

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTELAND ON 16 JANUARY 2019

Present: Councillor A Varley (in the Chair)

Councillors S Ahmed, Mrs C Caisley, R Dodd, Mrs C Greenwell, A Hall, Mrs S Johnson, Mrs K Overbury, A Shanley and Mrs K Woodrow

130. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Darwin and T Edwards-Clay.

131. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

132. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 12 DECEMBER 2018

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12 December 2018 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

133. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 121 – Grant Applications

Emails of thanks have been received from the Great North Air Ambulance, Tynedale Hospice at Home, Ponteland Beer Festival and Sport Tynedale.

134. PLANNING

(i) Planning Committee

Minutes of meetings held on 13th and 27th November 2018 were circulated for information.

(ii) Report on recent planning decisions

There was nothing to report.

135. PROJECTS REPORT

The projects report had been circulated for the information of Councillors.

RESOLVED – The report be accepted.

136. PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL RESERVES

A report by the Clerk was circulated for consideration.

136. PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL RESERVES (Continued)

The report set out the current level of reserves held by the Town Council for general purposes, and those set aside for asset replacement, Cemetery reserves and tree replacement.

Councillors were further reminded that they had agreed in May 2015 to work towards having a minimum of 6 months operating expenses in their general reserves (calculated at £151,000). The Council had now passed that target figure, however it was suggested that the Council may wish to consider revising that figure to take into account increased costs since 2015. An increase to £160,000 was proposed, however the Council wished to increase this further to £165,000.

At the budget meeting held on 9 January 2019, Councillors suggested using reserves for any shortfall in the sum set aside for projects for 2019-20.

At the end of this financial year, a report would be presented to the Council listing any necessary transfers and unexpended amounts and it would be recommended that any available funds that weren't already earmarked for other purposes should be transferred to the General Reserves.

RESOLVED –

(i) The Council agree to use general reserves to offset any shortfall in the sum set aside for projects in 2019-20 subject to agreement of the amount by the Council.

(ii) The Council agree to examine the situation at year-end when there may be non-earmarked funds that could be transferred to the general reserve.

(iii) It was agreed to increase the general reserves target figure to £165,000 from £151,000 to take into account the increase in general operating expenses since 2015.

(iv) It was agreed to transfer appropriate funds to the Cemetery and tree reserve funds in April 2019.

137. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2019-20

A report relating to the Budget and Precept for 2019-20 had been circulated. This followed a meeting held on 9 January to review the draft budget. No amendments had been made at that meeting and the Council was asked to formally approve the draft budget. It was proposed that the precept would be increased by 2% on a band D property. It was pointed out that the amount of the precept required had to be submitted to NCC by 25 January 2019.

Some comments had been made at the budget meeting and these related to budget heading 11.4 regarding the Music in the Park event when it had been agreed that the usual event would be held this year but that the Working Party recently established to look at possible changes would still meet during the year to discuss the format for 2020.

.....
CHAIRMAN

.....
DATE

137. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2019-20 (Continued)

In relation to the projects set out in item 11.9, it was noted that the sum of £22,555 was available for the projects listed in the budget. This sum could be supplemented by the amount of £14,050 that had been included in the current budget and it was suggested that this sum should be carried forward at the year end to allow all projects to proceed. Any shortfall could be met from general reserves (see Minute 136 above).

It was proposed to increase the allotment rents by £1 a year across the three tiers of fees and rents would be £37, £42 and £47 depending on the size of plot.

The Cemetery Committee would be considering the fees for 2019-20 at a meeting to be held in the near future. The fees had no impact on the budget however they would need to be approved by the Council.

RESOLVED –

(i) The Council approve the draft budget for 2019-20 as attached taking into account the comments made at the budget meeting held on 9 January and formally agree to levy a precept request of £414,591 on the County Council.

(ii) The Council approve an increase of £1 on all allotment fees for 2019-20 which would result in rentals of £37, £42 and £47 for 2019-20.

(iii) Agree to await the recommendations of the Cemetery Committee in relation to any increase in fees for 2019-20.

138. CONSULTATION RE THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF PONTELAND COMMUNITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

A copy of a consultation document produced by Ponteland Middle school relating to the future direction of the school had been circulated to Councillors. The consultation proposed changes to the age range and admission arrangements for the PCMS from the current 9-13 middle school age range to become a primary school including nursery provision for ages 2 – 11. The Council had also had a presentation from some parents of the Campaign Group working on behalf of the Middle school prior to the meeting. The Council considered the proposals outlined in the consultation document and agreed to write to the Regional Schools Commission requesting that they work with the school and fully consider their proposals.

RESOLVED – A letter be sent to the Regional Schools Commissioner from the Town Council requesting that they work with the school and fully consider their proposals.

.....
CHAIRMAN

.....
DATE

139. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Working Party held on 10th December 2018 were circulated for information.

A question was raised about the timescale for opening the temporary play area. The Clerk reported that she was awaiting information from NCC following their meeting with the contractor. She would advise Councillors when she had more information.

RESOLVED –The minutes be approved.

140. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd reported that the Northumberland Local Plan had been agreed by Full Council on 9 January 2019. A six-week consultation of the 'Publication Draft' of the Plan will take place between 30 January and 13 March 2019. Drop in sessions would be held in February and March 2019. The date for the Ponteland event is Tuesday 26th February at the Memorial Hall between 2.00 and 7.00 p.m.

141. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor submitted details of his diary engagements for December 2018 and January and February 2019.

142. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

(i) Ponteland Community Partnership

There were no minutes available for circulation as the November PCP minutes had not yet been approved. After being asked to clarify the situation with the PCP, the Clerk reported that she could only provide the minutes once they had been approved by the Committee. The November minutes would be circulated to the February meeting.

143. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £60,018.36. A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for December 2018.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2019 AT 6.45 P.M. AT THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES.