

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 24 May 2016, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Vicky Brown (Chair)	Victor Bridges
	Louis Brown	Marjorie Chambers
	Avril Chisholm	Stephen Fenwick
	Liam Lavery	Kris Lavery
	Pauline Thompson	Ely Turnbull

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer
Members of the Public - 0

FGP 16/606 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Nominations were formally invited for the position of Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Resolved:

That Cllr. Vicky Brown be duly elected as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

FGP 16/607 2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Nominations were formally invited for the position of Vice-Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Resolved:

That Cllr. Kris Lavery be duly elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

FGP 16/608 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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Apologies were received from Councillors Les Alderson, Keith Chambers, Glyn Davies, Lawrence Henderson, Maggie Lang, Mark Purvis, Wyn Stewart and Bob Walkinshaw.

FGP 16/609 4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllrs. Bridges, L Brown and M Chambers made disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest with regard to any discussions pertaining to allotments.

FGP 16/610 5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2016, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGP 16/611 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

FGP 16/601 Applications for Service Funding 2016/17

The Town Clerk reported that, following the decision taken at the last meeting, he had formally written to those organisations seeking service funding from the Town Council for 2016/17. Members were informed that each of the organisations had been asked to consider extending an invitation for a Town Council member to attend their Board meetings as an observer, subject to exclusion from any closed discussion items relating to staffing or contractual matters.

The Town Clerk requested members to consider representation with a view to making appointments at Full Council on 7 June 2016.

FGP16/612 7. APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Wansbeck Disability Forum (WDF): (Deferred from the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 24 May 2016.

The Chair reported that, as agreed at the last meeting, together with and three other members (Cllrs. L Brown, M Chambers and E Turnbull) she had attended a requested meeting with the Wansbeck Disability Forum held at the Ashington Life Centre where the Forum is currently based. Members present at that meeting were invited to comment and present their views and findings.

Cllr. Chambers reported that, during the site visit, they had met with members of the WDF Committee as well as volunteers. The financial information provided confirmed that the organisation's annual operating costs were in the region of £6,000 per annum which included £3,192 room rental at their current premises with Real Deal Plus; travel expenses for volunteers and public liability insurance cover. Members were informed that the organisation had recently undergone a management and structural change including a review of both the current financial position and future funding requirements.

Cllr. L. Brown reported that the volunteers were used to help clients complete benefit claim forms and with the onset of Universal Credit, it was expected that this function would greatly increase, particularly since referrals were made to WDF by other support organisations within the town (e.g. Northumberland CAB).

A lengthy discussion followed and it was agreed that, although the work carried out by the Disability Forum was felt to be worthwhile, the full request for £1,500 should not be met at this time.

A proposal was made to make a grant of £500 and for the Town Council to review the situation in three months' time.

A substantive motion was made to make a grant of £750 with a review in three months. A vote was taken and the initial proposal of £500 carried.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) A grant of £500 be made to Wansbeck Disability Forum with immediate effect.**
- (ii) The organisation be asked for an update report in September 2016 at which time the Town Council would consider the funding position.**

FGP 16/613 8. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, during the financial period 22 April to 20 May 2016.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Payments for the period 22 April to 20 May 2016 be formally agreed and approved.

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

FGP 16/614 9. ALLOTMENTS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Town Clerk presented a detailed summary of the Allotments Capital Programme of Works for 2016/2017 and requested the Committee to approve the costs as identified on the report. Members' specific attention was drawn to matters relating to each of the town's allotments sites as follows:-

- (i) *High Market Allotments:* New fencing had been provided on the boundary with the Holy Sepulchre Church. This had been well received by residents as the fence had been in a particularly poor state of repair.
- (ii) *Hirst East End Allotments:* A quotation had now been obtained for the installation of a replacement alkathene water pipe system. Committee approval was sought to carry out these works at a cost of £6,000.
- (iii) *North Seaton Colliery Allotments:* A number of related tasks were planned at North Seaton allotments at a total cost of £5,797. Members were informed that an agreed contribution of £3,000 towards this figure had been approved by the Allotment Association. Committee approval was sought for the balance of £2,797 in order to carry out these works.
- (iv) *Seaton Hirst Allotments:* Following the results and recommendation of the recent Town Council Appeal Hearing, two tenants had been evicted from the allotments site. The Town Clerk advised members that both hearings had related to the appalling and neglected condition of the sizeable allotment plots and it was expected that the site clearance costs would be in the region of £3,600 for safe environmental clearance including all landfill fees and charges.

Committee approval was sought to carry out these works at a cost of £3,600.

- (v) *Woodhorn Road Allotments*: Work had been recently completed to install alkathene water piping at a cost of £548.

The Town Clerk concluded that approval was sought for the works outlined at a total cost of £17,505, from a budget of £45,000 for this financial year.

Resolved:

That approval be given for the following work be carried out: -

- (i) Hirst East End Allotments : Installation of a replacement water system at a cost of £6,000**
- (ii) North Seaton Colliery Allotments : Plot clearance, drainage, fencing and car park installation at a net cost of £2,797,**
- (iii) Seaton Hirst Allotments : Full site clearance and restoration of two allotment plots at the agreed cost of £3,600.**

FGP 16/615 10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.

- (i) Wansbeck Music Festival: The Town Clerk reminded members that provision had been made in this year's budget for a bursary of £600 to be made, should an Ashington student win a place at the European Music Summer Residential School. Members were informed that Oscar Xoan Zi Ho (a pupil from the Church of England Academy) had won a place at the prestigious Summer School and a cheque for £600 had been provided to Wansbeck Music Festival. Members were informed that a letter of thanks had been received from the Committee of the Wansbeck Music Festival.
- (ii) The Town Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had carried out the annual audit last week and had submitted his report indicating full compliance and satisfaction with all statutory regulations and financial practices. The Town Clerk read out the summary of the Auditor's Report and stated that the full Report and Accounts would be submitted to Full Council for approval at the meeting arranged for 7 June 2016.

The Town Clerk added that, on behalf of the Council, he had requested the Internal Auditor to carry out a full review of the Memorial Garden Project and present a report in due course for consideration.

FGP 16/616 11. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was arranged for 6:00pm on Tuesday, 28 June 2016, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm.