

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 28 November 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, A Stanners, E Coulson, K. Collier, D. Nesbitt and S. Hartland.

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Cllr B Pidcock – Northumberland County Council

Sgt Steve Nicklin – Northumbria Police

PCSO Barry Elliott – Northumbria Police

Members of the public - 4

CO083/18 1. Apologies for absence

All members were present.

CO084/18 2. Disclosure of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

CO085/18 3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements

After welcoming everyone to the Council's last full meeting of the year the Chair referred to the refurbishment works that had recently started on the Old Pavilion in Astley Park and congratulated all involved for their hard work in raising the funds necessary to finance the works. He went to say that, weather permitting, the works will be completed in time for the commencement of the 2019 bowling season.

He also commented on the three successful Christmas Lights Switch On's that had taken place last week and reminded everyone that the Holywell Switch On would take place on Friday 30 November, followed by the New Hartley Switch On, on Saturday 1 December.

Finally, he said that the Council would be considering the County Council's recent proposal to introduce Car Parking Charges at selected coastal and railway car parks at tonight's meeting as a matter of Urgent Business. The matter was being considered at this meeting because the Council's next meeting is after closing date for formal responses to NCC's consultation exercise.

CO086/18 4. Public Question Time

A Holywell resident began by complimenting the recent leaf clearing works carried out by the Neighbourhood Partnership Team; he then identified what he thought to be an abandoned vehicle on the footpath of the A190 and also asked if the sound quality of the voice recordings on the Art Stop installation in the shelter next to the Milbourne Arms could be checked out.

In response the Chair thanked the resident for his comments on leaf clearing; informed the resident that although abandoned vehicles are dealt with by the County Council he would ask the Council's officers to report the matter and said that he would ask officers to visit the defective Art Stop installation.

As there were no further questions from members of the public the Chair asked Sgt Nicklin if he had anything he wanted to share with the meeting.

Sgt Nicklin thanked the Chair for the opportunity of addressing all Councillors together and went on to summarise the objectives of a current Northumbria Police initiative – Operation GRASP.

Operation GRASP is a Crime Prevention initiative targeting South East Northumberland, which has been set up to address a recent spurt of burglaries in the area. Sgt Nicklin stressed that although Seaton Valley was probably the least affected area in his command area (by the burglaries) burglaries have increased here too. He then went on to say that Police intelligence suggests that the crimes are being carried out by criminals from out of the area who target houses/cars or sheds that haven't been properly secured and, as a consequence, his officers are trying to get residents to be more conscious of routine security measures that should always be taken.

Leaflets have been drawn up for distribution to residents, Crime Prevention meetings are being arranged at various locations throughout Seaton Valley and Police Officers are pushing the security message at every opportunity.

Cllr Dungworth raised a query about the privacy and legal implications of using personal CCTV cameras. Sgt Nicklin responded by saying that the law surrounding the use of CCTV can be very complex, however, as a rule of thumb, as long as the CCTV is only covering your own property and the approaches to your property, no laws are being broken.

In thanking the Police for their attendance the Chair said that the Council would be happy to do all that it can to promote the initiative.

The Police representatives then left the meeting at 7.25pm.

CO087/18 5. County Councillor Update

Cllr Pidcock gave a short update on NCC matters.

The Coty factory in Seaton Delaval has now closed and the search continues for a new occupier. Some interest has been shown, but nothing concrete as yet.

The County Council's Development Company Arch, has been renamed Advance Northumberland, although recent announcements refer to the new company as 'Advance Northumberland, formerly known as Arch'.

Universal Credit is due to be rolled out to South East Northumberland in December.

Cllr Dungworth added that NCC has begun a consultation exercise on its proposals to increase Home Care Charges. She commented that this proposal, the roll out of Universal Credit and NCC's proposals to introduce a minimum Council Tax payment for working age claimants could all hit the same group of people where it hurts i.e. in their pockets – and this same group of people are likely to be the very same people that are currently struggling to make their income stretch to finance their basic essentials i.e. food, drink, housing and heating.

CO88/18 6. Minutes of the Council's Meeting held on 19 September 2018

Cllr Burt pointed out a minor error on page 23 of the minutes. The Christmas events at Holywell and New Hartley take place on Friday 30 November and Saturday 1 December respectively, and not on Saturday 30 November and Sunday 1 December as shown in the minutes.

Following this correction the minutes of Seaton Valley Council's Meeting held on 19 September 2018 were agreed as being a correct record and were duly signed and dated by the Chair.

