

PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 14 DECEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor C Greenwell (in the Chair)

Councillors C Caisley, A Hall, S Johnson, K Overbury, N Sehgal and A Varley.

82. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Darwin and R Dodd.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hall declared an interest in Minute 87(iii) and took no part in the discussion or voting.

84. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER 2022

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

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

85. MATTERS ARISING

Minutes 76 – Highways Working Party

Councillor Hall reported that on 8 December he had had a meeting with the resident who had concerns relating to the A696. He had sent a report of the meeting to the resident and to the Highways Working Party members

Minute 81 – Anti social behaviour in Ponteland

The Clerk had already advised members that the Police and Crime Commissioner for the area had referred the request for a meeting with her to the Neighbourhood Policing team. A meeting was to be arranged in the New Year.

86. PLANNING

(i) Planning Committee

Minutes of meetings held on 8 and 22 November 2022 were circulated for information.

(ii) Report on recent planning decisions

There were no reports.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

87. GRANT APPLICATIONS

It was reported that three grant applications had been received for consideration at this meeting. The applications were from the proprietor of Rialto restaurant towards the cost of fireworks, Ponteland 41 Club to cover the cost of replacement wheelbarrow wheels and Ponteland Rotary to cover the cost of purchase of second-hand tables.

The budget allocation for small grants was £4000 and the sum of £1450 had been awarded in this financial year. This left an amount of £2550 available for small grants until 31 March 2023.

(i) Application for grant towards firework display on New Year's Eve- Rialto restaurant

Members were reminded that they had given a grant of £500 towards the cost of this event in 2021.

Concerns were raised at the meeting regarding the environmental impact and the effect on animals and wildlife. Incidents of anti-social behaviour were also concerning for the Town Council.

The Clerk reported that the Police had raised concerns about this event due to the behaviour of some of the attendees.

There was a lengthy debate on this issue, and it was agreed that a grant of £500 be given for this year's event however, the Clerk was asked to write to the proprietor to advise that this would in all probability be the last year the Council would donate to the event for the reasons outlined above. They also asked if the proprietor could be asked to consider the use of lasers for future displays which would be a better alternative for the environment and animals.

RESOLVED – A grant of £500 be approved and the Clerk be requested to write to the proprietor of Rialto advising of the points set out above.

(ii) Application from the Ponteland 41 Club for a grant towards replacement of wheelbarrow wheels for the New Year's Day Wheelbarrow race.

An application from the Ponteland 41 Club was circulated to members. They were seeking a grant towards the cost of replacing replacement wheels for their wheelbarrows.

RESOLVED – A grant of £255 be approved.

(iii) Application from Ponteland Rotary Club for a grant to cover the purchase of second-hand tables

An application from the Ponteland Rotary Club had been circulated. They were seeking a grant of £200 to cover the cost of the purchase of 18 second-hand tables for use at fund raising events.

RESOLVED – A grant of £200 be approved.

Note – Councillor Hall declared an interest in this application and took no part in the discussion or voting.

88. CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OFFICE CLOSURE

A report by the Clerk in relation to the above was circulated for consideration. Last year the office had closed early to allow staff to use some of their leave. The Clerk reported that it had been difficult to take leave again this year for a variety of reasons including the loss of two members of staff from the beginning of September.

The Clerk requested that members agree to close the office from Thursday 15 December, reopening on Tuesday 3 January 2023.

A notice would be displayed on the door and on the website giving the NCC number and stating that emails can be sent to the PTC enquiries email address. Urgent issues would be dealt with, but most issues tended to be NCC related.

RESOLVED – The Council agreed to the office closure from Thursday 15 December until Tuesday 3 January 2023 and noted that arrangements were in place to ensure urgent issues could be dealt with.

89. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Minutes of a meeting of the above Working Party held on 21 November had been circulated for consideration.

There were several recommendations for discussion. One of the recommendations related to the cost of the new path between Callerton Lane and Waitrose bridge. The path was a public footpath and was the responsibility of NCC however, there appeared to have been an agreement made some years ago by the then Parish Council that they would meet the costs of improvements. NCC had agreed to provide £7000 towards the total cost of £24,878.02 which would mean a payment of £17,878.02 from the Town Council.

There was also a recommendation regarding including a 'star path' finish which would have to be included when the path was renewed. The cost was £14,750 and the total cost would have to be met by the Town Council.

There was significant debate on this item with some members feeling that this would provide some lighting through the park and others were concerned that this would attract more ASB into the Park.

RESOLVED – The minutes and the following recommendations be approved:

(i) The Council approved the cost of the new path between Callerton Lane and Waitrose bridge at a cost of £17,878.02. This was dependent on a contribution of £7,000 from NCC. The Council did not agree to the inclusion of the 'star path' material into the new footpath.

(ii) The Council agreed to the purchase of two tree guards for the trees to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee and in memory of Queen Elizabeth II at a cost of £1750 each, a total of £3500.

90. EVENTS WORKING PARTY

Notes of a meeting of the above Working Party held on 29 November had been circulated.

90. EVENTS WORKING PARTY(Continued)

The Chair of the Working Party stated that unfortunately the meeting was inquorate, so no recommendations had been included in the minutes. In relation to item 5 – further suggestions for Poppy displays, she advised members that she had prepared an article for inclusion in the next edition of PNV asking if the community would provide more Poppies for an extra display in 2023. More wool would be acquired in the New Year. There were two suggestions for new displays, one for the front of Pele tower in front of the gate and one in front of St Mary’s Church wall with the addition of one or two silent soldiers. Sketch drawings had been included with the minutes. The Chair advised that prices would be sought, and these suggestions would be further discussed at a meeting of the Events Working Party to be held in January/February. A recommendation would then be made to the Council for approval.

RESOLVED – the minutes be approved.

91. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

There were no reports.

92. MAYOR’S REPORT

A report by the Mayor had been circulated. The Mayor mentioned the event she had attended on the 14 November at Ponteland Primary school which she had enjoyed very much. She had received letters from the pupils and the teachers who were interested in the role of a Town Councillor.

93. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

There were no reports.

94. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £41,065.81 for November and a copy of the monthly budget reports were also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for November 2022.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC – Councillors were asked to pass the following resolution – That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the disclosure of the following items on the agenda as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A in the 1972 Act.

..... DATE

CHAIRMAN

95. PAY AWARD FOR 2022-23

Information has been received from the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services regarding the agreement of the pay scales for 2022-23. Councillors were reminded that staff were paid in accordance with the NJC pay scales.

Agreement had been reached on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2022. The new pay scales for 2022-23 represented a flat rate pay increase of £1925 across all salary points.

The NJC had also agreed that from 1 April 2023 all employees covered by the National Agreement, regardless of their current leave entitlement or length of service, would receive a permanent increase of one day (pro-rata for part timers) to their annual leave entitlement. The NJC fully expected that the additional days leave would be applied for all staff.

The payment for this year needed to be backdated to 1 April 2022 and NALC were asking employers to pay this as soon as possible. However, this was received too late for the November salary payments so this would be paid in December.

In response to a query, the Clerk reported that payments of backdated salary could be paid to employees who had left the organisation from 1 April to the date of leaving. This had to be at the request of the employee.

RESOLVED – The Council approved the implementation of the pay award and additional leave as set out above in accordance with staff contracts.

96. PTC OFFICE RENTAL COSTS

A report by the Clerk in relation to notification from the current landlord of Meadowfield Court, of a rent increase for the PTC offices with effect from 1 January 2023 had been circulated. A months’ notice has been given. There had not been an increase since the current landlord had acquired the offices in March 2020.

The rental payment included the cost of energy both electricity and gas heating as well as cleaning and supplies for the communal areas. The Town Council met the cost of water usage and waste collection.

Details of the proposed increase was reported to members and a new agreement would be sent to the Clerk for signature.

RESOLVED – The Council accepted the information relating to the rent increase and authorised the Clerk to sign the agreement when received.

The Mayor took the opportunity to wish all Councillors and staff a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL WOULD BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 2023 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON HALL

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CHAIRMAN