

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 24 January 2018 at 7.00 pm. at the Council's Offices, Seaton Delaval.

The meeting started at 7.01 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillors: S Stanners (Chair), B Burt, S Dungworth, L Bowman, E Coulson, K. Collier, and D. Nesbitt

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

B Pidcock – County Councillor

Members of the public - 5

CO00118 1. Apologies for absence

Cllr A Stanners and Cllr S Hartland had submitted their apologies as they were unable to attend the meeting.

CO002/18 2. Disclosure of interests

Cllr Dungworth said that she had a Personal Interest in Item 16 on the Agenda and would therefore leave the meeting during consideration of that item.

There were no other declarations of interest

CO003/18 3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Council's first meeting of the new calendar year.

There were no civic announcements.

CO004/18 4. Public Question Time

A Holywell resident made reference to what he believed to be a poor standard of street lighting around the Dene Top/Wallridge Drive area of Holywell – County Councillor Pidcock agreed to take the matter up with NCC's Street Lighting Team once the resident has provided him with additional details.

And the same resident asked about what is happening with the empty Care Home premises on the Main A192 in Holywell. The Chair responded by saying that whilst investigating the potential future use of a private/commercial property is not part of the Council's responsibilities, he would ask officers to contact the owners of the property to see if an update is available.

There being no further questions Public Question Time closed at 7.09pm.

CO005/18 5. County Councillor Update

County Councillor Pidcock concentrated on briefing the meeting about NCC's latest 2018/19 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan and referred to the Leader of the County Council's address to the a meeting of the Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council on Wednesday 17 January 2018.

The County Council is due to set its budget on 21 February 2018 and is expected to agree a baseline Council Tax increase of 2.99% plus an additional 2% Adult Social Care Precept giving a total Council Tax increase of 4.99%. In order to balance its Medium Term Financial Plan NCC will be required to make savings of £65M over the next four years. The actual areas of service where savings are to be made are still to be announced.

County Councillor Pidcock closed by saying that new investment in either Holywell First School or Astley High School is looking extremely unlikely as the County Council is reducing the size of its Capital Programme and because there are many similar competing bids throughout the County.

CO006/18 6. Minutes of the Council's last Meeting

The minutes of Seaton Valley Council's Meeting held on 29 November 2017 were agreed as being a correct record and were duly signed and dated by the Chair.

CO007/18 7. Minutes of Other Committee Meetings

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 23 November 2017 and the 11 January 2018 were received for information. Similarly the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 12 December 2017 were also received for information and in relation to these minutes Council **RESOLVED TO:**

- **Appoint the Clerk as the Council's Designated Data Protection Officer, and**
- **Approve the use of the current versions of the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for a further period of two years.**

CO008/18 8. Services and Partnership Update

In receiving the Services Officer's detailed report the Members made reference to the following:

- Cllr Dungworth asked the Clerk to send information on the number of Dog Fouling Fixed Penalty Notices that have been issued in the Valley to Seaton Sluice Residents Association,
- The Chair drew attention to the 'Pink Poo Day' that officers will be arranging towards the end of February - the idea being to spray all instances of dog mess in a particular area to highlight just how bad the problem is. Hopefully this will help to shame those owners who don't pick up into changing their behaviour.
- There have been a number of bus shelters vandalised in recent months – all such incidents are reported as a matter of course to the local Neighbourhood Police Team, and
- The Litter Pick organised at Seaton Sluice on the 3 March 2018 needs to be re-arranged as it clashes with another event. The Clerk will liaise with the Services Officer and publicise a new date as soon as possible.

CO009/18 9. Review of Village Entrance Signage

Councillors agreed with the principle of the Services Officers' report i.e. to review the signage and floral displays at each village entrance with a view to moving towards a uniform style that utilises a minimal approach to signage.

The preferred option was to have a simple black and white village sign housed on a raised stone flower bed at each village entrance; however it was further agreed that officers would need to liaise with the County Council's Highways Team to agree any changes/removal of or replacement of Speed Signs that currently incorporate village entrance signs.

In concluding the debate, Councillors asked that officers liaise closely with Ward Councillors to agree individual designs for individual villages as there may be occasions where slight

variations from the 'norm' may be justified.

CO010/18 10. Vehicle Activated Signs

Council received the Engagement and Development Officer's report for information and said how pleased they had been with the initial success of these signs. They particularly referred to the smiley faces that the signs show when motorists comply with the speed limit for a particular location. Many residents have been vocal in their support for the signs and the smiley faces too.