CO89/18 7. Minutes of Other Committee Meetings

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 26 September and 29 October 2018 were presented and received for information as were the notes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 31 October 2018.

CO90/18 8. Consultation on Car Parking Charges at Selected Coastal and Railway Parks

As explained above this item had been added to the meeting's agenda as an item of Urgent Business as responses to the consultation document needed to be submitted before the Council's next meeting.

A number of members expressed their opposition to the proposals citing a potential negative effect on visitor numbers and the displacement of vehicles from car parks into adjoining streets. One member suggested that it was a tax on local residents taking a long walk on the beach and another felt that although the charges proposed could be seen as reasonable, they would almost certainly increase in future years.

Cllr Hartland spoke in favour of the proposals saying that the proposed charges compared very favourably with charges elsewhere in the country and that the revenue generated from the charges was needed to fund car park improvement works throughout the county. He said that he didn't believe visitor numbers would be affected or that cars would choose to park in adjoining streets rather than in car parks.

At the end of the debate the Chair asked for a show of hands. Eight members voted to object to the proposals and one member voted to support the proposals.

Consequently, Council **RESOLVED TO ask the Clerk to draft a letter of objection to the proposals contained in the County Council's consultation document.**

CO91/18 9. Services and Partnership Update

Councillors referred to a number of matters within the Services Officer's report and in particular to the items below:

- Recycling bins are expected to be installed at the Cat Park, Seaton Delaval week commencing 3 December.
- Overgrown shrub beds are being targeted for removal, subject to local consultation.
- A number of residents have complimented to the Council about the recent installation of Poo Bag Dispensers in each of our villages
- Seghill Scooter Park is currently closed due to problems with the concrete infills coming away in a number of places. The Council, NCC and the contractors will be meeting soon to agree how to resolve the matter.
- The boundary fence at the Dunes Play area in Seaton sluice has been repaired.
- We are currently experiencing increased levels of damage (vandalism) to bus shelters.
- Our first three Christmas Events (Seghill, Seaton Sluice and Seaton Delaval) were a resounding success with attendance numbers up at all three events. Special thanks to Seaton Sluice First School Choir for making the Seaton Sluice event one to remember (despite the weather!).
- Similarly the Beacon of Light Ceremony at Seaton Sluice was also a massive success with over 400 people attending. There were some complaints about the sound quality which have been taken on board to inform future events.

CO92/18 10. Seaton Valley In Bloom

The Chair introduced the Services Officers report which both provided a summary of the individual results for each village and reviewed the ongoing 'value' of the competition to each village.

In respect of the former, the Council did very well in the recent awards and a full list of results is available on the Council's website.

With regard to the latter and the value the competition is providing to each village there are mixed views. Holywell and Seghill are both keen to continue with entering the formal competition, however, the groups in Seaton Sluice, New Hartley and Seaton Delaval all indicated that they would like to take a break from the formal competition for at least a year. These groups complained that a massive amount of work is required to get villages ready for judging which only takes place on two days each year. Some groups were also unhappy with the degree of emphasis placed on certain criteria by the judges themselves.

After debating the issue; members agreed that those villages who wanted to continue to enter the formal competition are free to do so and that the three villages that want to take a break from the competition, can do. The budget for the entry fees will be passed over to the villages that don't enter, together with the existing individual village in bloom budgets, however, a simple form will be required to be completed to let the Services Officer know what activity is planned by each village not entering the formal competition.

Members also asked if the Seaton Valley Gardening Competition could be extended to review the performance of each village in a less formal way than the In Bloom awards themselves. Members felt that by doing this an element of completion between villages would be retained and individual In Bloom Groups would be recognised for the additional value they add to their villages.

CO93/18 11. Floral Bedding Contract

The Chair introduced the Services Officer's report which provided an update on the performance of NCC in delivering the Council's Floral Bedding Contract and sought to extend the contract for a period of one year i.e. to 31 March 2020.

NCC performed well in delivering the contract for the first two years of the contract period, however has performed less well in the final year of the main contract term. However, much of the reason for the drop in performance was due to the very hot summer we had which affected both the quality of the plants grown and their blossoms, once planted.

That being said the report identified that the overall performance of NCC in delivering the contract had been generally good and as a consequence, the Services Officer felt that the Council should take up its option to extend the contact for a further year. The extension period will be used to further review the performance of NCC and to review and refine the contact documents with a view to retendering the contract in November 2019 for a new contract start date of 1 April 2020.

After briefly debating the matter Council **RESOLVED TO extend its Floral Planting Contract with NCC for a period of 1 year i.e. to 31 March 2020.**

CO94/18 13. Food Bank Outreach Service

The Chair again spoke to the Services Officer's report which provided a brief update on how the Council's new Food Parcel Delivery/Collection Service had been received since its introduction in April, earlier this year.

The report identified that the uptake of the service is increasing month on month as it becomes more widely known about and how the service is well received by both clients and referral bodies. The Council has built up a good working relationship with Blyth Food Bank itself and in particular with the Reverend Yvonne Tracey who promotes the workings of the Food Bank in South East Northumberland.

With respect to the service itself, the Services Officer's report identified that the main costs incurred by the Council are in terms of reimbursing mileage costs, incurred in both collecting donations from 10 outlets in Seaton Valley; taking these to the Food Bank and from collecting food parcels from the Food Bank too. Other costs include topping up food parcels with toiletries and fresh food items and a fee paid for the use of Astley Park Pavilion to the Astley Park Community Partnership.

With respect to the latter, the Chair said that the practice of using The Pavilion for food parcel collections has not proved to be very effective or practical for either the Council or recipients and as a consequence, wherever possible food parcels are now delivered direct to recipients doorsteps. Therefore, The Pavilion will no longer be used for this service.

In summary the Chair said he was delighted with the success of initiative in its first year and felt that the numbers using the service are likely to increase year on year, especially as a result of Universal Credit being rolled out across South East Northumberland in the coming weeks.

CO95/18 14. Cycle Parking Solutions

The Chair introduced the Engagement and Development Officer's report which provided an update on progress toward introducing cycle parking solutions (cycle stands) at five locations in Seaton Valley.

He reported that successful discussions had been held with NCC's Highway's Department to agree cycle stand installations at the locations shown below:

- Holywell – Holywell Dene Road between the Milbourne Arms and the old shelter
- New Hartley – St Michael's Avenue in front of the shops
- Seaton Sluice – Beresford Road next to The Harbour View chip shop and restaurant
- Seaton Sluice – Collywell Bay Road opposite Castaways Café

However, we have not, as yet been able to agree a suitable location at the Avenue Head, Seaton Delaval, close to the Crescent Café – discussions continue on this location.

Members should see the cycle tacks being installed in the first two months of the 2019.

Cllr Nesbitt said that he would still like to see a cycle stand located in Seghill but accepted that, at the moment, a suitable location is difficult to identify. He suggested that if the Blake Arms begins to attract cyclists, then this may prove to be a suitable location.

CO96/18 15. Environmental Enforcement Officer

The Engagement and Development Officer's report provided members with an update on the appointment of an Environmental Enforcement Officer (EEO) by the County Council. The officer, Michelle Linney, will be working in Seaton Valley for two days per week, Lynemouth two days per week and in West Bedlington for one day per week.

Michelle began her duties in October and after a short induction period is now on solo patrol

so to speak. Her patrols are mainly focused on the prevention of dog fouling and she is targeting areas where dog fouling is a particular problem. As an EEO, Michelle also has powers to deal with the following environmental issues:

- Dog Fouling
- Fly Tipping
- Rubbish accumulations
- Abandoned Vehicles, and
- Littering

In her first two months the officer has dealt with a number of fly tipping incidents, two rubbish accumulations, and one abandoned car and has issued two fixed penalty notices for dog fouling.

The Council's base budget includes funding for this service to the end of September 2019.

Council RESOLVED TO review the success of the appointment in more detail in July 2019 and make a decision at that time, as to whether to extend funding for the post for another year.

CO97/18 16. Annual Return 2017/18 – Completion of Audit

The Clerk spoke to his report which informed Council that its new external auditors PKF Littlejohn LLP have approved the Council's 2017/18 Annual Return (attached to the Clerk's report as Appendix 11A).

The Clerk informed the meeting that the external auditors had raised one minor issue during the audit in relation to the miss recording an asset between years and following a short discussion Council **RESOLVED TO: approve and accept the Council's audited Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2018 and note the minor reporting issue raised by the external auditor.**

CO98/18 17. Internal Auditor

The Clerk's report informed Council that its Internal Auditor, Malcolm Wilkinson had decided to step down from the post, however, before doing so he had recommended that a past work colleague of his, Mr John Ainsworth be taken on as his replacement.

