

# **PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 13th OCTOBER 2021**

**Present:** Councillor C Greenwell (in the Chair)

Councillors S Ahmed, C Caisley, L Darwin, R Dodd, A Hall, S Johnson, K Overbury, A Varley and K Woodrow.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader of Northumberland County Council to the meeting. Councillor Veronica Jones was also in attendance.

### **61. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ford and Sehgal.

### **62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hall declared an interest in Minute 69.

### **63. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

### **64. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **Minute 52(i) – update re Crocus planting day**

The Mayor thanked Councillor Overbury and the Clerk for the organisation of the Crocus planting day held on 9<sup>th</sup> October.

### **65. PLANNING**

#### **(i) Planning Committee**

Minutes of meetings held on 31st August and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were circulated for information.

#### **(ii) Report on recent planning decisions**

There were no reports.

### **66. GRANT APPLICATION**

A grant application had been received from Holy Saviour Milbourne together with a copy of their accounts for 2020-21. The Clerk reported that the church had applied for £300 but £350 had been included in the budget as that was the last sum that had been awarded to the Holy Saviour church.

**66. GRANT APPLICATION (Continued)**

She also reminded members that a decision had been taken by the Council in June 2014 to award the sum of £500 to the church towards the provision of a toilets. This sum would be retained by the Council until required. The Clerk had been advised that the work was now complete, and she asked the Council to agree to release the £500 that had been agreed in 2014.

RESOLVED – A grant of £850 be approved which included a grant of £350 for the ground maintenance and the release of £500 held in respect of the new toilet at the Holy Saviour Church.

**67. NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2020-21**

A report by the Clerk in relation to the above had been circulated.

The report stated that the External Auditors Report and Certificate had been received on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and this was circulated to Councillors together with a copy of sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Annual Return (AGAR).

The auditors, PKF Littlejohn had not raised any issues with the Town Council.

The information was displayed on notice boards and on the Town Council's website on 22<sup>nd</sup> September for a period of 14 days. The information had to be published by the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

The Clerk was asked for an update regarding engaging a new Internal Auditor for PTC. The Clerk reported that this was proving very difficult to organise and a lot of parish and town councils in the county were experiencing the same problem. She stated that she hoped to provide a report to the November meeting.

RESOLVED – The Council approve and accept the External Auditors Report and Certificate for 2020-21 and sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR.

**68. COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE YOUTH**

A report by the Mayor had been circulated. She has prepared the report following receipt and completion of a survey received from the National Association of Local Councils. After giving this, she asked the Council about attempting to open a dialogue with some of the larger groups in Ponteland that work with young people. She asked the Council to agree to an approach being made to the one or two of the larger well-established groups which covered all ages between 6 and 25 to ask if they would like one or two representatives to sit on their Committee.

Councillors asked if it would be possible to receive an update from NE Youth relating to the work currently being carried out in Ponteland. The Clerk agreed to chase this up with the organisation.

RESOLVED – The Council agreed to approve PTC taking this initiative forward and to begin tentative talks with youth groups in the parish area in order to improve communication links as outlined above.

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**69. PONTELAND ROTARY CLUB – SANTA’S SLEIGH EVENT – 3<sup>RD</sup>/4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

A report by Councillor Hall in relation to the above event was circulated for information.

The Rotary Club had received permission from the NCC Safety Advisory Group who also required information relating to the public broadcast of music, a risk assessment for the event and anything relating to Covid-19 restrictions. They also asked to be kept informed of the proposed routes.

Councillor Hall stated that he would also keep the Town Council involved in the continued organisation of the event, including the routes. He reported that at a recently Rotary Club meeting, it had been decided not to hand out sweets to children due to possible allergies etc. Councillors felt this would disappoint the children and a reference was made to the new law that was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 that meant that all food outlets had to provide full ingredient lists with clear allergen labelling on pre-packed food for direct sale.

RESOLVED – The information be noted.

**Note – Councillor Hall declared an interest in this matter and only participated in order to provide information to the Council.**

**70. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY**

Minutes of a meeting of the above Working Party held on 13<sup>th</sup> September were submitted for consideration. There were no recommendations.

There was some discussion regarding item 3(i)e which related to the sensory garden. The Clerk provided the background to the expenditure on this area and stated that plants against the back wall were dead and some replacements were required. There was some funding available within the budget. Significant cutting back was also necessary, and this was on the schedule of work for the contractors in Autumn/Winter. The Clerk mentioned the mural which had been produced by the High School in 2018 which was becoming badly damaged due to weather and reported that a recent suggestion had been made to install a mosaic type display which would withstand weather conditions much better. It was agreed that this required further discussion by the EWP and then the Town Council.

There was some discussion regarding a recent spate of anti-social behaviour in Ponteland which resulted in the destruction of Christmas lights in Merton Way and emptying flower beds of newly planted flowers. A bin had also been set alight near to the Waitrose bridge.

It was suggested that an item be included in a future edition of PNV advising residents of the costs resulting from this vandalism.

The Clerk reported that the new CCTV system around Ponteland and at the play area was nearly complete and it was hoped this would assist with the problems faced.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved.

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## **71. HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY**

Minutes of a meeting of the above Working Party held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September were submitted for consideration. There were no recommendations for approval.

In relation to page 4, the heritage directional signs, Councillor Overbury reported that the two large signs on Main Street had been removed. Councillor Caisley asked if it would be possible for a group of people to carry out some cleaning of street signs. Councillor Hall agreed that this could go on the agenda for the next meeting as some permissions may be needed. In relation to item 6, Councillor Greenwell reported that she had been informed that some new signage would be installed at the Merton Way South car park to make it clear there was a time limit on the ability to park there. Councillor Dodd reported that NCC were looking into the possibility of installing rubber mats to protect the wall at the back of the Thornhill Road car park following concerns received from residents of Peel House (item 5 refers). Councillor Darwin reported that he thought that the plans for the Police HQ development included a pedestrian crossing (item 8 refers). He agreed to find the plans and report back to the Highways Working Party members.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved.

## **72. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**

Councillor Dodd referred to an increase in Covid-19 figures in certain areas of the county.

Councillor Jones asked if she could be informed of the PTC priorities for the LTP for 2022-23.

She mentioned the NCC Locality team co-ordinators that may be able to help with the ASB issues in Ponteland. She agreed to pass on their details if the Council was interested.

Councillor Jones reported that Northumberland was top in the country for the numbers of 16- to 24-year-olds who had had the vaccine for Covid-19.

Councillor Darwin reported that it was anticipated that the Local Plan would be adopted soon.

Councillor Richard Wearmouth attended the meeting as an observer and held a question and answer session with Councillors after the meeting.

This was extremely productive and the Council expressed their thanks to him for attending the meeting. Councillor Wearmouth agreed to attend a future meeting if the Council felt this would be helpful.

## **73. MAYOR'S REPORT**

A report by the Mayor had been circulated. The report related to three events she had attended remotely, and a summary of those meetings was included within the document.

RESOLVED – The report be accepted.

**74. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

- (i) Report re attendance at Bus Services Improvement & Enhanced Partnership Stakeholder Forum

Councillor Varley had submitted a report relating to his attendance at the above event on 13<sup>th</sup> September at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Newcastle.

**75. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT**

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £33,115.75  
A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for September 2021.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021 AT 6.15 P.M.  
AT MERTON HALL**

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CHAIRMAN

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