

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA ZOOM ON 11 NOVEMBER 2020

Present: Councillor A Varley (in the Chair)

Councillors S Ahmed, Mrs C Caisley, L Darwin, R Dodd, T Edwards-Clay, Mrs C Greenwell A Hall, Mrs S Johnson, Mrs K Overbury and Mrs K Woodrow.

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the first remote meeting of the Town Council.

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Shanley.

16. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 12 AUGUST 2020

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12 August 2020 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute 4(i) – Update on new play area at Callerton Lane

Councillor Hall asked if there was any update regarding the new play area. The Clerk reported that the final handover was proving to be challenging in some respects. An insurance inspection had been carried out and the inspector had stated that a self-closing gate needed to be installed to replace the existing gate prior to opening.

It was expected that the work could be carried out very soon and that the play area would be open next week. It was likely that the temporary area would be removed at the same time.

19. PLANNING

As all minutes had been circulated to Councillors during the past few months, a decision had been taken not to re-circulate them for this meeting.

20. GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Clerk had provided a report relating to two applications that had been received for consideration.

20. GRANT APPLICATIONS (Continued)

(i) Sport Tynedale

A grant application had been received from the above organisation to provide financial assistance to athletes and teams of both adult and school age.

The Town Council awarded a grant of £250 to Sport Tynedale at the October 2019 Council meeting (Minute 73(i) refers).

A copy of the application form and accounts had been received from the organisation which had been circulated to Councillors.

RESOLVED – A grant of £350 be made to Sport Tynedale.

(ii) Northumberland Community Bank

A grant application had been received from the above organisation for a grant in the sum of £1000.

The organisation had been set up in 2017 and was based in Ashington although the services they provide were available to all residents of Northumberland. The bank loans small amounts (from £300) to people who may not qualify for mainstream lending. They do not impose set up charges, early settlement or missed repayments fees and they were flexible if borrowers' circumstances change and loan repayments became difficult.

The bank's goal was to be self-sustaining by the end of 2021, however due to the current Covid-19 crisis, the bank had experienced a drop in loan applications and were facing a substantial shortfall against plan for 2020. The organisation was seeking grants from the larger town councils in Northumberland to contribute to this. They had also applied for £50k from the Tyne and Wear and Northumberland Community Foundation and were in discussions with NCC re increasing their cash reserves to enable them to meet regulatory ratios of borrowing to lending.

There were currently 7 members in the NE20 postcode area, but the bank was keen to raise awareness of their services countywide.

The Council felt that this item should be deferred pending the outcome of their discussions with Northumberland County Council. Councillor Dodd was asked to update the Council on this matter as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – The application be deferred pending the outcome of the decision from NCC

21. PONTELAND MEMORIAL HALL – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

A request for financial assistance had been received from the Memorial Hall who were seeking some financial assistance towards the cost of replacing their internal gas distribution pipe work which had succumbed to corrosion and required urgent replacement. The cost of this work was £7474 plus VAT. The Hall Chairman had

21. PONTELAND MEMORIAL HALL – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (Continued)

indicated in his request that the hall was still struggling to build their income and whilst the annual grant provided by the Council was a tremendous help, they were having to use their reserves to meet this unforeseen and unavoidable cost.

The Clerk had circulated a report which set out three options for the Council to consider.

Councillors had some sympathy with the Hall, particularly at this difficult time but they felt unable to provide additional financial assistance at this moment, particularly as they had already received early payment of their grant at the Hall's request.

It was suggested that in order to improve the financial position of the hall, it may be advisable to engage a business/financial consultant to assist the hall in improving their financial situation.

The Council would be willing to consider a grant towards this suggestion and the Clerk was asked to convey this offer to the Hall Chairman.

RESOLVED – Although the Council could not agree to the request for additional financial assistance for the purposes outlined above, the Hall Chairman be advised of the offer made regarding the engagement of a business/financial consultant and a grant for that purpose being made by the Town Council in order to assist the hall in improving their financial situation.

22. RISK MANAGEMENT/INTERNAL CONTROLS REPORTS

The Town Council was asked to consider the following three reports which had to be prepared and agreed on an annual basis.

(i) Risk Management report

A report relating to an annual review of risk management for 2020-21 was circulated for consideration.

A section relating to the Covid-19 situation and how this impacted on the Town Council had been included.

In relation to the item under PNV on page 4 of the report, a query had been raised regarding PNV and how this would operate following the dissolution of the PCP in April 2021. The Clerk stated that she would be submitting a report to the Council on this matter as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – The report be approved, and Councillors noted that a further report relating to PNV as set out above would be submitted to the Council as soon as possible.

(ii) Review of Internal Audit report

A report relating to the review of internal audit for the current year had been circulated. The report set out the processes followed by the internal auditor

22. RISK MANAGEMENT/INTERNAL CONTROLS REPORTS(Continued)

and explained his role in relation to the Town Council. A copy of the internal audit review checklist had also been circulated for consideration. Members were reminded that the Internal Auditor had agreed to continue his work for the Town Council for a further year.

The interim audit for 2020-21 had been completed and there were no issues to report to the Council other than minor points relating to petty cash receipts.

The Clerk needed to check the internal auditors plans for 2021-22 and would report back to the Council.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Council approved the report and the checklist as presented.
- (ii) The Council noted that the Clerk would be asking the internal auditor about his plans for 2021-22 and whether he intended to continue in his role.

(iii) Review of Internal Controls report

Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 required the Council to carry out a review of their internal controls annually before the end of the financial year.

A report had been circulated.

A suggestion for the inclusion of information regarding the Clerk’s delegated authority had been made and a revised report had been circulated to Members. An addition relating to the operation of the Accounts Committee and the monthly payments system during the current crisis had also been included on page 2 of the report.

RESOLVED – The report be approved.

23. NOTICE OF MAKING OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (TPO) LAND AT LADYWELL WAY

A report by the Clerk had been circulated.

Members were reminded that permission had been granted for a new build dwelling on land at Ladywell Way in 2019. As part of the planning conditions, the applicant was required to plant three trees to compensate for the loss of three mature trees on the new build site.

A variation to the application was submitted by the applicant in February/March 2020 and this included details of where the three trees would be sited on the estate. This application was considered by the Town Council’s Planning Committee on 17th March and no objections were made.

The Clerk received a Notice of making a Tree Preservation Order from NCC on 20th October. This showed the intention of NCC to place TPOs on the three new trees which have yet to be planted as well as details of the species. Residents who were affected by this proposal would also have received this notification. Comments were required by 24th November.

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23. NOTICE OF MAKING OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (TPO) LAND AT LADYWELL WAY(Continued)

The Clerk reported on contact she had had with a resident who was unhappy with the siting of the trees and a further letter had been received from the resident stating that he had submitted an objection to NCC regarding the location and species of trees. He had submitted three alternative locations however, one of these was on land which was not owned by PTC. It was understood that the resident had made contact with the original applicant who was building the house and had agreed alternative locations with her. PTC had not been informed officially of this but one of the locations was on the large area of land behind Simonside View.

Maps from NCC showing the location of the trees had been circulated with the report together with a map showing the alternative locations submitted by the resident referred to above and a Land Registry map showing land in PTC ownership on the estate.

Members had no concerns regarding the TPOs on the trees, however, they did query whether the Black Cherry was a suitable choice due to the difficulties with root spread. Whilst not objecting to the TPO, the concerns re this choice of tree would be mentioned.

RESOLVED – The Town Council had no objections to TPOs being placed on the three new trees but the Clerk was asked to mention their concerns re the choice of tree C3.

24. PAVEMENT PARKING – OPTIONS FOR CHANGE – GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER

A report by the Clerk regarding the above consultation had been circulated to the Council.

The Clerk had been alerted to this consultation paper on the 17th September and had sent a link to the website to Councillors on that date. Parish and town councils were not included in the list of consultees.

The report set out the background to the consultation paper and the reasons for producing it.

It also set out the options provided in the report and a set of questions for local authorities to complete and submit by the 22nd November.

Councillors recognised the problems that parking on pavements caused for both pedestrians and motorists however as the report mentioned, it was inevitable in some cases in order to provide access in certain areas.

