

# **PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2023**

**Present:** Councillor K Overbury (in the Chair)

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

### **19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Johnson.

### **20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hall declared an interest in Minute 25(i) and (ii) and Minute 32 and took no part in the voting or discussion.

### **21. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> MAY 2023**

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

### **22. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **(i) Minute 13 – Allotment Tenancy agreement**

The Clerk reported that the new agreements had been sent out to all tenants and various comments had been received. These would be collated for consideration by the Environment Working Party. It appeared likely that an evening meeting would need to be arranged with tenants and the adviser at the Northern Counties Allotment Association had agreed to attend.

#### **(ii) Minute 14 – Events Working Party**

The Chair of the Working Party reminded members that some assistance to direct the parade at the leisure centre was required on Remembrance Sunday. Councillor Dodd had volunteered but further help would be useful. She also reported that Party in the Park held on 11 June had gone well with no reports of any issues.

### **23. CO-OPTION OF T OWN COUNCILLORS TO FILL VACANCY IN NORTH WARD**

Councillors had interviewed two candidates prior to the meeting to fill the vacant position in the North Ward. Mr Kevin Wilson had been nominated as the successful candidate.

RESOLVED – That Mr Kevin Wilson be appointed as a Councillor to fill the vacancy in the North Ward.

**23. CO-OPTION OF T OWN COUNCILLORS TO FILL VACANCY IN NORTH WARD(continued)**

Councillor Wilson joined the meeting and signed a declaration of acceptance of office.

**24. PLANNING**

**(i) Planning Committee**

Minutes of meetings held on 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 were circulated for information.

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

There were no reports.

**25. GRANT APPLICATIONS**

**(i) Ponteland Memorial Hall Trustees**

Members were reminded that following approval of a one-off grant made to the Memorial Hall trustees at the May meeting, they had been advised to submit a request for the annual grant of £6,600 which was available in the budget for 2023-24.

A grant application had been received and was circulated to Councillors.

RESOLVED – A grant of £6,600 be approved.

**(ii) Ponteland Rotary Club**

A grant application had been received from Ponteland Rotary Club for a grant of £350 to assist with the costs of providing portable toilets at their Duck Race event to be held on 3 September 2023.

Councillor Dodd stated that the Council was asked every year to provide funds for toilet facilities when the organisations involved gave the money raised at events to charity.

He asked if there was an alternative and various options were discussed.

It was agreed that this issue would be discussed by the Environment Working Party with a report back to the Council.

RESOLVED – A grant of £350 be approved.

**Note – Councillor Hall declared an interest in both applications above and took no part in the discussion or voting other than to provide relevant information.**

**26. ANNUAL AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2022-23**

A report by the Clerk had been circulated.

Members were informed that the Annual Audit Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) had to be sent to the Town Council's external auditors, Mazars by 30 June 2023. This related to the annual audit of accounts for 2022-23.

**26. ANNUAL AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2023-24**

A copy of the relevant sections of the AGAR form had been circulated with the report.

A copy of the Internal Auditors report (page 3 of the AGAR) had been circulated. A written report was expected from the Internal Auditor which would be circulated when received.

A copy of the Annual Governance Statement (page 4 of the AGAR) had been circulated and Councillors reviewed the information and responded to the various questions included in the Statement.

The Accounting Statement (page 5) was approved and was signed by the Mayor as the person presiding at the meeting. The Clerk had already signed the Accounting Statement prior to circulation to the Council. The Council also reviewed the draft annual accounts.

It was suggested that the notice of public rights should start from Tuesday 27 June ending on Monday 7 August. The information would appear on the website on Monday 26 June.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) The Council approved the Internal Auditors report.
- (ii) The Council considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement.
- (iii) The Council considered and approved the draft final accounts as presented.
- (iv) The Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements and ensured they were signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.
- (v) Councillors noted that the process for the exercise of public rights would start from Tuesday 27 June ending on Monday 7 August. They also noted that information would be published on the website one day before the start date so by Monday 26 June.

**27. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY**

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Working Party held on 22 May 2023 had been circulated.

There was one recommendation which was requesting approval to order a plaque to commemorate the coronation for the seat to the right of the Peel House entrance. This was agreed.

The majority of the work had been completed at the rockery, delivery of the seat for the location above was awaited but this would be shipped in the following week.

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CHAIRMAN

**27. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY(Continued)**

The Chair of the Working Party, Councillor Greenwell asked if any Councillors were willing to join the group as there were currently only 4 members. Councillor Wilson agreed to join the Working Party.

In relation to item 10(i), Councillor Darwin confirmed that there was a bin at the entrance to Jameson Manor. The Clerk confirmed that the correspondent had been informed of that.

Councillor Darwin also mentioned item 12 relating to the painting of the Darras Road bridge. It was reported that this was an issue for the Highways Working party who had discussed it at their meeting held on 12 June. It had been agreed that the Clerk would obtain prices for cleaning the bridge in the first instance and if painting was required, prices would be sought for painting the roadside of the bridge only.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved, and the recommendation outlined under item 3(i)(1) be agreed.

**28. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**

It was reported that the County Council boundary changes report produced by the Electoral Commission had identified two changes affecting the Town Council in the North and East wards. Due to the increase in population size in the North ward, it was recommended that there should be four Town Councillors in that ward and only two in Ponteland East.

Councillor Darwin reported that he had attended the NCC Council meeting prior to attendance at this meeting where the main item of business was discussion of the Challenge Board review. This review suggested that there was an improvement in the culture and atmosphere at NCC with improvements in relations between officers and Councillors as well as an improvement in cross party relations. The report was available on the NCC website.

Councillor Hall suggested that it may be useful to have a presentation from the County Councillors for the area to find out more about what was happening at NCC. This would be considered.

**28A. MAYOR’S REPORT**

A report by the Councillor Overbury had been circulated. The Mayor stated that she would be providing a monthly update on meetings and events that she attended.

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CHAIRMAN

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

There were no reports.

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

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £42,173.79 for May 2023.

A copy of the monthly budget report was also circulated, as well as the Bank reconciliation for May 2023.

A year-end budget revisions report had also been circulated which showed that an amount of £38,674 could be transferred to general reserves once all the carry forward amounts had been agreed.

A suggestion was made to hold this sum for projects during the year and the Clerk explained that this was possible if Councillors agreed.

Councillor Wilson mentioned that other Town Councils provided small amounts for Councillors to use in their wards. The Clerk agreed to investigate this further.

The Clerk also mentioned that the carry forward amount may need slight amendment as the sum of £600 may be required to fulfil approval of a grant to NE Youth to meet the costs of booking Merton Hall for the youth club. This was currently being investigated.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the item below on the agenda as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A in the 1972 Act.

**32. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION**

A report relating to the above had been circulated.

This had been produced following informal discussions in May about a potential offer of office premises.

A suggestion was made within the report to set up a small working party to review the current accommodation and examine alternatives available.

A further proposal was made to hold a meeting between the Council and the organisation who had made the offer prior to setting up the suggested working party.

There was a lot of discussion on this matter and a vote was taken on the counter proposal.

RESOLVED – That a meeting be held as outlined above.

It was noted that there were five Councillors who voted in favour of the proposal, two against and two abstentions.

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CHAIRMAN

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL  
WOULD BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 JULY 2023 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON  
HALL.**

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CHAIRMAN

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DATE