cost of the Horticultural Officer post in 2020/21 ;and that**

**(iv) The Job Description, recruitment and appointment process be delegated to the Personnel Sub-Committee with a view to an appointment at the earliest date.**

**FGS 19/005 9. PLANNING APPLICATION 18/0077/FUL (Ascent Homes) – Application for 99 no. Dwellings incorporating new site access and internal access road, provision of SUDS, open space and landscaping – Land South West of Portland Terrace, Ellington Road, Ashington.**

**Cllrs. B.Gallacher and J.Lang declared an interest in this matter and withdrew from discussion.**

Cllr.Grimshaw informed members that there were currently still major and ongoing traffic related issues on the A197/A1068, Ellington Road, primarily resulting from the addition of housing on the Persimmon Portland Site. Members were informed that the recently installed crossing on this road had not worked as well as originally hoped or intended and traffic still remained a major issue at key points of the day. Cllr.Grimshaw reported that Ascent Homes had agreed in principle as part of the pre-application to look at an allocation of S106 monies to the improvement of the highways in question. Members were advised that there was also a forthcoming options appraisal report from Northumberland County Council Highways Officers that was due for consideration in coming months.

It was agreed that the matter be delegated to the ward councillors to pursue an acceptable solution, with the full support of the Town Council and to respond direct to NCC at appropriate points in the process.

**Resolved:**

**That;**

- (i) The matter be delegated to the Bothal Ward Council members Cllr.Grimshaw, Cllr.Cuthbert and Cllr.Walkinshaw to seek an acceptable highways improvement solution; and that**
- (ii) Northumberland County Council be reminded that Junction Improvements at the A1068 (Ellington Road) & A197 (Morpeth Road) was the priority scheme for Ashington in the 2020/21 Local Transport Plan Programme.**

**FGS 19/006 10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.**

There was no other urgent business.

**FGS 19/007 11. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.**

Date to be confirmed in the New Year, at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

**The Meeting ended at 7:15pm.**