

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 13th APRIL 2022

Present: Councillor C Greenwell (in the Chair)

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

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Ford and S Johnson.

138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were submitted by Councillor C Greenwell in respect of items 142 (i) and (ii) and 151.

Councillor Hall declared an interest in item 144.

139. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9th MARCH 2022

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 9th March 2022 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

140. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 128 – Request to hold a 3-day circus event in Ponteland Park

The Clerk reported that she had advised the applicant of the various reasons why the Council could not agree to the event in the park. She had received a response thanking the Council for a comprehensive reply.

141. PLANNING

(i) Planning Committee

Minutes of meetings held on 1st and 15th March 2022 were circulated for information. It was reported that a date was still awaited for a licensing hearing in respect of the former Police station at Bell Villas.

(ii) Report on recent planning decisions

There were no reports.

142. GRANT APPLICATIONS

Grant applications had been received from the following:

(i) NE Youth

An application had been received from the above organisation requesting a grant of £1200 to meet the cost of hiring Merton Hall as they were currently holding a youth club in the building on a Thursday evening.

142. GRANT APPLICATIONS(Continued)

The organisation would continue to meet the cost of refreshments and resources.

Councillors expressed concern at the lack of reports from the organisation in relation to the youth work. Queries were also raised regarding whether attendees were from Ponteland or outside of the area and whether the club had increased the level of ASB on a Thursday evening.

It was explained that reports had been requested but had not been received for some time. Councillor Greenwell stated that the youth worker in attendance at the club sent her weekly reports in her Merton Hall role, but she was not able to pass these to Councillors. The reports had to be provided by the manager.

The attendees had to be from the Ponteland Parish. The numbers were dictated as a ratio to youth workers. There was a possibility that another youth worker would be attending to increase the numbers. An offer had been made by a resident of Ponteland to help at the event, but Councillor Greenwell was unsure whether this had been followed up. She did not believe the youth club was to blame for the additional ASB in Ponteland. The children who came were keen to be in attendance and there were more who wanted to attend but the club was at full capacity presently. She gave a brief update on the sort of activities that were carried out which followed a strict format laid by NE Youth.

After some discussion it was suggested that the Council do not approve the grant at this stage, due to the lack of reports being received. The application would be considered again once an undertaking of regular reports (at least quarterly) to the Council had been made

RESOLVED – The Council agreed to consider the application again once agreement had been reached with NE Youth to provide regular reports as outlined above.

(ii)Ponteland Ladies Choir

An application had been received from the above organisation for a grant of £1000 to purchase new music for the choir.

Members did not feel this application met the criteria for grants as this appeared to be more of a social group.

RESOLVED – The grant application be refused.

Note – Councillor Greenwell declared an interest in Minute 142(i) and (ii) above and provided points of information but did not take part in the vote.

143. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

A report relating to the investment strategy for 2022-23 had been circulated.

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CHAIRMAN

143. INVESTMENT STRATEGY(Continued)

Parish and Town Councils with investments over £100,000 had to provide a strategy each financial year.

RESOLVED – The investment strategy be approved.

144. REQUEST FROM PONTELAND ROTARY CLUB TO HOLD THE DUCK RACE IN THE PARK ON SUNDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2022

A letter from Ponteland Rotary Club relating to the above had been circulated for consideration.

The letter sought permission from the Town Council to hold the Duck Race but also included a new feature with a small collection of classic motorcars as a new attraction.

Councillors agreed to grant permission for the Duck Race but asked if clarification could be sought from Rotary regarding the number of cars involved and also whether permission would be needed from the Scouts as the cars would be on part of their land. Councillor Hall agreed to provide the information requested above and report back. It was stated that the Club would need a fall-back position in case of bad weather.

RESOLVED – The Council agreed the request to hold the Duck Race in the Park on 4th September 2022 but awaited further information in relation to the proposal for the classic cars attraction before they would approve that element of the request.

Note – Councillor Hall declared an interest in Minute 144 above and provided information but did not take part in the general discussion and voting,

145. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Working Party held on 14th March 2022 had been circulated. There were no recommendations.

