

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 8th DECEMBER 2021 **DRAFT MINUTES ONLY – NOT YET AGREED BY COUNCIL**

Present: Councillor C Greenwell (in the Chair)

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

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Ford.

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Johnson declared an interest in Minute 99A and took no part in the voting or discussion.

95. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 10th NOVEMBER 2021

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 10th November 2021 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

96. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute 79 – Matters arising

Councillor Hall reported that the event had been held on 3rd and 4th December and it had been a huge success. Rotary had received several emails congratulating the club on the success of the event.

Councillor Overbury mentioned an incident on the 3rd December which had not been well received. She appreciated that this was the first time the event had been held and she hoped that the feedback provided would be useful. Other Councillors felt that the event on the Saturday had been greatly appreciated.

(ii) Minute 81(ii) – Letter of thanks from Ponteland Memorial Hall

The Clerk reported that a letter of thanks had been received from the Chairman of the Memorial Hall.

(iii) Minute 83(iii) – update re CCTV

The Clerk provided an update on the above decision which had been delegated to her.

It was found that three cameras at the One Stop would provide better vision for Merton Way and Thornhill Road. Permission had been sought from NCC to mount the cameras on a lamppost. This had been granted although it was necessary to install a commando switch at a cost of £450 to the Council. The Clerk had been alerted that day to a potential problem with the lamppost and she would update members on the outcome as necessary.

97. PLANNING

(i) Planning Committee

Minutes of meetings held on 26th October and 9th November 2021 were circulated for information.

(ii) Report on recent planning decisions

There were no reports.

98. GRANT APPLICATIONS

A report by the Clerk relating to three grant applications that had been received from Ponteland Beer Festival, Great North Air Ambulance and Dalton Village Hall was circulated for consideration.

The Clerk reported that there was currently £2950 remaining in the small grants budget. The sum of £1500 was included in the budget under the village halls heading for Dalton Village Hall.

In relation to the Beer festival, it was stated that this would take place on 3rd and 4th June of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend. The Rugby Club had agreed not to extend the event to the 5th June as Party in the Park was being held. It was pointed out that the organisers had received a grant of £250 in January 2020 for the event that was cancelled due to Covid-19.

The Great North Air Ambulance were seeking a donation of £500 towards the extension of their critical car scheme. The organisation received a grant of £437.5 in March 2020.

A request had been received from Dalton Village Hall for their annual grant of £1500. Councillors were reminded that they had not taken up the grant in 2020-21 due to grants being received from other sources due to Covid-19.

(i) Ponteland Beer Festival

RESOLVED – A grant of £250 be awarded to the organisers of the Ponteland Beer Festival and that they be advised this was in addition to the £250 awarded last year which was not required as the event had been cancelled.

(ii) Great North Air Ambulance

RESOLVED – A grant of £500 be approved.

(iii) Dalton Village Hall

RESOLVED – A grant of £1500 be approved.

99. Christmas and New Year Office Closure

A report by the Clerk in relation to the above was circulated for consideration. It was reported that at a recent meeting with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor it was suggested that the office should close on Thursday 16th December and reopen on Tuesday 4th January as the Monday was a bank holiday. This was in recognition of the staff being unable to take much of their annual leave in the current year.

The Clerk reported that she had been advised that Government guidance had just been announced recommending that staff work from home again. She would therefore likely close the office from Monday 13th December. Notices would be displayed advising visitors of the number to ring for PTC and NCC and the enquiries email address would be manned during the holiday Period.

RESOLVED – The Council agreed the suggestion to close the office from the 16th December until the 4th January and noted that the office would be closed to the public from the 13th December in accordance with Government guidance.

99a. PONTELAND PARK – Land Ownership

The Clerk had submitted a report in relation to the above issue. The report included details of a possible encroachment issue that had arisen last year with an area of land in the park that bordered some nearby properties. The land was thought to belong to the Council, but it was found that there was no record of ownership with the Land Registry. The problem was further complicated by a large tree that had blown down during Storm Arwen which one of the households was asking the Council to remove.

The advice of the Council's solicitor was that the Council should make a claim for the land and it was explained how this would be handled by the solicitor.

Councillors were concerned at the possibility of the loss of land thought to belong to the Council and asked the Clerk to take appropriate specialist advice on this matter. She was also asked not to arrange for the tree removal until this issue was resolved.

RESOLVED – The Clerk arrange to seek appropriate specialist advice on this issue and report back as necessary.

Note – Councillor Johnson declared an interest in the above matter and took no part in the discussion or voting.

100. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Working Party held on 15th November had been circulated. There were no recommendations. The Chairman reported that the meeting with FOPP had been postponed and would be rearranged when possible.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

101. HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways Working Party held on 24th November 2021 had been circulated. There were no recommendations.

There was some discussion regarding item 6 and Councillor Dodd agreed to inform the correspondent of the decision taken to have a survey carried out. Councillor Greenwell suggested if there was a problem the Council should consider installing speed indicator signs at both ends of the A696 in Ponteland. She also suggested that the Working Party examine the possibility of reducing the speed limit from Prestwick Road Ends to Dobbies to 30mph.

It was reported that the issue with the SID on Thornhill Road had been tested and referred to NCC for action.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

102. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd reported that the situation at NCC was currently dominated by the aftermath of Storm Arwen. There were still some houses without power in Ponteland although the majority had been reconnected. He congratulated everyone who had been involved in the efforts to assist residents during this very difficult situation.

Councillor Greenwell stated that she was concerned that Merton Hall had not been requisitioned by the Fire Service as an evacuation centre. It appeared that this was down to lack of communication. There was a delay in finding out the scale of those without power in the parish area

Councillors Dodd and Darwin agreed to look into this further. Councillor Darwin reported that he had been away with work during the time of the storm and some of the aftermath, but he had taken calls from residents and liaised with various organisations to find out about possible help. There was also some concern about the delay in raising the level of emergency to gold from silver. There were concerns that a state of emergency had not been declared until Friday 3rd December. Councillors did state that the officers from NCC who had attended Merton hall during the crisis had been extremely helpful.

..... DATE

CHAIRMAN

102. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT (Continued)

Councillors agreed that the Town Council should produce an emergency plan similar to the flood resilience plan.

103. MAYOR'S REPORT

A report by the Mayor had been circulated. The report related to four events she had attended some in person and some remotely. A summary of those meetings was included within the document.

In relation to the event, she attended relating to Section 106 monies, she mentioned that the head of Planning at NCC, Mr Rob Murfin had offered to have a meeting with the Town Council to discuss the possible use of Section 106 funding to acquire land for open spaces. Councillors agreed that a meeting should be arranged in the new year.

She also mentioned her intention not to send out Christmas cards this year as she would prefer to use the funds to donate to two food banks in the area. The office staff would be sending out a Christmas email instead.

RESOLVED – The report be accepted, and a meeting be arranged with the head of planning at NCC in the new year as outlined above.

104. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

(i) Merton Hall Trustees meeting held on 4th November 2021

A report by Councillor Sehgal had been circulated. It was noted that Merton Hall Trustees had voted in favour of a change in charitable status to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

105. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £42,206.48. A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for November 2021.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 12TH JANUARY 2022 AT 6.15 P.M.
AT MERTON HALL**