Mr Ainsworth is a former local government Chief Internal Auditor and already audits a number of other local councils.

Following a short discussion **Council RESOLVED TO appoint Mr John Ainsworth as its new Internal Auditor and to write to Mr Wilkinson to thank him for his work with the Council over the past three years.**

CO99/18 18. 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 October 2018. 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. The report highlighted one or two of these variances and provided explanations where required.

Before concluding his report the Clerk informed Council that efforts to secure a local contractor (North of England) to repair the Seaton Delaval Village Clock had failed and as a

result the original suppliers, who are located in Southampton, have had to be contacted. Engineers will visit during January 2019 to service and repair the clock at an estimated cost of £1,200. Cllr Nesbitt said that he knew a clock repair specialist and asked if he could arrange for him to inspect the clock before confirming with the Southampton company. The Clerk said that he was happy to agree this, but that the inspection would need to be carried out before Christmas.

In conclusion the Clerk said that his latest projections suggest that the Council's budget is likely to be underspent by circa. £20,000 in 2018/19.

CO100/18 19. Bank Reconciliation as at 15 November 2018

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

CO101/18 20.2019/20 Budget Process

The Clerk's report laid out a schedule of meetings that are to be used to agree the Council's 2019/20 annual Budget. The schedule is reproduced below for information:

2019/20 Budget Process – Work Schedule/Timetable

| Date | Group | Purpose |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Wed 31 Oct 2018 – 6.00pm following F&GP Committee Meeting | Budget Working Group | Review Base Budget |
| Wed 14 Nov 2018 – 6.00pm | Budget Working Group | Review Base Budget |
| Wed 28 Nov 2018 – 7.00pm | Full Council | Review Latest Information |
| Wed 12 Dec 2018 – 6.00pm | Finance and GP Committee | Review Latest Information |
| Wed 09 Jan 2019 – 6.00pm | Budget Working Group | Finalise Proposals |
| Wed 30 Jan 2019 – 7.00pm | Full Council | Agree 2019/20 Budget |

In addition the Clerk said that a similar process to previous year's is being followed i.e. the Finance and General Purposes Committee is taking on the role of Budget Review Working Group which considers summary information on the build-up of the Council's base budget at various stages of the process, the latest projections of the current year's income and expenditure as compared to budgets, the latest estimated of unallocated reserves and recommends potential areas for saving.

After considering the report Council **RESOLVED TO agree the budget process and timetable shown in the body of the Clerk's report (and summarised above).**

CO102/18 21. 2019/20 Budget Update

The Clerk presented his report which in essence showed the starting point for political group(s) to begin preparing any budget proposals they may have for the 2019/20 financial year.

The Budget Review Working Group has met two times and has reviewed the outputs generated from the Councils major cost centres review and have fed their observations into the budget process.

After applying inflationary increases and taking into account all known changes the Clerk's projections showed a starting position of minus £2,000, meaning that any new initiatives will either need to be funded from reserves or from savings elsewhere in the budget.

The Clerk pointed out that his 2019/20 budget projections included an allowance for a 2% increase in Council Tax and said that adjustments would need to be made for any proposed increases above or below this level.

The Clerk also pointed out that although his projections showed an increased cost (over and above inflation) for Partnership Services, the budget for a new contract has yet to be formally agreed. He went on to say that he expects to be able to seek agreement to a new 5 year Contract at Council's next meeting and to be able to report a firmer cost to the Finance and General Purposes Committee when it meets on 12 December.

In concluding his report the Clerk said that he expects the amount of the Council's unallocated reserves to be in the region of £60,000 at the end of the current financial year.

Following the Clerk's update Council **RESOLVED TO note the report and in particular further note that political groups/individual members should submit any 2019/20 budget proposals they may have to the Clerk by Friday 18 January.**

CO103/18 22. Dates of Future Meetings

| 2018 | Committee/Council | Time | Venue |
|-----------------------|--|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Wednesday 12 December | Finance & General Purposes | 6pm | Seaton Valley Council Offices |
| 2019 | | | |
| Wednesday 30 January | Full Council | 7pm | Seaton Valley Council Offices |
| Wednesday 27 March | Full Council | 7pm | Seaton Valley Council Offices |
| Wednesday 24 April | Full Council | 7pm | St Mary's Church, Holywell |
| Wednesday 29 May | Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting | 6.30pm | New Hartley Memorial Hall |

There being no other business on the Agenda, the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed by the Chair:

Dated: