

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

7 SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Cooke (in the Chair); Councillors Blissett and Harrison.

Officers: Mr King (Town Clerk) and Mrs Jane Woodward (Deputy Clerk).

In attendance: Two members of the press.

18. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Moorhouse (personal reasons); Councillor Deacon (personal/family reasons); and Councillor Kinch (illness).

Resolved – That Councillors' apologies be accepted.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 72(a)/Sep/12 refers), Members were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members were reminded that a declaration could be given later in the meeting if a need arose during discussion. There were no declarations of interest at this juncture.

20. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 15 JUNE 2015 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the Minutes be accepted as a correct record.

21. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS

Submitted – A report and associated appendices relating to payments and receipts for the period 9 June 2015 to 28 August 2015 and income & expenditure relating to the month end of July 2015 (Month 4). It was reported that reconciliation of the 2015/16 first quarter was carried out by Councillor Harrison on 7 July 2015.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

22. BUDGET 2016/17 – INITIAL CONSIDERATION

Submitted – A report setting out the budget preparation timetable, inflationary/other factors to be taken into consideration, predicted underspends and future projects and growth. It was confirmed that budgetary headings would be examined in detail at next meeting on 2 November, together with new projects approved for recommendation to Council on 16 November. The whole of the proposed budget for 2016/17 would be examined by this Committee on 11 January, with the proposed budget recommended to Council on 18 January 2016.

It was reported that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant (LCTRS) would continue in its present form for 2016/17. Durham County Council anticipated a net reduction in income to the town council of £915.98, equivalent to 0.5% increase on current precept.

It was prudent for pay inflation of 1% to be built into salaries and that from April 2016, the national 'Living Wage' was to be set at £7.20 per hour for those aged 25 and over,

affecting mini golf attendant wages. Employer on-costs in relation to National Insurance needed to be taken into account.

Specific inflationary demands would be identified against individual budget headings. It was confirmed that capping criteria at 2% increase in precept was unlikely to impinge on the town council at its current gross expenditure or Band D equivalent precept levels.

All known underspends on the 2015/16 budget, would be taken into account when considering the recommended figure to put forward for 2016/17.

All Members had been contacted by letter to indicate any new projects to put forward to next Resources Committee on 2 November.

Resolved – (a) That the report be received and information noted;
(b) That 1% pay inflation be built into salaries for 2016/17;
(c) That non-pay inflation be factored in at 1%;
(d) That Services Committee take into account increase in National Minimum Wage when considering mini golf budget for 2016/17 and;
(e) That a velvet collar for mayoral chains be put forward as a new budgetary item in 2016/17, for consideration at next Committee meeting on 2 November.

23. MARKET CROSS LIGHTING SCHEME – CONSIDERATION OF REPORT

Received – a report seeking approval to procure lighting units for the scheme to externally illuminate the Market Cross.

The equipment specified by the Durham County Council's street lighting engineers was proprietary and was exempt to the general rules for obtaining quotations for goods and services set out in the Town Council's Financial Regulation, 11(a)(vi). This equipment was proprietary because, in the engineers' opinion, it was the only equipment appropriate to be attached to their lamp posts. DCC had supplied a quotation provided by their approved lighting supplier, MacLean Electrical, which totalled £7,727.61 plus VAT. This was consistent with the quotation supporting the Town Council's original bid for TAP funding and maintained the overall scheme cost of £11,614 plus VAT, which was entirely covered by the acquired, external funding.

Resolved – (a) That Resources Committee recommend for onward approval by Council on 21 September, that lighting units (as specified by DCC's street lighting engineers), be purchased by DCC, then recharged to the town council at a cost of £7,727.61 plus VAT.

24. SALE OF ALLOTMENT ACCESS LAND – BEDE ROAD

Submitted – a report confirming conclusion of sale of land to the rear of numbers 9 and 11 Bede Road, resulting in a capital receipt to the Town Council of £19,000.

It was confirmed under section 11 of the Local Government Act 2003, capital received for land, other than held in trust, must be used to discharge debt or for any lawful capital purpose.

Resolved – (a) That the report be noted;
(b) That the capital receipt of £19,000, for the sale of land to the rear of numbers 9 and 11 Bede Road, be allocated to the Allotment Improvement Holding Account and;
(c) That Services Committee approve a programme of capital works within the allotment improvement programme.

25. TENFIELDS LEASE ARRANGEMENTS UPDATE

It was reported that a request had been received by the Treasurer of Barnard Castle Football Club (BCFC) to explore the option of reducing rental costs. BCFC was reported to be making a loss at the Tenfields site. It should be noted that Council endorsed the decision of Services Committee for a new 35 year lease to be prepared between this Council and BCFC for the rental of Tenfields, with the yearly rental for the first five years to be £100 and every five years thereafter an incremental increase of (at least) 5%, subject to review, be applied, with the costs of the preparation of the lease being met from the 2014/15 Play Areas budget (Council Minute 75(4)(a)(ii)/Dec/13 refers). The annual rental for Tenfields was purposefully set at a low level to be offset by the grounds maintenance undertaken by the tenant.

Resolved – (a) That there was no change to the yearly rental agreement and;
(b) That BCFC carry out grounds maintenance at their discretion to reduce costs.

26. BARNARD CASTLE METHODIST CHURCH SPIRE APPEAL UPDATE

It was reported that investigations and discussions were continuing between the Town Council and the Methodist Church for support to be given to the Spire Appeal.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

27. WOODLEIGH

(a) Woodleigh Working Group – 23 June 2015 – Draft notes

Resolved – That the notes be received for information.

(b) Update

It was reported that the lease and licence for Woodleigh was signed by the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor on 14 August 2015. Completion of the lease was delayed due to addition of a condition to the deed held by the Land Registry requiring a licence for disposal to be issued by Durham County Council, in addition to its role as landlord.

The lease had been sealed by the county council, but the licence to carry out works on the building had not. Remedial works to the electrics had been carried out by county council's contractors. Information was awaited from the county council's assets team on the work to the exterior of the building to make the roof and windows water-tight. There had been no rent free period negotiated to date.

Resolved – (a) That the position be noted and;
(b) That another meeting of the Woodleigh Working Group be called when lease completed and programme of works from DCC confirmed.

28. DEFIBRILLATOR

North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) had recommended a Community Public Access Defibrillator (CPAD) from an approved supplier at a cost of £841.75. The cost of a coded box for external installation was approximately £600. Friends of The Richardson Hospital had agreed to contribute up to £1,000, to be spent by year end December 2015. The town council reserves were an option to fund the shortfall. A location for the CPAD and cabinet was discussed. Morrison's and St. Mary's Parish Hall were both interested as potential locations, however, siting a defibrillator at St. Mary's Parish Hall would give greater coverage within the town.

Resolved – (a) That procurement of the CPAD meeting the specification recommended by NEAS be approved.

(b) That the shortfall between the overall cost of the installation and the funding provided by the Friends of the Richardson Hospital (£441.75) be met from general reserves.

(c) That the preferred location of the CPAD be the exterior of St Mary's Parish Hall.

29. FLOODING OF GARDEN ON MARWOOD DRIVE UPDATE

Pursuant to Minute 15/Jun/15, Fields in Trust (FiT) had clarified the Terms of Agreement with the Town Council. FiT held the land as custodian, with maintenance and management being the responsibility of the Town Council.

It was reported that the town council had no legal liability regarding surface water flooding. According to Northumbrian Water, the area had a medium risk of flooding and the land was well above the level of the water table. Conclusive evidence was still being gathered from the Environment Agency on how the flooding risk was calculated. It was noted that Durham County Council was responsible for water courses and that Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency both had a role. Members felt it was unfair that the precept should pay for something that was historically repetitious. The town council also managed other areas of open space, such as Green Lane, that was also liable to flooding.

Resolved – (a) That the position be noted and;

(b) That the matter be referred back to Services Committee on 19 October.

30. PROPOSED CLOSURE OF PATHWAYS CONSULTATION

Received – a letter from a resident of the town seeking support from the Town Council to object to Durham County Council's proposal to close Barnard Castle Pathways between March and September 2016. This was part of wider proposed changes to County Durham Care and Support Day Services. The nearest day care service would be Spennymoor. Durham County Council's consultation ended prior to next full Council meeting.

Resolved – That the town council supports the resident's letter and strongly objects to the proposal to close Barnard Castle day services, due to the negative impacts this would have on service users and carers in the town.

31. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & DATA ACCESS REQUESTS

Received – a report outlining requests received under the provision of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

It was reported that the town council had received two Freedom of Information (Fol) requests on 30 July and 7 August 2015. Both had been responded to. One Data Subject Access request had also been received on 10 August 2015, which was being dealt with.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

32. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF ITEM 33 BELOW)

Resolved – That, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 §1(2), the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matter referred to at item 33, below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted: in that it was not in the public interest.

33. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Submitted – a report outlining changes to the town council's banking arrangements to take effect from 13 October 2015.

The town council's bank accounts were held with Barclay's Bank, Barnard Castle. Bank charges were to be introduced for handling cash and cheques. A fully electronic payment plan would not suit day to day operation arrangements of the town council. A mixed payment plan was the best option. Investigations had been made with all other banks within the town; none offered the services or met the requirements of the council in terms of accounts available, opening times, business support etc. It was proposed that a new budget heading of 'Bank Charges' be created in the council's accounts to record transactional charges, to be offset by interest received on the council's deposits.

Resolved – (a) That it be recommended to Council on 21 September that a mixed payment plan be taken up with effect from 13 October 2015 and that the council continue to work towards making more payments via direct debit and receives as many receipts as possible by BACS.

(b) That the council establishes a budget heading of 'Bank Charges' against which all relevant expenditure and income is recorded and that existing monthly charges for BACS payments in relation to salaries (currently charged to 'Employer On-costs') be transferred to this heading.