

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 9th FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Councillor C Greenwell (in the Chair)

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

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K Woodrow.

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest however, Councillors Darwin and Dodd stated that they would not take part in any discussion re minute 114.

112. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8th DECEMBER 2021 and THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26TH JANUARY 2022

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8th December 2021 and the Special Council Meeting on 26th January 2022 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

113. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising. However, Councillor Caisley queried whether the cancellation of the January Town Council meeting had been advertised. She was assured that notification had been placed on the Town Council's website.

114. PLANNING

(i) Planning Committee

Minutes of meetings held on 23rd November, 7th and 21st December 2021 and 4th and 18th January 2022 were circulated for information.

Note Councillors Darwin and Dodd took no part in any discussions in these matters.

(ii) Report on recent planning decisions

There were no reports.

115. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Clerk circulated a report relating to the appointment of an internal auditor. She reminded members that the Council's internal auditor had resigned following completion of the audit for 2020-21.

Every effort had been made to find a replacement however, this had proved very difficult.

115. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR(Continued)

The Clerk had approached an auditor, Mr Gary Kennedy who worked for a small parish council in the north of the county, and he had agreed to take on the role.

Details of his experience was set out within the report.

The report also included extracts from the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) which showed the key principles an authority should consider when appointing an internal audit provider.

Details of what should be included in a letter of engagement were also set out in the report.

The Council was asked to approve the appointment of Mr Kennedy to the role of internal auditor for the Town Council for a period of one year.

RESOLVED – The Council approve the appointment of Mr Gary Kennedy to the role of internal auditor for the Town Council for one year (2021-22) and a letter of engagement be prepared and sent to Mr Kennedy.

116. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Working Party held on 17th January had been circulated.

The Chair of the Working Party informed members that she would be having surgery in the near future and had decided to step down from the Working Party although she would be chairing the March meeting and would be prepared to assist with future events such as litter picks etc.

In relation to item 8(iv), she asked if a meeting to discuss the Easter egg hunt could be organised to discuss the event.

In relation to item 3(k), she reported that she had had a meeting with the FOPP recently and would be submitting a report to the March EWP meeting. She also reported that further to item 3(l), a second letter had been received from the Rotary Club and this would be dealt with at the March meeting.

Councillor Caisley also asked the Clerk to advise the Council of the request received to hold a forest school in the Park.

The Clerk stated that she had been approached by someone who was in the process of taking a qualification to hold forest schools and she had asked if she could hold it in Ponteland Park. The Clerk had asked for more information and had advised the applicant that she would need to provide details of her public liability insurance. The Clerk had emailed members of the Working Party to obtain their views and a positive response had been received. Further information would be provided when available.

There was one recommendation included 8(v) relating to writing to the schools in Ponteland offering them the sum of £100 each to purchase items to encourage and assist wildlife.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved, and the recommendation set out in item 8(v) as outlined above be agreed.

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CHAIRMAN

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117. EVENTS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Events Working Party held on 3rd February 2022 had been circulated.

The minutes set out the current plans for the Platinum Jubilee weekend which included the beacon lighting on the 2nd June, the Beer Festival on the 3rd and 4th and the Party in the Park event on the 5th which would also include a Duck Race organised by the Rotary Club.

The timings for the Thursday evening were set out in the report. Councillor Darwin was pleased to report that the piper had been booked and would play at the appropriate times.

Councillors Darwin and Overbury would be meeting with the regional manager for Active Northumberland on the 11th February to discuss how they could get involved in the events of the weekend.

Applications for grants from the Town Council to assist organisations with their events were now open. Forms could be downloaded from the website or Facebook and copies were available in the Town Council offices. Councillor Darwin mentioned that grants were still available from the County Council for up to £500.

Members welcomed the plans to involve the businesses to decorate their premises which was set out in the agreed actions in item 4 of the minutes. Letters would be sent to all businesses in the near future and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor would judge the best decorated premises at both locations on the 30th May.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Council note the actions outlined in the minutes and await further information from the Events Working Party in due course.
- (ii) Councillors agreed to grant delegated authority to the Working Party to determine the awarding of grants to organisations of up to £100.
- (iii) The Town Council agreed that prizes of £200 be awarded to the best decorated business in Main Street/Bell Villas/Merton Way and Broadway as set out within the minutes.

118. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd reported that Councillor Jones had asked him to report that work would be carried out on Stamfordham Road in the near future. He reported that Covid restrictions were being eased further in line with the Government guidance. He stated that he would be attending the Council's budget meeting in two weeks' time.

118. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT(Continued)

Councillor Dodd stated that he was part of a sub-committee that had been established to review the actions of the Council during the recent storms, in particular Storm Arwen that had had a huge effect on the county in certain areas.

He asked Councillors if they had any ideas about what could have been done differently to pass them onto him.

He also suggested the Town Council should discuss the situation and how it had impacted on the parish. As an example, the use of generators was discussed and whether the Council should consider acquiring one for possible future events of this nature. The examination of the various village halls should also take place to see which ones were best placed to assist in future emergency situations.

Councillor Darwin stated that the Northumberland Local Plan would be adopted shortly, and it was necessary to re-examine the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it was in line with the newly adopted document.

119. MAYOR'S REPORT

A report by the Mayor had been circulated. The report related to 7 events she had attended some in person and some remotely. A summary of those meetings was included within the document.

In relation to the Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) report, she stated that this had been a very useful meeting. She advised Councillors of the role of the NCT which was based in Cramlington and was open 7 days a week. Councillors asked if they could be provided with a copy of the document that had been circulated at the meeting.

In relation to the neighbourhood plan briefing held on the 20th January it was suggested that the review of the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan should be handled in-house with a small group being set out to consider any necessary changes. The Director of Planning had agreed to produce an overview sheet to assist parish and town councils and meetings could be arranged with one of the neighbourhood plan officers at NCC.

RESOLVED – The report be accepted.

120. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

(i) Newcastle Airport Consultative Committee held a meeting 7th December 2021

Councillor Varley had attended this meeting on 7th December. Much of the discussion had been about the solar farm application which it was understood, had recently been approved by Newcastle City Council.

121. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £53,503.42.
A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for January 2022

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

RESOLVED – Councillors agreed that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the disclosure of the following item on the agenda as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of schedule 12A in the 1972 Act as indicated below:

122. MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD.

Councillors were reminded of the process for selecting recipients of the above award which was for those who volunteered and helped in the community. Details of past recipients had been circulated for information. A suggestion was made to make the award to two people who had been very involved in the Boys and Girls Brigade for a long period of time. Councillors Dodd and Overbury agreed to find out more about the suggested recipients and report back to the Council.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 9TH MARCH 2022 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON HALL

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CHAIRMAN

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DATE