

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 8TH JUNE 2022

Present: Councillor C Greenwell (in the Chair)

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

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Greenwell declared an interest in Minute 34.

23. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11th MAY 2022

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11th May 2022 were submitted for approval.

An amended was suggested to the last sentence in paragraph 2 on page three to read "Councillor Greenwell said that she believed they had to be attendees of Ponteland High School".

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved subject to the amendment outlined above being made.

24. MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Hall wished to congratulate the staff and Councillor Overbury, Chair of the Events Working Party on their work in respect of the Platinum Jubilee weekend. He believed that everything had gone well and that the community had appreciated the events that had been arranged.

25. PLANNING

(i) Planning Committee

Minutes of meetings held on 26th April and 10th May 2022 were circulated for information.

(ii) Report on recent planning decisions

There were no reports.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

26. REPLACEMENT OF OFFICE COMPUTER EQUIPMENT FOR STAFF

A report by the Clerk to the Council in relation to the above had been circulated. Councillors were informed that the PCs hard drives in the office required replacement.

An upgrade to Windows 10 was required but due to the age of the existing equipment, it would not be possible to install that version. The existing computers were running Windows 7 which was no longer supported and the machines were running slow.

A quote had been received from 24/7 who provide the Council's Cloud network and who also provided laptops for staff which were recently purchased. The quote was for the provision of 4 Lenovo V50s with Windows 10 Pro installed in the sum of £1836 and also a set up fee of £340 which gave a total cost of £2176 plus VAT. The company had offered credit terms or the ability to pay in two instalments however, the funds were available in asset replacement and the Council agreed to pay the amount in full.

RESOLVED – The Council approve the expenditure as outlined above in the sum of £2176 plus VAT which would be funded from asset replacement.

27. EVENTS WORKING PARTY – Minutes of a meeting held on 9th May

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2022 were submitted for approval. The Chair of the Working Party reported that she was pleased with the events held over the weekend. She stated that the Working Party had been meeting for around a year on this subject and it was good to see the work come to fruition. She was pleased that the Leisure Centre had been involved and they were delighted with how well the free events had been received by attendees.

She was pleased that the Council had been able to help the various organisations who had applied for grants which had enabled them to organise their own events. Just under £2000 had been awarded in grants which was within the budget.

Councillor Greenwell stated that the grant for Merton Hall had been well utilised for their afternoon tea held on 6th June which had been attended by over 100 people. She had also arranged for a piper to perform.

Members asked who had been successful in the best decorated windows event. Councillor Overbury reported that this had been arranged to persuade businesses to get involved in the decoration of Ponteland. The winners would all receive £200 each. The results were at Broadway, the Carousel gift shop, on Main Street, Taylors Pharmacy and on Merton Way, Bardgetts funeral directors. Councillor Greenwell reported that Richard Coates school had agreed to decorate Merton Hall and she would be contacting them shortly to thank them for their efforts.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

28. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Working Party held on 23rd May 2022 had been circulated.

A query was raised in relation to Minute 6 regarding the allotments. The Clerk reported that there were currently three vacant plots. The two larger ones would be divided up into several plots and the smaller one would be divided into two. This would reduce the number on the waiting list which was currently at 25. Councillor Greenwell stated that she had suggested the two larger ones be turned into community allotments, but this idea had been shelved for the time being. Councillor Caisley mentioned that she was aware of two community gardens becoming available in the area, one of which was in Ponteland which she was supportive of.

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

29. HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of meetings held on 25th May 2022 were circulated for information. There was one recommendation which was approved.

The Chair, Councillor Hall advised members that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) submission had been brought forward by NCC this year and a response was needed by the end of July. All parish and town councils were asked to submit three priorities. The priorities for last year had been circulated as well as the rest of the LTP information for 2023-24. A Highways Working Party would be arranged in early July when the LTP would be discussed. This would then be reported to the Council for approval.

Discussions had taken place at the May meeting about one particular suggestion which related to a proposal to reduce the speed limit along the Main Street in Ponteland to 20mph. It was explained at the meeting that this would be unenforceable by the Police, but it was felt that this would help with the traffic problems and speeding through Ponteland. The Chair of the Working Party asked Councillors to give some thought to their views on this proposal prior to discussion at the next Highways Working Party.

Some Councillors had experience of the reduced speed limit in other areas which appeared to work well.

A query was raised about the number of accidents along this stretch of road in Ponteland and the Deputy Clerk agreed to look into this and report back. Councillor Dodd stated that he was currently working with a Highways officer for the same proposal in Belsay. The Highways officer had reported that research showed that the lower speed limit brought out bad behaviours in some drivers for example inappropriate overtaking in the 20mph zone. He thought it would be better for the Council to agree a priority which was more likely to be achieved.

29. HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY(Continued)

Councillors were asked for suggestions about where they think the 20mph should go in Ponteland. Councillor Hall had originally thought from the Beeches to the Golf Club, however this could be extended to Cheviot View.

Councillor Sehgal mentioned the 20mph at schools which were only operational at school drop off and pick up times. She asked if they could be extended to take account of extracurricular activities.

Councillor Dodd referred to the item on page 6 relating to parking on Jackson Avenue. He had visited the location and agreed that this was becoming a problem that should be added to the list of junctions to be considered for double yellow lines.

RESOLVED –

(i) The Minutes be approved and the recommendation in Minute 6 relating to the Town Council's contribution to returning the planted area at Click-em-in to footpath be approved.

(ii) Councillors agreed to consider any items for possible inclusion in the LTP for 2023-24 and also submit any comments they may have about the proposal for 20mph speed limit through Ponteland to the Chair of the Working Party and/or the Clerk.

30. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd stated that he had been in attendance at a Planning Committee recently when an application for an extension to a quarry had been considered. There had been no representation from Ponteland although objections had been received from nearby villages.

He said that he had attended a meeting that day when a governance report relating to the County Council had been considered. Details would be reported in the local press.

Councillor Varley asked if information about quarries was included in the new Northumberland Plan. Councillor Dodd said that it would be and asked Councillors to review it.

31. MAYOR'S REPORT

Various reports by the Mayor relating to meetings she had attended had been circulated.

In relation to the meeting about the Town and Parish Liaison Working Group, she reported that there was a need for the Town Council to review its Neighbourhood Plan in order to fit in with the new NCC Local Plan.

A Working Party should be established to do this, and this would be organised by the Chair of the PTC Planning Committee. A meeting could then be arranged with an appropriate officer from NCC to discuss what was required.

The Mayor reported on her meeting with David Laux, Head of Technical Services at NCC. She had mentioned the lack of Police support in Ponteland and he had agreed to discuss this with the Public Protection Team at NCC to see if presence could be increased from Thursday to Saturday evenings.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

32. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

(i) Minutes of Newcastle Airport Consultative Committee held on 8th March 2022

The Minutes of the above meeting held on 8th March attended by Councillor Varley had been circulated for information.

He had attended another meeting on 7th June and would submit a report to a future meeting.

RESOLVED – The minutes be accepted.

33. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT/ YEAR END BUDGET REVISIONS

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £35,439.84.

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

A report relating to year-end budget revisions had also been circulated.

The Clerk reported on the need to carry forward a substantial sum in respect of the public toilets on Thornhill Road. She advised members she was unaware that the Town Council had become liable for the water charges and several significant bills had been received from the supplier at the beginning of the year.

After investigating the issue, a serious leak had been found at the water meter in the car park which had since been fixed. A final amended invoice was awaited from the supplier. She had not made provision for the current financial year as she was unaware of the liability however, sufficient funds were included in the carry forward report which would hopefully cover the previous bills and any invoices for the current year.

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.

34. **STAFFING COMMITTEE.**

Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 4th May 2022 had been circulated.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

Note – Councillor Greenwell declared an interest in the above and left the meeting whilst the item was discussed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL WOULD BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 JULY 2022 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON HALL.