

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**16 JANUARY 2017**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Cooke (in the Chair); Councillors Harrison, Sutherland, Blissett, Mrs Thompson and Mrs Moorhouse.

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

**In attendance:** One member of the press.

**44. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Kinch, who was unwell.

**Resolved** – That the apologies be accepted.

**45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 17(b)/May/16 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.

**46. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 31 OCTOBER 2016 – MINUTES**

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

**47. WOODLEIGH WORKING GROUP – 9 JANUARY 2017 – DRAFT NOTES**

It was reported that at the end of December, the income from Dawson Room hire was £1,299.

Responses were circulated from the consultation events on 14 December 2016 and 7 January 2017 and online feedback pertaining to the proposed transfer of assets and services from Durham County Council.

Various recommendations were referred to this Committee for consideration:

- Resolved** – (a) That the draft notes be received for information;
- (b) That the town council proceeds with the transfer of management of open spaces from Durham County Council (subject to reservations) and that this be reflected in the 2017/18 budget;
- (c) That £186.88 be netted off ATDC invoice for rent;
- (d) That a programme of maintenance for the building be drawn up and prioritised;
- (e) That estimates be sought for painting of window frames;
- (f) That estimates be sought for secondary double glazing; and
- (g) That the information be received and noted.

#### **48. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS**

(a) Task & Finish Group Notes:

(i) **17 November 2016** (Scoping and First Review: Statement of Constitution; Protocol on the Use of Council Facilities and Resources by Councillors; Employees' Code of Conduct; and Officer Member Protocol.).

(ii) **25 November 2016** (Second Review of Constitution and Risk Management Policy).

(iii) **13 December 2016** (Draft) (Risk Management Policy and Staff Handbook).

**Resolved** – That the documents reviewed and amended by the Task & Finish Group to date, namely: Statement of Constitution; Protocol on the Use of Council Facilities and Resources by Councillors; Employees' Code of Conduct; Officer Member Protocol; Risk Management Policy and Staff Handbook be recommended to Full Council for approval at its meeting on 20 March 2017.

#### **49. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS**

Submitted– a report outlining budget activity for the 2016/17 financial year since the last Resources Committee meeting on 31 October 2016. Budget monitoring information was presented relating to payments and receipts for the period 1 October to 31 December 2016 and income & expenditure relating to the month end of December 2016 (Month 9, 2016/17).

In line with Section 2(b) of the council's Financial Regulations, reconciliation of the 2016/17 third quarter was carried out by the vice-chair on 9 January 2017.

**Resolved** – That the information be received and noted.

#### **50. BUDGET 2017/18 – FINAL REPORT**

Received – a report considering the 2017/18 budget as a whole to enable recommendations to be formulated, including the recommended precept figure, for onward presentation to the full Council meeting on 23 January 2017. It was reported that confirmation had been received that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) Grant the council would receive in 2017/18 was £6,348 (decrease of £2,757).

It was reported that the current balance of general reserves was approximately £72,643 compared to the target figure of £70,000 (Resources Committee Minute 21/Nov/13 and Council Minute 77/Dec/13 refers).

Members were informed that if the proposed budget remained unchanged, the total 2017/18 demand on Durham County Council would be £187,059 made up of Precept of £180,711 and LCTRS Grant of £6,348. Based on 2017/18 parish tax base of 1,781.5 Band D equivalent properties, this equated to an annual contribution of £101.44; an increase of £3.77 per annum (approximately 7 pence per week or 3.86% for a Band D property in Barnard Castle).

Members debated reducing certain expenditure items to calculate the budget on a lower percentage precept increase per Band D household.

**Resolved** – (a) That the following changes to budgetary allocations for 2017/18 be recommended to full Council on 23 January 2017:

(i) Co. Durham Association (Expenditure Item 7) be **£715 (increase of £5)**;

(ii) Local Government Pension (Expenditure item 15) be **£17,381 (increase of £1,445)**;

(iii) Employer on-costs (Expenditure item 16) be **£8,080 (increase of £740)**;

(iv) Business Rates and Water Rates (Expenditure item 18) be **£2,500 (decrease of £2,162)**  
(v) Floral and Open Spaces (Expenditure item 41) be **£11,500 (decrease of £2,200 on previously submitted figure)**.

(b) That an Earmarked Reserve in 2017/18 of £2,200 be set up for maintenance of additional open spaces transferred from DCC;

(c) That a detailed reserves review, with comparison of last 4 years' reserve levels, be presented at next Resources Committee on 6 March 2017;

(d) That Youth Council (new Expenditure item 52) be **£500 (decrease of £1,500 on previously submitted figure)** subject to investigations on administrative costs;

(e) That Dementia Friendly Town (new Expenditure item 53) be **£500 (no change on previously submitted figure)** subject to further detail on spend.

(f) That Town Mayor's Charity Fund (Expenditure item 40) be renamed Town Mayor's Civic Fund aimed at raising the profile of the town, within objectives, guidance and evaluation to be established by full Council.

## **51. INTERNAL AUDIT 2016/17 – HALF YEAR INTERNAL CONTROL REPORTS**

Submitted – a report detailing the half-year internal control checks carried out during November 2016 by Mr Gordon Fletcher, as approved by Resources Committee (minute 6/Jun/16 refers).

For the financial year 2016/17 checks were carried out on the following areas of work:

- Income Collection and Banking Arrangements and;
- Accounts Payable (Creditors).

Full assurance was awarded to both services examined, as follows:

- Income Collection and Banking Arrangement – Full Assurance with one issue found; and
- Accounts Payable (Creditors) – Full Assurance with no issues found.

**Resolved** – (a) That the information contained in the reports, together with the recommended action, be noted; and

(b) That the recommended action that the town council determines its own procedures and charges for the running of the Wednesday Market be referred to Services Committee on 20 February.

## **52. SUB STATION LEASE**

It was reported that Durham County Council, as the landlord of Woodleigh, operated a wayleave agreement with Northern Powergrid for the operation of the electricity sub-station in the corner of the Woodleigh Car Park. This area was excluded from the town council's lease and provisions regarding access to the substation and avoiding obstruction of the substation were included in the terms of the lease between DCC and the town council. Notwithstanding these, Northern Powergrid required the town council to be a joint signatory to its lease with Durham County Council. There were no additional restrictions or conditions applying to the town council as a result of this. Durham County Council would cover the town council's administrative costs in signing this lease at the sum of £50.

**Resolved** – That the lease be appropriately signed by two members on behalf of Barnard Castle Town Council.

### **53. DEFIBRILLATOR UPDATE**

Pursuant to Minute 39/Oct/16, NEAS had delivered a defibrillator familiarisation session organised by the town council on 30 November to nine local people. The defibrillator had been installed via donation from the Town Mayor's Charity Fund, as reimbursement for the funds expended from the capital reserve. It was noted that consumables would need to be renewed from 2018/19.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

### **54. TREE PRESERVATION ORDER – POLICE STATION, BEDE KIRK**

Following the request from a Barnard Castle resident and pursuant to Planning Committee (Minute 68/Nov/16 refers), a recommendation was made to Resources Committee for the town council to apply for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect trees on the green area fronting Harmire Road, following the proposed sale of Barnard Castle Police Station and adjacent green area.

**Resolved** – That the town council applies for a TPO to protect trees on the green area fronting Harmire Road, following the proposed sale of Barnard Castle Police Station and adjacent green area.

### **55. DRAFT PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN BILL CONSULTATION**

It was reported that NALC was requesting comments by 24 January for a co-ordinated response to the Cabinet Office on the draft legislation setting out the Government's plans for a new Public Service Ombudsman (PSO). The Draft Bill proposed to abolish the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) and the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and aimed to bring parish and town councils into scope of the new PSO. Members discussed the impact of the proposed changes and were in favour of retaining LGO to cover town and parish councils.

**Resolved** – That the town council submits a response to NALC on the Draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill that the LGO be retained and extended to cover parish and town councils, beginning with larger councils (based on NALC definition of a larger council) in the first instance.

### **56. NOTICE OF COMPLAINT RECEIVED ON 1 DECEMBER 2016**

It was reported that a complaint was received about an individual member of staff and was dealt with under the town council's complaints procedure by the Town Mayor and Vice Chairman of Resources Committee. The complaint was resolved informally on 15 December.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

### **57. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR FROM 2017**

Pursuant to Council Minute 103/Jan/16, when the town council resolved to opt in to Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAAL), a successful procurement exercise resulted in the appointment of an external auditor for town and parish councils in the Durham area. Members were informed that for a 5 year period from the 2017/18 accounts onwards, annual returns would be submitted to Mazars LLP.

There were no changes to the current audit arrangements for the current financial year. BDO would undertake the external audit of the town council's accounts from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

**58. ROYAL GARDEN PARTIES 2017**

It was reported that CDALC had been allocated four places for the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 23 May 2017. Nominations were requested by 20 January. Invitations were in recognition of past service. Nominated Councillors or accompanying guests should not have previously attended. Nominations were for two people. Nominations would be drawn at random on 23 or 24 January.

**Resolved** – That Councillor Blissett, Town Mayor, be nominated to be put forward to CDALC to be entered into the draw.