After considering the questions included for local authorities, it was felt that the Town Council would be unable to answer most of them as they did not have access to the information required. They felt that this would be best dealt with by NCC as the Highways authority who had the relevant knowledge regarding the impact of pavement parking and how any legislation would affect their organisation.

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24. PAVEMENT PARKING – OPTIONS FOR CHANGE – GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER(Continued)

Town Councillors would consider whether to submit comments as individuals.

RESOLVED – The Council agreed that this consultation would be better dealt with by the principal council as the highway’s authority.

25. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Councillors were reminded that they were required to set up a small Working Party to carry out the annual review of the above documents. The membership last year comprised of Councillors A Varley, A Hall, Mrs K Overbury and A Shanley.

Councillors Varley, Hall and Mrs Overbury were willing to stand again. Contact would be made with Councillor Shanley and if he was unable to be part of the Working Party, Councillor Mrs Greenwell would join. It was noted that updated copies of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting.

RESOLVED – That Councillors Varley, Hall, Mrs Overbury and A Shanley be appointed to the Working Party to carry out the annual review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. A report would be submitted to the Council before the end of the financial year.

26. HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways Working Party held on 29th September via Zoom had been circulated.

The meeting had been held to consider the Town Council’s submission for the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for 2021-22.

The following had been agreed as the Council’s top three priorities:

(1) Request for bridleway crossing safety improvements to include a Pegasus crossing on Rotary Way. This suggestion is in the interest of pedestrian safety, particularly given the increase in usage during the current pandemic. It was noted that a Pegasus crossing related to the safe use by horse riders.

(2) Request for road improvements such as road widening to Fox Covert Lane, and or the addition of a dedicated footpath in the interest of pedestrian safety

(3) Request for raised bus stops at Cheviot View near to Dobbies on the A696 and Middle Drive close to the junction with Broadway for reasons of accessibility.

The reserve item chosen was:

Request for speed surveys at the following locations nr 104 Middle Drive, 202 Western Way and North Road (close to the new development where the Speed limit changes from 60mph to 30mph).

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26. HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY(Continued)

The Chairman of the Working Party stated that she hoped to have another meeting of the Working Party as soon as possible as there were various items that required an update. She asked members of the Working Party to email anything they wished to discuss to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and herself.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

27. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd reported that like many local authorities the main priority for NCC during this year related to the Covid-19 crisis. A wealth of information had been provided for the public on the NCC website that was updated regularly. For latest information visit the link below:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus.aspx>

He stated that Northumberland County Council continuing to work with the other local authorities in the North East known as LA7. It was important that residents followed the Government guidance in order to reduce the number of cases across the area covered by the 7 local authorities.

Councillor Dodd reported that work was continuing with the refurbishment of County Hall.

28. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor reported that with the Coronavirus situation, his diary had been fairly clear since 24th March. He reported that he had attended the last physical meeting of the Town Council held on 12th August at the Memorial Hall. He had also visited the Council office on various occasions for meetings with the Clerk and to authorise monthly payments. He had participated in a short film for the Rotary Club of Ponteland in respect of their Annual Duck Race which had been held virtually this year. He had also attended a remote meeting of the Ponteland Community Partnership on 21st October and would attend their AGM being held remotely on the 18th November.

29. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

(i) Newcastle Airport Consultative Committee

Minutes of the Newcastle Airport Consultative Committee held on 1st September had been circulated for information.

(ii) Minutes of the Ponteland Community Partnership held on 21st October 2020

Minutes of a meeting of the Ponteland Community Partnership held remotely on 21st October had been circulated for information.

30. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORTS

Details of payments approved by the Accounts Committee in September and October in the sums of £37,937.06 and £34,713.21 respectively had been circulated. A copy of monthly budget reports for September/October were also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation document for the same months.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – IT WAS AGREED THAT MONTHLY REMOTE MEETINGS WOULD NOW BE HELD VIA ZOOM. THE NEXT MEETING WOULD BE ON WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER AT 3.00 P.M. (2.45p.m. for public questions)

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