

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

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2 November 2022

To: ALL MEMBERS OF PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

I hereby give notice that a Meeting of Ponteland Town Council will be held on **WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2022 at 6.15 p.m. IN MERTON HALL. THE MEETING WILL BE PRECEDED BY PUBLIC QUESTION TIME WHICH WILL COMMENCE AT 6.15 P.M. PLEASE NOTE IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS THE COUNCIL MEETING WILL COMMENCE AT 6.15 p.m. PLEASE NOTE THE REVISED MEETING TIME AND VENUE.**

Yours sincerely



K MAVIN

Clerk to the Council

AGENDA

- 67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
- 68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
- 69. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2022.
Copy attached.
- 70. MATTERS ARISING
- 71. PLANNING
 - (i) Planning Committee – Minutes of meetings held on 27 September, 11 and 25 October. Copies attached for information.
 - (ii) Report on recent planning decisions
- 72. RISK MANAGEMENT/INTERNAL CONTROLS REPORTS
 - (i) Risk Management report – copy attached
 - (ii) Review of Internal Audit report – copy attached
 - (iii) Review of Internal Controls report – copy attached

73. **COST OF LIVING AND ENERGY CRISIS** – It was agreed at the October meeting that this would be a standard item on the agenda for discussion. Report attached.
74. **REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**
The Council is requested to set up a small Working Party to carry out the annual review of the above. The membership last year comprised of Councillors Greenwell, A Hall, Mrs K Overbury and A Varley.
75. **CEMETERY COMMITTEE** – Minutes of a meeting held on 25 October are attached for consideration. See attached
76. **HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY** – Minutes of meetings held on 2 November are attached for consideration. To follow.
77. **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**
78. **MAYOR'S REPORT**
(i) Mayor's diary – nothing to report
79. **REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**
80. **ACCOUNTS/BANK RECONCILIATION/BUDGET REPORT** - Reports attached
81. **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN PONTELAND**

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL
Report by Clerk to the Council
Report to November 2022 Council meeting
RISK MANAGEMENT - ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-23

Agenda item no. 72(i)

As part of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Town Council must ensure that it has implemented satisfactory risk management procedures. This report is to clarify the areas of potential risk and to confirm the action already in place to manage them. New risks that may be identified should also be reviewed by the Council.

RISK	ACTION
<p>COVID-19 The situation with the Town Council has returned to near normality. In most cases face to face meetings have returned although some meetings are held off-site. The legislation is not in place to allow remote or hybrid meetings if the public can attend. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. The TC office has been open for some time although staff are still working one day a week at home if possible. Covid has changed working practices.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>Noted</p>
<p>Appointment of Internal Auditor The Council agreed to appoint a new internal auditor last year. The Council are asked to reappoint him for this year. See recommendation in item 72(ii).</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Insurance Covers office equipment, structural assets, machinery & tools Play areas (including equipment & inspections) Public liability (set at £10m), employers' liability, Councillors personal accident & fidelity guarantee. The level of funds held by the Council are checked each month and the Fidelity guarantee figure would be increased if necessary. Current level of Fidelity guarantee insurance is £1million.</p>	<p>Currently insured</p>
<p>Financial Risk A table which sets out the various risks involved in the financial management operations of the Town Council is attached for comment, consideration & approval. This should also be read in conjunction with the report on Internal Controls and review of Internal Audit.</p>	<p>In place</p>
<p>PROPERTY Council offices – The Town Council offices have a high level of security including reinforced doors and shutters. Maintenance of the building is the responsibility of the landlord. The current landlord is BGH Holdings.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Noted.</p>
<p>Play areas – Checked daily and inspection records kept. Quarterly insurance inspections carried out by Zurich Insurance. Items raised by insurers should be acted upon in a reasonable timescale even if the risk is low.</p>	<p>In place</p>

RISK	ACTION
There continue to be incidents of anti-social behaviour and CCTV was installed at the play area last year.	Noted.
Park – This facility is checked regularly, and incidents reported. Remedial actions taken as soon as possible. PTC employs a Park contractor.	In Place
Bridges – Refurbishment/replacement of the two timber footbridges were carried out in 2013. Bridges are regularly inspected by PTC or consultants if this is required.	In place & ongoing
Slope Stability - The slope protection works were carried out eleven years ago, and this has improved the safety for those using the area. The site is at Fox Covert Lane above the path between the Park and Runnymede Road. The slope area was checked last year and no remedial action was necessary.	To be noted
Seats/Litter/dog waste bins These are all insured. Most of the seats have now been replaced with recycled plastic although there are still a small number of wooden ones that require replacement. New seats/bins should generally be situated in areas where the risk of vandalism is low. There is a recurring problem at the Waitrose bridge area of the park where the bin is regularly set on fire. All future bins will have a 'fire expire' mechanism fitted by the suppliers.	In place & ongoing
Trees Tree management continues to be carried out both inside and outside of the Park. Any urgent works are carried out as soon as possible after checking if the tree has a TPO on it or is in the Conservation area. If this is the case a 5-day notice application is submitted to NCC. Every effort will be made to have a further tree survey carried out in 2022-23.	Ongoing
Allotments – Checked regularly by PTC contractors. Contractors will soon be fencing off plots in two vacant sites which will create at least another 10 plots. The waiting list is high and letting these sites will reduce that substantially.	In place and in programme of Contractors work
Sculpture on Coates Green – Insured for all risks. The Green is cut by the Council's contractors on a weekly basis during the cutting season.	In Place
Public Toilets – The toilets were refurbished some years ago to a much improved standard. The toilets are cleaned and checked 7 days a week by an NCC operative as part of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with NCC. Any issues are dealt with as soon as possible. The building is insured.	In Place
Cemetery – The Cemetery was transferred to PTC in April 2013. The service is provided by NCC under an SLA arrangement. The Cemetery is also checked on a weekly	In Place

RISK	ACTION
<p>basis by a PTC contractor who in turn reports any issues directly to the Clerk. Landscaping works were carried out in the Cemetery five years ago.</p> <p>The shelter in the Cemetery is insured.</p> <p>An inspection of memorials was carried out in 2020 by NCC.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Office Equipment – Itemised and Insured.</p> <p>Electrical safety testing is carried out on an annual basis.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>
<p>Civic Regalia – Itemised, insured and retained in safe.</p>	<p>In place</p>
<p>Tractor, Mowers, Strimmers, Hedgecutter and Gritter</p> <p>The tractor is insured for use on the highways</p> <p>The operation of the Tractor with or without the various attachments is potentially the most dangerous task that the PTC contractors carry out. Contractors wear reflective clothing, safety footwear and ear protection. They also ensure the warning light is working prior to use. The machinery is serviced twice a year.</p> <p>Contractors use protective face masks and ear protectors when the strimmer is in use and wear safety boots at all times.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>
<p>EMPLOYEES</p> <p>Office Staff – The staff have been provided with a copy of the Council’s Health & Safety Policy and are aware of their responsibilities within the building and when on Council business.</p>	<p>In place</p>
<p>First Aid – There is a first aid kit located in the communal kitchen area of the offices that is provided and re-stocked as necessary.</p>	<p>In place</p>
<p>COUNCILLORS – Councillors are insured for personal injury when on official business and for cases of libel and slander, but only if they are acting on the instructions of the Council. there is no cover for individual Members who may make verbal or written statements that may be construed as slanderous or libellous. Care should be taken by Councillors when using social media. A guidance note produced by NCC was circulated to Councillors in 2021 and this covers the various pitfalls that can occur in more detail. Personal safety alarms were purchased for Councillors some time ago and they are available on request. Councillors are advised to be careful when meeting with the public alone.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>To be noted.</p> <p>Available for Councillors</p> <p>To be noted.</p>
<p>VOLUNTEERS – Volunteers who carry out work on the Council’s behalf are insured for public liability and personal accident through the Council’s insurance policy. They are restricted to safe working practices eg, no power tools, and should advise the Council when and where they are working. They are also advised to wear gloves when working. Risk assessments will be carried out if necessary, prior to starting</p>	<p>In place</p>

RISK	ACTION
a project either by PTC, advisors or contractors as appropriate.	
<p>CONTRACTORS – Contractors have been provided with a copy of the Council’s health and safety policy. They are also made aware of the need to minimise risk to the public. The Council also ensures that Contractors have adequate Public Liability insurance prior to engaging them. This is checked on an annual basis or when a contract is let. They are also responsible for providing their own protective clothing.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>
<p>REMEMBRANCE – The event will be held as usual on Remembrance Sunday – 13 November. In view of the amount of participants who were unwell last year, two operatives from St Johns Ambulance have been booked. They have offered their services free of charge but asked if the Council will pay their travelling expenses. A risk assessment for the event has been carried out.</p>	
<p>PNV – The Council has editorial control of Pont News & Views. An editorial board including members of the community was appointed last year. The Town Council deals with any issues relating to the newsletter in conjunction with the editor. The Council is insured under its current policy and the editor also holds appropriate indemnity insurance. The PNV account is also held by PTC and a member of TC staff is responsible for dealing with all financial transactions including invoicing and chasing up payments. It is likely that a meeting of the editorial group will be held before the end of this year.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>
<p>PTC RECORDS Computer records The Council agreed to opt for a cloud network in 2017. All files have a high level of security provided by the Cloud provider company This is working well.</p>	<p>In place</p>
<p>General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Councillors are aware that this legislation came into force in May 2018. Appropriate privacy notices etc are displayed on the website and consent forms were sent out to all contacts and replies were logged and filed. New contacts are issued with a consent form by staff. Various policies have been produced and agreed by the Town Council. Documents that should be destroyed under GDPR are shredded by a locally based specialist shredding company once or twice per annum.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>

RISK	ACTION
<p>CCTV The Council replaced their CCTV in October 2021. This is complete and appears to be working well. The Police have made several recent requests to review footage which is being downloaded onto memory sticks which will be returned and the footage deleted. Signs have been displayed at each of the camera locations and at the play area to say CCTV is in operation. The system is password protected and can only viewed by staff and the Police.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>Noted</p>

Recommendation – The Council is requested to approve the report.

Enclosure – Financial risks management table

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL
RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT FOR PERIOD 2022-23

Topic	Risk Identified	Risk Level H/M/L	Management of Risk	Action
Precept	Not submitted	L	Submit following approval of budget	Clerk to confirm
	Not paid by NCC	L	Confirm receipt	Clerk to confirm
	Adequacy of precept	L	Quarterly review of budget to actual	Already in place – ongoing checks
Other income	Cash handling	M	Very little cash is paid to PTC but is checked by two staff members. Check to bank statements	Already in place- ongoing checks
Investments	Cash banking	L	Review levels & receive best terms possible.	Already in place & reviews carried out. Challenging in current economic climate.
	Surplus funds	L		
Reserves – General	Adequacy	L	Consider at budget setting (3 – 12 months gross expenditure desirable) Council did agree in January 2022 to raise the that figure to £210,000 from £165,000 (Minute 108(iv) refers). General reserves are now in excess of that figure.	Annual review
Reserves – earmarked Assets	Adequacy	L	Consider during budget setting process	Annual review
	Loss Damage etc	M	Annual inspection, update insurance and asset registers	Annual Review
Loss	Risk of damage to third party, property or individuals	M	Review adequacy of Public Liability Insurance (currently set at £10million)	Annual Review
	Consequential loss due to critical damage or third party performance	L	Review adequacy of insurance cover	Annual review
Maintenance	Reduced value of assets or amenities – loss of income or performance	M	Annual Maintenance inspection	Ongoing review
Financial Records	Inadequate Records	L	Regular checks by Clerk & internal audit review. Auditor can report direct to Council if necessary	Ongoing review

Topic	Risk Identified	Risk Level H/M/L	Management of Risk	Action
Legal powers	Illegal activity or payment	L	Education as to legal powers	2 Cllrs sign and approve each payment. Clerk to oversee
Minutes	Accurate and legal	L	Review at following meeting	Ongoing review
Members Interest	Conflict of interest	M	Declarations of interest to be documented/minutes and any conflict addressed as appropriate	Ongoing review
Salaries	Wrong salary/hours/rates paid	L	Check salary to agreed minute, check hours & rate to contract.	Salaries prepared monthly by Clerk. Checked by Internal auditor twice per year.
	Wrong deductions – NI and income tax	L	Check to PAYE calculation – HMRC real time information reporting system used	
Direct costs & overhead expenses	Goods not supplied to Council	M	Follow up on all orders	Ongoing check
	Invoice incorrectly calculated or recorded	L	Check arithmetic on invoices and produce bank reconciliations on monthly basis	Ongoing checks carried out In place and regularly reviewed
	Cheque payable is excessive or to wrong party	L	Very few cheques now paid due to introduction of electronic banking however signatories initial cheque stub when used.	
Grants	No power to pay or no evidence of agreement of council to pay	L	Minute council agreement	Ongoing check
	Conditions agreed	L	Agree and document any reasonable conditions	
VAT	VAT analysis	L	All items in cash book lists	Clerk to verify Clerk to verify Clerk to verify
	Charged on purchases	L	Consider all items per cash book lists	
	Claimed within time limits	L	Agree returns submitted monthly for PTC	

**PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL
Report by Clerk to the Council
Report to November 2022 Council meeting
REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT 2022-23**

Agenda item number 72(ii)

Introduction

This report should be considered in conjunction with the report on Internal Controls. The Council must carry out a review of the work of the internal auditor before the end of the financial year.

Internal Auditor

The Council agreed to appoint Mr Gary Kennedy as the Town Council's Internal Auditor in November 2021.

Role

The process of internal audit is to provide an independent appraisal of systems of internal control for the Town Council. This review does not relieve the Clerk or the Council of the responsibility for ensuring that effective systems of control are in place.

The Internal Auditor fulfils this role by carrying out independent reviews of the Town Council's activities and reporting their findings to the Town Council who can then ensure appropriate action is taken.

Independence

Reports from the Internal Auditor must be produced in their own name and addressed to the Clerk. Reports are presented to the Council at the earliest opportunity. An Internal auditor can request to present their report directly to the Council.

Audit Planning and Reporting

The Internal Auditor uses the Governance and Accountability for Local Councils Practitioner's Guide to inform and direct the audit. **The Internal Auditor has the power to report directly to the Mayor and the Town Council if they wish to do so. If the issue warrants it, they can also report directly to the External Auditor.**

The Internal Auditor should carry out two audits per year, one at the year end and an interim audit.

There is a fee involved for this work.

Audit Scope

All areas of work of the Town Council are open to the scrutiny of the Internal Auditor. The scope of the Audit considers the following:

- Checks that proper bookkeeping is carried out
- Payment controls
- Review of whether Standing Orders and Financial Regulations have been adopted and applied.
- Risk Management arrangements
- Budgetary controls
- Income controls
- Petty cash procedures
- Payroll controls
- Assets controls
- Bank reconciliations (checks on regularity of completion and against bank statements)
- VAT Claims
- Year end procedures

Appointment of Internal Auditor

The Town Council is asked to approve the reappointment of the Internal Auditor at this meeting. He is due to attend a meeting with the Clerk at the office on 15 November when he will start the interim audit for 2022-23.

Conclusion

The Internal Audit in place is effective since the Auditor is acting in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, they are acting independently from the Council and carry out a wide range of tests as set out in the draft Audit Programme document attached. An Internal Audit review checklist is also attached for consideration and approval.

Recommendations

- (i) Councillors are recommended to approve the report and the checklist.**
- (ii) The Council is recommended to reappoint Mr Gary Kennedy to the position of Internal Auditor for 2022-23.**

Attachments –

- (i) Audit review checklist

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW CHECKLIST

Part one – Meeting standards

Expected Standard	Evidence of Achievement	Yes or No	Areas for Development
1. Scope of internal audit	<p>Terms of reference for internal audit approved by Council on annual basis</p> <p>Internal audit work takes into account both the Council's risk assessment and wider internal control arrangements.</p> <p>Internal audit work covers the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	
2. Independence	<p>Internal audit has direct access to those charged with governance.</p> <p>Reports are made in own name (G Kennedy) to management.</p> <p>Internal auditor does not have any other role within the Council.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	
3. Competence	<p>There is no evidence of a failure to carry out internal audit work ethically, with integrity and objectivity.</p>	<p>No</p>	
4. Relationships	<p>All responsible officer(s) (Clerk/RFO) are consulted on the internal audit plan.</p> <p>Respective responsibilities for officers and internal audit are defined in relation to internal control, risk management and fraud and corruption matters.</p> <p>The responsibilities of council members are understood.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	
5. Audit Planning and reporting	<p>The annual internal audit plan properly takes account of all the risks facing the Council and is approved.</p> <p>Internal audit has reported in accordance with the plan.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	

Part two – Characteristics of Effectiveness

Characteristics of effectiveness	Evidence of Achievement	Yes or No	Areas for development
Internal Audit work is planned	Planned internal audit work is based on risk assessment and designed to meet the Council's needs.	Yes	
Understanding the whole organisation, its needs and objectives	The annual audit plan demonstrates how audit work will provide assurance for the Council's Annual Governance Statement (Section one of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return - AGAR)	Yes	
Be seen as a catalyst for change	Internal audit supports the Council's work in delivering improved services to the community.	Yes	
Add value and assist the organisation in achieving its objectives	The Council makes positive responses to internal audit's recommendations and follows up with action where this is called for.	Yes	
Be challenging	Internal audit focuses on the risks facing the Council. Internal audit encourages managers/members to develop their own responses to risks, rather than relying solely on audit recommendations.	Yes Yes	
Ensure the right resources are available	Adequate resource is made available for internal audit to complete its work. Internal audit understands the Council and the legal and corporate framework in which it operates.	Yes Yes	

**PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL
Report by Clerk to the Council
Report to November 2022 Council meeting
Statement of Internal Control for the
year ending 31 March 2023**

Agenda item number 72(iii)

1. RESPONSIBILITY

Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 requires Councils to carry out a review of their internal controls annually before the end of the financial year.

Ponteland Town Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

In discharging this responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively, efficiently and economically.

The Council

The Council has elected a Mayor who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and together with the Clerk for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful.

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January meeting. As part of this process the Council will also examine its level of reserves at this time. The January meeting of the Council approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The full Council meets at least 11 times per year. A decision was taken in July 2019 not to hold a monthly meeting in August in future.

A monthly budget report is prepared and submitted to the council showing income and expenditure together with a monthly bank reconciliation statement. Quarterly budget revision reports are also reported for information and these set out any changes to the budget as per Council decisions or any known budget over or underspends.

Clerk to the Council

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations and advises the Council on managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to. The Clerk also manages the staff and contractors.

Payments

A schedule of all payments is approved by the Council's Accounts Committee and submitted to the Council for information at each meeting. The Town Council now makes most payments via electronic banking. A limited number of payments are made by cheque. Two Members of the Council from the current list of ten authorised signatories (the Accounts Committee) must authorise every payment against invoices before authorising the payment using their own login details provided by the bank.