Members also commented upon the data that is being collected that points to particular locations in the Valley where drivers exceeding the speed limit is a real concern.

Members felt that the introduction of the mobile signs is contributing to improving road safety in the Valley and hoped that by moving the signs on a regular basis that further road safety improvements can be achieved.

CO011/18 11. Review of Dog Fouling Officer Support and Allotments and Maintenance Assistant Arrangements

Council received the Clerks report which set out the background to a temporary post of Allotments and Maintenance Assistant being created as part of last years' budget proposals and also additional hours being added to the Services Officer and the Engagement and Development Officer posts for a period of 12 months.

Members agreed with the Clerk that such arrangements had worked well over the last nine months and therefore Council **RESOLVED TO make the additional contractual hours allocated to the Services and Engagement and Development Officers in respect of Dog Fouling duties and the part time post of Allotments and Maintenance Assistant permanent additions to the establishment with immediate effect.**

CO012/18 12. Review of Office Opening Hours

This item was deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

CO013/18 13. Bank Reconciliation as at 31 December 2017

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

CO014/18 14. Budgetary Control Update

The Clerk presented his report which provided detailed and summary information on the Council's income and expenditure compared to budget as at 31 December 2017. In summary, the Clerk said that the Council's income and expenditure is more or less in line with budgets when known variations are taken into account and that he had nothing further to add that hadn't already been reported during the year.

The Clerk said that he was happy with the financial performance of the Council and that he anticipated that there would be a general underspend of circa. £25,000 at the end of the current financial year.

CO015/18 15. 2018/19 Budget Proposals

The Chair presented the Labour Group's 2018/19 Budget Proposals which had been circulated to all members as Appendices 12, 12A, 12B and 12C.

In presenting the Labour Group's proposals he referred to the rigorous process that is gone through to arrive at the re priced base budget which becomes the starting point for the following year's budget discussions. He also referred to the process that is used to confirm

the level of the Council's reserves and the reliance placed on the Clerk to recommend the minimum level of reserves the Council should hold.

Turning to the detail of his report the Chair said that he was very pleased to be able to propose a budget on behalf of the Labour Group that identifies additional savings to allow further investment in key services, whilst at the same time keeps Council Tax increases to a minimum and below the rate of inflation. Referring to new investment areas he specifically drew attention to the following items:

- The group is proposing to provide funding from within its existing Community Fund to purchase a number of Cycle Stands to be located at appropriate sites in the Valley.
- The group would also like to trial the provision of large recycling bins at one specific location within the Valley to see if residents can be encouraged to dispose of their waste more sensibly. A village centre location will be sought to site large bins based on the existing domestic waste recycling model. The success of the project will be monitored closely to see if it can be rolled out across the Valley.
- A number of residents have commented upon the enhanced visual appearance of the Avenue Head since railing planters were installed. Consequently, the Group is proposing to install railing planters throughout the Valley at available sites to further enhance its appearance. One off funding of £7,000 will be provided from the Community Fund to purchase the new planters and the ongoing costs of providing flowers for the planters will be financed via the existing Floral Planting budget.
- In recent years the Council has begun to invest in Dog Fouling Prevention Measures. The Group would like to see such investment continue and indeed, to be enhanced and proposes a partnership with the County Council that would see one of NCC's Enforcement Officers working in Seaton Valley exclusively for one day per week. This officer would work with the Council's Services and Engagement and Development Officers to provide a more comprehensive and reactive Dog Fouling Prevention Service for the Valley. The costs of this additional service will be £8,000 per annum.
- Another successful initiative provided by the Council in 2017 has been the introduction of Vehicle Activated Speed Signs (VAS's) throughout the Valley. The initiative has been praised by residents and Councillors alike and the Group feels that the number of devices should be increased to provide cover for a greater area of the Valley. The Group's proposals provide for a further 5 VAS's to be acquired; such funding to come from unallocated reserves, and
- Finally, the Group proposes that the Council takes an initial step towards helping people in genuine financial difficulties in the Valley by setting up an outreach branch of a Local Food Bank. Initial research suggests Seaton Valley is poorly served by Food Bank Services and the Group hopes that by providing a small budget of £5,000 per annum, a viable service run by volunteers and provided at a Seaton Delaval location will be able to be set up and established over a short period. The Group would like to see Officers research this proposal more closely and come forward with an early report to set out in more detail how such a service could be developed for Seaton Valley residents.
- Budgetary provision has again been made to fund up to 200 hours of professional support to the Council's Neighbourhood Planning process,

Before moving on to Allotment Rents and other matters the Chair said that when drafting the Group's proposals he had been under the impression that the County Council was going to withdraw its funding to Arriva to provide evening services on the 57A bus route between Earsdon Village and Cramlington and as a consequence the Labour Group had also proposed to withdraw its support for the service too.

However, he is now aware that NCC is prepared to continue to provide support to Arriva, albeit at a reduced level, and as a consequence the Council is working with NCC and Arriva to come up with a package of support to allow some evening services to continue on this route. Any funding that the Council agrees to provide to support this package will be found from its 2018/19 Community Fund.

In closing his speech and moving the recommendations in the Clerk's report he referred to Allotment Rents and Flat Rents. In relation to the former he proposed a flat rate increase of 2% and acting on the advice of the Council's letting agent proposed to keep flat rents at their current level.

In seconding the Chairs motion Cllr Dungworth echoed the Chairs views and said she was particularly pleased that the Group had been able to draw up a budget that reinvested savings in priority areas and kept Council Tax increase to a minimum.

At the end of the debate a vote was taken on the Labour Groups 2018/19 budget proposals and all Councillors present voted in favour of said proposals and as a consequence, Council

RESOLVED TO:

- a) **Approve the build-up of the 2018/19 Budgets as shown at Appendix 12A of the Clerk's report which includes the budget proposals of the Labour Group,**
- b) **Agree to set a Council Tax Precept of £548,260,**
- c) **Note that in agreeing to set a Council Tax Precept of £548,260, Seaton Valley Council's element of the Council Tax will increase by 2.0% from £114.12 per annum to £116.40 per annum (Band D Equivalents),**
- d) **Note that Seaton Valley Council's Band 'D' Equivalent Council Tax base has increased from 4,657.17 to 4,710.02,**
- e) **Further note that in setting a Council Tax precept of £548,260 the amounts of annual Council Tax payable in respect of Seaton Valley Council will be approximately:**

• Band A £77.59	Band E £142.27
• Band B £90.54	Band F £168.14
• Band C £103.47	Band G £194.00
• Band D £116.40	Band H £232.79
- f) **Approve the Allotment Rent levels identified in the table at paragraph 13 of the Clerk's report,**
- g) **Agree to continue to subscribe to the North East Regional Employers Association and the Society of Local Council Clerks and to the Northumberland branch of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) ,**

- h) Agree to maintain current rent levels for the two flats it owns, and
- i) Agree to maintain the Council's minimum level of non-earmarked reserves at its current level of £75,000.

CO016/18 16. Request for Funding

Prior to Council discussing this matter Cllr Dungworth declared a Personal Interest in this item and left the meeting.

The Chair introduced the Clerk's report which detailed a request from the Delaval Parish for a contribution towards the cost of holding a re-dedication service to celebrate the re-opening of The Church of Our Lady, adjacent to Seaton Delaval Hall. The Rev David Bowler's full request was appended to the Clerk's report and reported that the anticipated cost of holding the event was likely to be in the region of £3,000 and that all such costs had to be met by the Delaval Parish.

The Chair said that he thought a contribution of £1,000 was appropriate to what would be a community wide celebration and after a short debate the matter was put to a vote.

Of the remaining Councillors present; all voted in favour of the Chairs proposal with the exception of Cllr Coulson who abstained from the vote.

Consequently Council **RESOLVED TO: make a contribution of £1,000 towards the costs of Delaval Parish holding a re dedication service to celebrate the re-opening of the Church of Our Lady.**

Following the debate and vote on item 16 Cllr Dungworth returned to the meeting.

17. Dates of Future Meetings

2018	Committee/Council	Time	Venue
Wednesday 7 February	Planning Committee	6.30pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices
Wednesday 28 February	Finance & General Purposes	6.00pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices
Thursday 8 March	Planning	6.30pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices
Wednesday 21 March	Full Council	7pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices
Thursday 5 April	Planning	6.30pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices

There being no other business on the Agenda, the meeting closed at 7.56pm

Signed by the Chair:

Dated: