

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 26 April 2017 at 7.00 p.m. at St Mary's Church, Holywell.

The meeting started at 7.03 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillors: K Collier (Vice Chair) D Mullen (Chair) B Nixon S Stanners (Vice Chair)
 B. Swinhoe A Stanners S Dungworth L Bowman and S Hartland

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Cllr B Pidcock – Northumberland County Council

Members of the public - 5

CO040/17 1. Apologies for absence

All members were present and consequently there were no apologies for absence.

CO041/17 2. Disclosure of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

CO042/17 3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that while he had no official announcements to make he wanted to take the opportunity to say a few words about Cllr Bobby Nixon who has decided not to stand for election at next month's elections. Consequently; tonight's meeting was to be Cllr Nixon's last official meeting as a Councillor.

The Chair went onto say that Cllr Nixon had served the local community for approximately 35 years, representing various Wards for the former Blyth Valley Borough Council, Northumberland County Council and latterly with Seaton Valley Community Council. The Chair thanked Cllr Nixon on behalf of the Council and the community for his hard work and dedication over that time and presented him with a small gift from staff and Councillors to mark his retirement from public office.

A number of other Councillors said that they would like to be associated with the Chair's remarks, following which Cllr Nixon received a round of applause.

CO043/17 4. Public Question Time

One member of the public said that she too would like to congratulate Cllr Nixon on his years of public service and wished him all the very best in his retirement from office.

Another resident commented on the attractive overall appearance of Seaton Valley and said that the Council and its partners should be congratulated on the excellent standard of its grounds maintenance and floral planting works.

Finally; a resident made an enquiry about the brightness of a street light outside of her property – the Clerk agreed to look into the matter on her behalf.

There being no further questions; public question time closed at 7.15pm

CO044/17 5. County Councillor Update

Cllr Pidcock provided a brief update on the potential closure of the Coty factory in Seaton Delaval. He said that the County Council had set up a Task Force up to address the matter should the company's consultation exercise result in the closure of the factory and that the Task Force had held its first meeting to agree its terms of reference. Cllr Pidcock said that he himself is a member of the Task Force and that Seaton Valley Council is also represented on it.

Cllr Pidcock also referred to the recent adjournment debate in the House of Commons which had been secured by the MP for Blyth Valley. Cllr Pidcock said that whilst the debate had raised the issue at the very highest level the response from the appropriate minister had merely been to confirm that a Task Force had been set up to address the matter.

Cllr Pidcock closed his briefing by offering his own best wishes to Cllr Nixon on his retirement from public office.

CO045/17 6. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of Seaton Valley Council's Meeting held on 20 March 2017 were agreed as being a correct record and were duly signed and dated by the Chair.

CO046/17 7. Minutes of Other Committee Meetings

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 5 April 2017 were presented and received for information.

CO047/17 8. Services and Partnership Update

The Clerk presented the Services Officer's report for information and referred in particular to a number of items:

- Most of the 2017/18 Allotment invoices have now been paid. Reminders will be sent out this week to those that remain unpaid.
- Work on Fountain Head Bank roundabout has now started and should be completed within the next two weeks.
- Weed spraying on footpaths will begin in early May – weather dependent.
- All play areas will have their ROSPA inspections carried out by the end of May.
- The spring visits by the Seaton Valley in Bloom judges took place in April – initial feedback has been received by the respective groups and action plans to address any issues raised are being developed, and
- Floral displays will soon be placed in the new containers that house our Gateway Signs and these containers are to be stained Silver/Grey.

CO048/17 9. Dog Fouling Patrols

The Clerk presented the joint report of the Services Officer and Engagement and Development Officer for information. The report summarised the work being carried out by Seaton Valley Council Officers to highlight the issue of Dog Fouling and to help persuade dog owners to pick their dog's mess up. Officers carry out high visibility patrols in all villages and target areas of known abuse. Officers are in the process of acquiring two inexpensive portable cameras to help monitor hot spots and to provide potential evidence to NCC Officers to support prosecutions.

CO049/17 10. Approval of the Council's 2016/17 Annual Return

In presenting his report, the Clerk drew attention to the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the accompanying Annual Report which contains a number of statements about the controls the Council has in place to ensure that it has a sound system of internal control. The Clerk reminded Councillors that both they and the Clerk are jointly responsible for signing off this statement.

In receiving the Clerks report, Council:

RESOLVED TO:

- **Approve the Annual governance statement included as Section 1 of the Annual Return attached at Appendix 5A**
- **Approve the accounting statements included as Section 2 of the Annual Return attached at Appendix 5A, and**
- **Note the contents of the Annual internal audit report included at page 5 of the Annual return attached at Appendix 5A.**

CO050/17 11. Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2017

Council agreed to receive the report, and noted that the Council's bank accounts had been successfully reconciled to its financial records.

CO051/17 12. Budgetary Control Report – Final Position 2016/17

The Clerk presented his report which provided detailed and summary information on the Council's final outturn position for 2016/17. The information provided included a comparison of actual and budgeted income and expenditure for the year.

In summary the Clerk said that the Council had performed well from a financial perspective during 2016/17 and that its finances remain in a healthy position. Unallocated balances are at adequate levels and further progress has been made in beginning to earmark small levels of reserves for future and specific reasons. The Clerk said that he was particularly pleased that the final position was in line with projections made throughout the financial year.

The report highlighted a number of underspends that needed to be carried forward or transferred to earmarked reserves together with the reasons behind these requests. In agreeing the report Council

RESOLVED TO:

- **Note the content of the report,**
- **Agree to carry forward/transfer to earmarked reserves the amounts shown at paragraph 4 of the Clerk's report (Appendix 7) totalling £24,500, and**
- **Agree to maintain the Council's minimum level of unallocated reserves at £75,000**

CO052/17 13. Report of the Council's Internal Auditor

The Clerk drew attention to the Internal auditor's report which detailed the testing of the Council's financial records that had been completed by the auditor, Malcolm Wilkinson. The Clerk said that this report, and Section 4 of the Annual Return, helps to provide Councillors with the required

reassurances that the Council's finances are being administered in line with best practices.

There were no specific items that the internal auditor needed to draw to the attention of Council.

RESOLVED TO: receive and note the content of the Internal auditors report attached at Appendix 8.

CO053/17 14. Dates of Future Meetings

In noting the dates of future meetings Council agreed to move the Planning Committee meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday 8 June to Thursday 15 June 2017

2017	Committee/Council	Time	Venue
Thursday 11 May	Planning	6.00pm	CANCELLED
Wednesday 17 May	Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting	6.30pm	New Hartley Memorial Hall
Thursday 15 June	Planning	6.00pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices
Wednesday 21 June	Finance and GP	6.00pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices
Thursday 6 July	Planning	6.00pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved: That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of items 15 on the Agenda as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act relating to personal staff affairs and/or commercial matters.

CO054/17 Computer Network Back Up

The Clerk presented the Engagement and Development Officer's report which highlighted the need for the Council to establish more robust and secure computer back up procedures and recommended using a local company to facilitate this process. However, the Chair had provided additional information that suggested an alternative supplier could be found at a lower cost.

Following discussion of the item, Council **RESOLVED to:**

- Introduce more robust and secure computer network back-up arrangements with the cost to be met from within existing budgets and,
- Delegate authority to the Chair and the Clerk to agree which supplier to use to facilitate this process.

The meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.

Signed by the Chair:

Dated: