

# **PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 11th MAY 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, A Varley and K Woodrow.

### **1. ELECTION OF MAYOR**

Nominations were invited for the position of Mayor for 2022-23.

Two nominees were proposed and seconded, Councillors Greenwell and Overbury. A ballot was taken and the votes were equal for each candidate. The Mayor used her casting vote and was re-elected for a further year.

RESOLVED – Councillor Greenwell be elected Mayor for 2022-23

### **2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

Nominations were invited for the position of Deputy Mayor.

RESOLVED - Councillor Overbury be elected Deputy Mayor for 2022-23.

### **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Greenwell declared an interest in Minute 12 and Councillor Hall declared an interest in Minute 15.

### **5. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022**

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

### **6. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

### **7. APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED - The Town Council approved the appointment of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and 7 Town Councillors to the Accounts Committee for the purpose of authorising all payments made from the Council's Deposit Account.

## **8. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

A list of the current appointees to local organisations had been circulated. In relation to the Ponteland Memorial Hall, Councillor Hall pointed out that the hall Committee no longer met since they had become a CIO. He was however willing to act as a contact between the hall and the Town Council. It was agreed that this outside body should be removed from the list. In relation to Ageing Well, it was agreed that Councillor Overbury would be removed from the organisation as it was not meeting at present.

RESOLVED – The list of representatives on local organisations be approved subject to the two amendments listed above being made.

## **9. TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES**

A list of the current appointees to Town Council Committees and Working Parties had been circulated. Councillor Caisley had previously mentioned that she was standing down from the Environment Working Party. Councillor Greenwell asked to join the Working Party.

RESOLVED – The list of Committees and Working Parties be approved subject to the amendments listed above.

## **10. PLANNING**

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

Minutes of meetings held on 29<sup>th</sup> March and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were circulated for information.

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

There were no reports.

## **11. DATES OF TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS AND CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2022-23**

A list of proposed dates for Town Council Meetings for the forthcoming year had been circulated. Councillors were asked to retain this information and note the various dates.

The Clerk stated that it was hoped the Environment Working Party could agree the dates for the forthcoming year at their first meeting scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

In relation to the Highways Working Party, it was more difficult to agree a schedule due to the attendance by an NCC officer.

The Clerk mentioned that she would try and schedule at least two meetings of the Cemetery Committee for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Caisley asked if it was possible to consider introducing hybrid meetings. The Clerk replied that it was currently illegal for parish and town councils to hold hybrid meetings. The Government were being lobbied by NALC to change the legislation to allow remote and hybrid meetings to attract younger councillors to be elected.

RESOLVED – The dates be approved.

## **12. GRANT APPLICATIONS & REPORT FROM NE YOUTH**

Members were reminded that consideration was given to a grant application from NE Youth at the last Council meeting.

Councillors felt that they could not agree to the grant due to the lack of reports being received from the organisation.

It was agreed that the application would be re-considered once agreement had been reached with the organisation.

NE Youth were advised of the Council's decision after the meeting and a report was received on 20<sup>th</sup> April which was circulated to Councillors. An assurance that bi-monthly reports would be produced had been given in the report.

The application was presented to the meeting for consideration.

Various comments were made about the report. Councillors felt it was positive but lacked some key information such as where the young people came from who engaged with the youth workers, did all the youths who used the club at Merton Hall live in Ponteland, was the youth club making current anti-social behaviour worse. In response to the questions relating to the youths who attended Merton Hall on a Thursday evening, Councillor Greenwell said that she believed that they had to be attendees of Ponteland High School.

A suggestion had been made at the agenda meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> May to provide half of the grant to allow them to pay for the usage of the hall to date. The remainder of the funds could be held until later in the year. It was important that the promised reports were produced.

Councillors were asked to submit any questions they had regarding information that had not been included in the report to the Clerk who would pass them onto NE Youth.

There was a general discussion on the ongoing problems faced with anti-social behaviour.

A suggestion was made to arrange a meeting with the Leisure centre, Waitrose and the Police and possible the Police & Crime Commissioner to discuss the problems and find a way forward. The County Councillors for the area agreed to organise this and invite the Town Council to attend.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) A grant of £600 be approved to meet the cost of room hire to date and the remaining £600 be retained until later in the year.
- (ii) Councillors submit their questions to the Clerk as set out above who would pass them on to NE Youth.
- (iii) County Councillors agreed to arrange a meeting with various agencies as outlined above.

.....  
CHAIRMAN

.....  
DATE

**Note Councillor Greenwell declared an interest and took no part in the discussion or voting other than to provide points of information.**

**13. REPORT RE PNV**

The Clerk had circulated a report advising members of the current situation regarding the Pont News and Views magazine.

At a recent meeting of the editorial group of PNV the Clerk and member of staff who produced the accounts had produced a report relating to the financial situation.

Councillors were advised of the problems faced during 2020-21 due to the Pandemic which had resulted in the magazine making a loss. This was down to several issues such as lack of advertising, producing three online issues only and some advertisers requesting refunds.

Town Councillors had been asked for their views about publishing the magazine during the Pandemic and they felt it was important to continue to produce PNV either digitally or a paper copy. They agreed at the time to make a financial contribution to ensure the publication could continue.

At the end of the last financial year 2021-22, the income was still lower than previous years. However, expenses were increasing due to paper and printing costs. The editor made every effort to ensure that value for money was achieved. The accounts had not yet been produced by the accountant however the records kept by the Town Council showed that there was a shortfall.

In 2021-22 all invoices submitted from the Town Council to PNV were reimbursed and all invoices that had been sent out in that year had been paid. There were funds in the PNV account but there was likely to be a projected deficit.

At the recent agenda meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, a suggestion had been made to carry forward £6000 from last year to offset the shortfall figure. This could be repaid when the situation improved.

The editor made every effort to attract advertising however he felt that the Pandemic had had a significant impact on the magazine. He believed things would improve although this may take time due to the current cost of living crisis. Councillors agreed that it may take some time for things to return to some sort of normality.

Councillors asked about the distribution to new houses in the parish area such as Jameson Manor, Jameson Fields and Medburn. The Clerk advised Councillors that the number of magazines would have to be increased in order to achieve the deliveries however, the distributors had stated that they could not deliver to areas where there was heavy machinery on site. This was an ongoing situation between the editor and the distributors.

RESOLVED –

(i) The Council noted the information set out in the report and would await further updates when required.

**13. REPORT RE PNV (Continued)**

(ii) The Council agreed to carry forward funds from 2021-22 to this year to cover the shortfall on the understanding that this was repaid when the situation improved.

**14. REPORT RE SUBSIDISED EVENING BUS SERVICE**

A report relating to the above had been circulated. Councillors were reminded that the Town Council had been subsidising an evening bus service (number 74) for several years for one night at the weekend between Ponteland and Newcastle. The budget figure of £4973 was agreed at the special budget meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January.

Councillor Varley had advised the Council that a new timetable from Stagecoach was running from March 2022 and this showed a late service running from Newcastle 7 days a week up until 23.10. He therefore asked if the Council could discuss this and consider giving notice to Go Northeast for the number 74 service.

The Clerk had contacted NCC to find out the details of any notice to be given to the bus company. She had been advised that 4 weeks' notice had to be provided. However, if the Stagecoach timetable changed for any reason, it would not be possible to restart the 74 service.

Some Councillors felt it was too early to stop the service as the Stagecoach service may not continue if it was not well used. There was also a concern that the Stagecoach service did not travel to Medburn.

County Councillor Jones expressed her concern at the possible withdrawal of the service which affect Medburn. The new service might not continue, and it would not be possible to reintroduce the 74 bus service.

The Clerk was asked to request the usage figures with Go Northeast and circulate them to Councillors.

RESOLVED – It was agreed to continue with payment of the subsidy for evening bus service for the current financial year.

**15. SECOND LETTER FROM PONTELAND ROTARY CLUB RE THE DUCK RACE**

A second letter from Ponteland Rotary Club relating to the above had been circulated for consideration. The letter was seeking agreement from the Town Council to meet the cost of providing toilets for the event.

.....  
CHAIRMAN

.....  
DATE

The Clerk also reminded Councillors that they had agreed permission for the organisers to use the Park for the Duck Race on 4<sup>th</sup> September however, they had asked for more information about numbers of classic cars.

**15. SECOND LETTER FROM PONTELAND ROTARY CLUB RE THE DUCK RACE (Continued).**

Councillor Hall had reported that there would be no more than 20 cars. The numbers would be monitored, and car owners would be advised not to attend if the ground was judged to be unsuitable following heavy rainfall.

The Clerk was asked to check with the Scouts and report back to members on their views.

RESOLVED – The Council agreed to provide the toilets for the Duck Race and would await further information on the views of the scouts regarding the classic cars.

**Note – Councillor Hall declared an interest in Minute 15 above and provided information but did not take part in the general discussion and voting,**

**16. EVENTS WORKING PARTY**

Minutes of a meeting of the Events Working Party held on 11th April 2022 had been circulated. There were no recommendations.

A further meeting had been held on 9<sup>th</sup> May and the minutes would be submitted to the June Town Council meeting.

Councillor Caisley asked about the decoration of business premises and said she was disappointed that companies had not yet put-up displays to celebrate the Jubilee.

The Clerk reported that the letter sent to businesses had asked them to decorate their premises by a certain date ready for judging on the 30<sup>th</sup> May so there would likely more decorations displayed in the coming weeks.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved, and the information reported at the meeting be noted.

**17. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**

Councillor Dodd reported that there were currently a lot of roadworks taking place however this proved that there was investment in the area although he had received several complaints.

Work was ongoing on the North Road.

Councillor Johnson asked about the road beyond the Parish boundary on the A696 which was quite dangerous in the dark as there were no cats eyes, and the road markings were very faint. Councillor Dodd agreed to look into this.

Councillor Darwin stated that vehicle access was now available at the sports fields.

Councillor Varley asked if there was a date for the resurfacing of Cheviot View and outside of the Golf club.

The Clerk reported that a gentleman had visited the office to complain about the state of the road at the Golf Club and this had been reported to NCC who had said they would send a surveyor out to look at this area.

**17. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT(Continued)**

Councillor Darwin agreed to refer this to NCC Highways.

Councillor Jones stated that she had also received complaints about the amount of roadworks and road closures.

Work to the Stamfordham Road had been completed and some of the smaller roads would now receive attention.

Councillor Jones asked if the Highways Working Party would consider including an item re pavements at Medburn onto their LTP submission. Councillor Hall said this had been discussed and the Working Party had been advised it was unlikely to go ahead due to the high costs involved.

Councillor Jones also stated that if anyone at the Town Council was interested in re-starting the Ageing Well project in Ponteland, she would be pleased to get involved. This had stopped during the Pandemic but could start up again.

**18. MAYOR'S REPORT**

A report by the Mayor had been circulated.

An additional report had been circulated relating to a visit by the Mayor to the youth club at Merton Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

RESOLVED – The report be accepted.

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

**(i) Report re Memorial Hall AGM**

Councillor Hall had circulated a report relating to his attendance at the Memorial Hall AGM.

Following on from the report, the Clerk had been contacted by the Chairman of the hall to ask if the Council would still be willing to offer a grant to the hall to allow them to engage a business/financial consultant to assist them with improving their financial situation.

This had been agreed in November 2020 following a request from the hall for a grant to help them with repairs to their internal pipework.

Councillors agreed that the hall should obtain prices for these services and then submit an application to the Council for the funds. Could they also provide the name of the business/company This would be in addition to their annual grant which had been halved as part of the budget process to £3,300. The Clerk was asked to convey this response to the Hall Chairman.

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

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £35,116.04.

.....  
CHAIRMAN

.....  
DATE

A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for April 2022.

**20. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT**  
**(Continued)**

The Clerk reported that she hoped to be able to report on the budget revisions at the June meeting. She advised Councillors of the funds available at the end of 2021-22 and stated that she had worked through the remaining budget and outlined items that should be carried forward to 2022-23.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL  
WOULD BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 JUNE 2022 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON  
HALL.**

.....  
CHAIRMAN

.....  
DATE