

# **PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT MERTON HALL ON 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

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

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

### **58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **60. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

### **61. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **Minute 52 Events Working Party**

A meeting of the above had been arranged for 26 September but had had to be postponed due to unavailability of members.

The issue relating to D-Day 80 would be discussed at the rearranged meeting.

### **62. PLANNING**

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

Minutes of meetings held on 29 August and 12 September 2023 were circulated for information.

Councillor Varley raised the issue of farm workers' dwellings, and said he was grateful for information that had been circulated on this topic. He felt that the Committee needed to look carefully at these applications in the future.

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

There were no reports.

### **63. GRANT APPLICATION**

#### **(i) Request from Archaeological Investigation Services for funding for an information panel**

A report by the Clerk in relation to the above request was circulated.

### **63. GRANT APPLICATION(Continued)**

#### **(i) Request for Archaeological Investigation Services for funding for an information panel**

The Town Council had been contacted by the above-mentioned organisation after being asked by NCC to produce a panel relating to investigations carried out on the site of the Ponteland Leisure Centre when a discovery of human burials and cremations had been made. The Town Council had been approached for funding of this project as the NCC Archaeologist did not have funds available to produce the item.

There were various locations where this panel may be situated. This included the school, the leisure centre, or the library. Various options had been provided for types and costs of plaques however it appeared that a digital file could be produced which could then be printed onto Foamex board with a cost-effective mounting solution. The anticipated cost of this was £550.

Members suggested that the library would be the best option where such a panel could be seen by the public. They also felt it was important to mark the history of this find. It was also suggested that the Clerk ask the company to come forward with a costed proposal including details of the agreed location and this would be further considered by the Town Council.

RESOLVED – The Clerk be asked to request the company to produce an agreed and costed proposal which would include details of location which the Council would consider at a future meeting.

### **64. NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2022-23**

A report by the Clerk in relation to the above had been circulated.

The report stated that the External Auditors Report and Certificate had been received on 26 September and this was circulated to Councillors together with a copy of sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Annual Return (AGAR). The auditors, Mazars, had not raised any matters with the Town Council although they did note that box 11a in Section 2 of the AGAR had been left blank. This was raised as a minor issue for internal reporting only as they did agree that the answer could be inferred from the other answers on the AGAR form. The Council was asked to ensure that in future, all boxes were filled in, marking nil or not applicable where appropriate,

The information was displayed on notice boards and on the Town Council's website on 27 September for a period of 14 days. The information had to be published by the 30 September.

RESOLVED – The Council approve and accept the External Auditors Report and Certificate for 2022-23 and sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR.

## **65. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Councillors were reminded that a small Working Party was needed to carry out the annual review of the above documents. It was felt that a meeting was required as soon as possible to review the information.

RESOLVED – That Councillors Greenwell, Hall, Overbury and Varley be appointed to the Working Party to review the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

## **66. ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY**

Minutes of a meeting of the above Working Party held on 18 September had been circulated for consideration. There were no recommendations for approval.

Under item 4, Ash trees in the park, the Clerk had been asked to request that the contractor carrying out the work be asked to remove the timber from the park. It had been suggested that a community wood bank could be approached if this was a problem for the contractor.

There were potential problems with access to the park for the necessary machinery and the Clerk was asked to obtain a price for removing the timber.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved.

## **67. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**

Councillor Dodd reported that an announcement had been made about dualling a section of the A1 between Morpeth and Alnwick, this was part of the distribution of funds following the cancellation of part of the HS2 project. He also mentioned again about defibrillators and asked Councillors to make him aware of any information relating to this subject in the parish area.

Councillor Jones referred to the budget and stated that there were some difficult decisions to be made however, the County Council were keen to retain services such as grass cutting, leisure centres and libraries. She reported that she had taken on the role of overseeing the Inequalities Portfolio.

Councillor Jones mentioned the Local Transport Plan information and asked if she could be informed of the Town Council's priorities.

She also asked if it would be possible to keep her informed of any planning applications within her ward that the Town Council objected to. It was agreed to add Councillor Jones to the distribution list for the Planning Committee minutes.

## **67. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT(Continued)**

Councillor Overbury mentioned her attendance at the Town and Parish conference with NCC on 5 October. The Leader of the Council had said that the Council was committed to keeping public toilets open and perhaps opening others. She had heard a comment made recently by a member of the public praising the provision of public toilets in the county.

## **68. MAYOR'S REPORT**

A report by the Mayor, Councillor Overbury had been circulated.

## **69. REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

There was a brief discussion regarding the Newcastle Airport Consultative Committee. Councillor Varley agreed to produce a summary report for circulation to members if required.

## **70. ACCOUNTS/ BANK RECONCILIATION/ BUDGET REPORT**

The Accounts Committee approved payments totalling £41,979.27 for September 2023.

A copy of the budget reports for September were also circulated, as well as the bank reconciliation for that month.

RESOLVED – The reports be accepted.

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC – Councillors are asked to pass the following resolution** - 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.

## **71. STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting held on 27 September 2023 had been circulated.

RESOLVED – The Minutes be approved.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL WOULD BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.15 P.M. AT MERTON HALL.**