Those Councillors also check the bank reconciliation against the bank statements and sign to say they have carried out this review.

There is a facility for making urgent payments out of meeting if necessary. Such payments then appear on the pay order for the following month.

Risk Assessments/Risk Management

The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions to be taken. As the Council is currently meeting face to face, a risk assessment was carried out before physical meetings started again in May 2021.

The Clerk makes an annual risk management report to the Council. A review of financial management risks is included as part of the review report.

Internal Audit

The Council appointed a new Internal Auditor, Gary Kennedy in November 2021 following the retirement of Peter Basnett. The Internal Auditor is asked to base his report to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management
- Reviews
- Insurance cover

A review of internal audit must be carried out before the end of each financial year.

External Audit

The Council's External Auditors are PKF Littlejohn who were appointed in 2017 for a period of five years to 2022 by the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments (SAAA). This may change in 2023 as the contract was for five years only. The External Auditors submit an annual Certificate of Audit, which is presented to the Council, together with a copy of their

report listing any issues to be raised. At the end of the Audit the Council must display the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for 14 days and must make the Annual Governance and Audit Return (AGAR) and Final Accounts available on request. These are also displayed on the Town Council's website. A report was submitted to the October 2022 meeting informing the Council that the External Auditors report and certificate had been received on 22 September and they did not raise any issues with the Town Council. This information, together with sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Annual Return (AGAR) were displayed on the Council's noticeboards from the 27 September for 14 days.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The Council has a responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of:

- The full Council
- The Clerk to the Council who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and managing risks
- The independent Internal Auditor who reviews the Council's systems of internal control
- PKF Littlejohn, the Council's external auditors, who make the final check using the AGAR, which is completed and signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, the Chairman and the Internal Auditor.

5. SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL CONTROL ISSUES

As stated above, the Auditors did not raise any issues with the Council as part of the 2021-22 Audit.

Recommendation – Councillors are requested to approve the report.

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL
Report by Clerk to the Council
Report to November 2022 Council meeting
Report re cost of living/energy crisis

Agenda item no. 73

A meeting was held with an officer from NCC Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) on 26th October. The Mayor and the Clerk were in attendance. This was to discuss the issue of mapping availability for young people in Ponteland and to discuss any ways the Town Council could assist with the ongoing cost of living/energy crisis.

There was a brief discussion about mapping availability of activities for young people in Ponteland. The NCT officer said she would need to know about the green spaces in Ponteland, transport links and the various groups who offered activities.

In relation to the cost of living and energy crisis, the Mayor reported that she had had an idea to create a small food bank using a shed that would be located on her drive. It would be painted red and insulated. It would be open between 9 and 5pm, Monday to Friday. The Ponteland Methodist Church were also interested in the idea.

The NCT officer outlined initiatives that were taking place in other parts of the county such as a 'bread and butter club' at Stobhill and a community pantry at Seaton Valley.

She suggested making contact with two representatives from Thriving Together who would be able to offer advice.

The idea of the community pantry was that food was collected from various sources that would be thrown out. People paid a fee to be a member of the initiative and could call in once a week and pay a small fee to fill a bag of shopping from the range of fresh and nonperishable food available. It was available for anyone to use. It only took place one day a week. This helped the environment as less food would be going to landfill.

There was some discussion re the red food shed idea. The NCT officer suggested that it would be necessary to establish that there was a need and support in Ponteland for this type of facility. It could be offered for a trial period.

Ways of determining the need and support for a food bank initiative was discussed and the officer from NCT suggested asking them in person or carrying out a simple survey on social media using survey monkey asking people if they would support an initiative and would they use it.

The NCT officer agreed to send contact details through for the Thriving Together representatives. She also asked if she could have a further meeting with the Clerk regarding the mapping exercise requirements.

The Mayor and Clerk would be invited to further meetings with the NCT officer for this area.