Councillor Caisley stated that this had been her last meeting as Chair of the Working Party. She had initially been in favour of providing a shelter on the site of the leisure centre but in view of the increase in anti-social behaviour in that area she now had concerns. This would be considered further by the Working Party.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved.

146. EVENTS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Events Working Party held on 16th March 2022 had been circulated. There were no recommendations.

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CHAIRMAN

146. EVENTS WORKING PARTY(Continued)

Councillor Overbury, the Chair of the Working Party stated that a further meeting had been held on 11th April and the minutes would be considered at the May TC meeting. She mentioned that she had also attended a meeting at the Leisure centre on the same date to discuss how the facility could be involved in the Jubilee weekend celebrations. They had suggested offering free use of the soft play and climbing wall for two hours on Saturday 4th June. They had asked if the Council would be willing to meet the cost which would be £500. Members felt this was a good idea.

The Chair also mentioned that she and the Clerk had had a meeting with Reverend Paul Allinson on the 11th April when one of the items discussed was 'Operation London Bridge'. The Clerk and the Chair had attended a NALC briefing on this subject last year. It was felt that there was a need to have a early meeting involving the Mayor to discuss this in more detail. The Clerk had also been asked to acquire certain items. As part of the discussions, it was suggested that the Council should obtain costs to provide another flagpole to be sited on Coates Green. The Clerk was asked to report back on this.

The Clerk asked if the Council would give the Working Party delegated powers to spend within their budget in order to speed up the decision-making process.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Minutes be approved, and the information reported at the meeting be noted.
- (ii) The Council agree to give delegated powers to the Working Party to spend within the budget allocation.
- (iii) The Clerk be asked to obtain prices for a second flagpole for Coates Green and report back.

147. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd reported that he had obtained permission from the relevant portfolio holder to start the process to set up a new Leisure Centre Users group for the complex.

NCC were also going to start examining the issues in the car parks. For example, there were 10 to 20 bus bays which could be used in the evenings. The legal signage relating to the car parks had not been erected yet and Councillors Darwin and Dodd continued to follow this up with NCC.

Councillor Dodd further reported that the work of the Storm Arwen group was coming to an end.

He stated that works had commenced on the North Road.

Councillor Dodd mentioned that the area around Merton Way shops should be examined by the Council as a future project.

He mentioned that overnight parking of HGVs at the Merton Way car park North was becoming more frequent and the Clerk was asked to chase up the relevant signage with NCC Highways.

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147. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT(Continued)

Councillor Darwin reported that he had heard from the Regional Manager for Active Leisure, and they were concerned about the problems with ASB and youths congregating in the centre in large numbers.

He mentioned speeding issues at the Prestwick roundabout, and said he was investigating options such as extending the kerb or bollards to slow the traffic down with a highways officer.

Councillor Caisley stated that the Speed watch group had been given permission to volunteer at that location.

He also mentioned that a scheme had been suggested to improve the path outside of Click-em-in with a highways officer. Councillor Darwin was prepared to fund half of the cost from his small schemes budget but asked if the remainder could be met by the Town Council. This would be considered at the next Highways Working Party.

Councillor Greenwell mentioned that the consultation for the Walking and Cycling infrastructure plans closed on 15th April. She had attended a zoom meeting on this subject earlier in the day. She had made a suggestion about a possible walking route from Jameson Fields which would be included in the Council's submission. Comments could be sent by email to

gearchange@northumberland.gov.uk

The Clerk would be submitting comments received from Councillors before the deadline.

148. MAYOR'S REPORT

A report by the Mayor had been circulated. This related to her attendance at a 100th birthday party which had been organised by Ponteland Rotary for one of their members.

RESOLVED – The report be accepted.

149. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

There were no reports to consider.

150. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £47,923.38. A new pay order document had been signed as there was a discrepancy of 3p for a pension payment

A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for March 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.

151. **STAFFING COMMITTEE.**

Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 23rd March had been circulated.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL WOULD BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 2022 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON HALL.

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