

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING**

19TH JULY, 2010

(NOTE – Prior to the meeting and in accordance with the decision at Minute 186(2)/Mar/09, a 15-minute slot was allocated for public participation. No questions had been raised in advance and no members of the public were present.)

PRESENT:- Councillor Cooke (Town Mayor)(in the Chair); Councillors Mrs Bailes, Blissett, Mrs Hamilton, Peat, Watson, Wood and Yarker.

Officers:- Mr Bosworth (Town Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Assistant Town Clerk).

38A. APOLOGIES:- Councillors Mrs Dixon, Harrison and Hinchcliffe.

39A. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 20/Jun/07 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.

40. ATTENDANCE OF POLICE REPRESENTATIVES

In accordance with the arrangements agreed at Minute 176(b)/Mar/09, Police Constable H. Marsh and Acting Sergeant G. Smith from Barnard Castle Police attended the meeting. Members were informed of current priorities which included the Police and Communities Together (PACT) priorities, Operation Blighton, crime trends, policing during the travellers period, Pub Watch and the recently established Shop Watch. A 'question and answer' session ensued, with references made to speeding, inconsiderate parking and cyclists using footpaths.

Resolved – That Police Constable Marsh and Acting Sergeant Smith be thanked for their attendance.

41. COUNCIL MEETING – 7TH JUNE, 2010 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the Minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record.

42. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING – 28TH JUNE, 2010 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the Minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record.

43. 'EN BLOC' ITEMS

Submitted – In accordance with Minute 72/Aug/04, a further set of items with the accompanying recommendations to be moved 'en bloc'. The six items considered at the meeting were as follows:-

(1) Modernisation Committee Meeting – 21st June, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(2) Planning Committee Meeting – 28th June, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(3) Finance Committee Meeting – 28th June, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(4) Christmas Festival Committee Meeting – 5th July, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(5) Modernisation Committee Meeting – 5th July, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(6) Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's Activities

It was reported that, since the Council meeting on 7th June, 2010, the Town Mayor had attended the following, supported by the Deputy Town Mayor at the Town Council's Garden Judging on 12th July, 2010:-

- 13th June** (accompanied by Town Mayoress (Miss R. Abrahams))
St John Ambulance's Annual Service of Commemoration and Rededication (Cathedral Church of Christ, Blessed Mary The Virgin and St Cuthbert, St John's College, Durham) and Award Presentation (St John's College, Durham).
- 17th June** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Teesdale District Scouts' Annual General Meeting (Scout Headquarters).
- 19th June** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Opening of Teesdale District Scouts' Family Barbeque Event (Scar Top).
- 25th June** Launch of new Café, Deli and Gift Shop at Thorpe Farm Centre.
- 3rd July** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Barnard Castle School's Speech Day and Prize-giving.
- 7th July** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Aviation Day (HMYOI Deerbolt).
- 8th July** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
The Castle Players' pre-show reception and performance of 'All's Well that Ends Well' (The Bowes Museum grounds).
- 10th July** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
The Friends of The Bowes Museum Music Group Gala Concert – Young Sinfonia and the History of The Friends of The Bowes Museum 1950 – 2010 (The Bowes Museum).
- 12th July** Town Council's Garden Judging – The Deputy Town Mayor accompanied the judge on the morning visits and the Town Mayor accompanied the judge on the afternoon visits to entries.
- 17th July** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Town Council's Floral Competition (Methodist Church Hall).

Resolved – That the information be noted.

44. REFERRAL FROM MODERNISATION COMMITTEE – REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF TOWN COUNCIL – REVISED IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALE

Reference was made to the recommendation of the Modernisation Committee, at Minute 14 of the set of Minutes at sub-section (1) of Minute 43 above, regarding a further revised timescale for the implementation of the review of the role of the Town Council. Whilst it was acknowledged that the review had been ongoing for some time, there was a relatively large workload still to be carried out, not least in respect of the production of a 50-60 page report. Consequently, the Committee considered that the September 2010 implementation deadline was totally impractical and that a further deferment of that deadline was warranted.

Resolved – That approval be given to the recommendation of the Modernisation Committee that the revised implementation of the review of the role of the Town Council be March 2011 and that the resolution at Minute 135/Jan/10 be rescinded accordingly.

45. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES

(A) Specific Updates

Submitted – A report providing updates of some of this Council's representations on other bodies. The nine items included in the report were as follows:-

(1) Barnard Castle Vision Sub-Group

It was confirmed that meetings between the Barnard Castle Vision's Chairman and the Clerk had been arranged and that agendas were being produced to ensure that those meetings were constructive. It was therefore considered unnecessary for the Clerk to attend Vision Sub-Group meetings. However, because the whole communication process might have to be reviewed at some time in the future, the Clerk's membership of the Sub-Group would officially continue for the time being.

(2) Barney Guild – Meeting on 29th June, 2010

It was reported that, pursuant to Minute 22(1)/Jun/10, a further meeting of the Guild had taken place on 29th June, 2010 and had been attended by Councillor Peat, this Council's representative. At that meeting, it was agreed that all Town businesses should be canvassed, by means of a questionnaire, in respect of joining the Guild. Other matters discussed included a summary of relevant events in the previous few months, proposed future events, the Tourism Destination Plan (which promoted County Durham generally but not Teesdale specifically) and the imminent introduction of a bigger 'Barney Bag' at a cost of £2 each.

(3) County Durham Clerks' Co-ordination Group

It was confirmed that, the Co-ordination Group's meetings had become infrequent, not least because there were other structures in place to convey local councils' concerns to Durham County Council. However, it was understood that there were plans to revamp the Co-ordination Group, with its usefulness for all local councils being a key goal. In the meantime, the Clerk's membership of the Co-ordination Group would continue.

(4) The Lady Barnard Memorial Fund

Pursuant to Minute 10/May/10, the Clerk to the Trustees had indicated that it would be helpful if the vacancy was filled so that a full complement of Trustees could formally wind up the Fund. A second nominee from this Council was therefore sought.

(5) South West Durham Heritage Corridor Partnership

As reported at Minute 10/May/10 refers, the Partnership's operations were at a standstill, largely due to lack of funding. However, nothing had been formally confirmed to this Council. Consequently, the membership of Councillor Cooke (Town Mayor) on the Partnership would continue for the time being.

(6) The Stannard Trust

On behalf of this Council's representative Trustee (Councillor Yarker) and Mr Wilkinson (who remained as a Trustee), it was reported that the Clerk had sent a letter to the 1st Barnard Castle Scout Group Leader regarding an apparent recent decision on an application, the need to increase this Council's membership to three (as originally agreed) and the need for a draft constitution. Background information was provided and a subsequent reply indicated willingness to convene a Trust meeting.

(7) Teesdale Local Councils' Forum – Meeting on 14th June, 2010

It was reported that a Special meeting of the Forum had been urgently convened for 14th June, 2010 to discuss the draft County Durham Plan. Two officers from Durham County Council had attended the meeting and the consultation process was continuing until 6th August, 2010. It was also confirmed that the Forum meeting scheduled for 12th July, 2010 had been postponed until 26th July, 2010 because of the absences of the Forum's Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

(8) Teesdale Marketing Ltd

In accordance with Minute 10(b)/May/10, it was confirmed that a letter had been sent to Teesdale Marketing Ltd seeking clarification on the remit of this Council's representative on that body. A copy of this Council's letter and Teesdale Marketing's reply were circulated and Members' views were sought on any further course of action in this matter.

NOTE - Councillor Yarker declare an interest in respect of this item and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

(9) The Witham Hall Management Committee

It was reported that, because recent Management Committee meetings had taken place on the first floor of The Witham Hall, this Council's representative, Councillor Mrs Hamilton, had been unable to attend because she had not physically been able to gain access to the meetings. It was confirmed that the Chairman of The Witham Hall Trustees had agreed to alter the venue of the next meeting to a ground-floor location. It was likely that the dates of future meetings would be altered to ensure that there were no conflicts of a similar nature.

Resolved – (a) That all of the above information be noted

(b) That Councillor Blissett be nominated to fill the vacancy on The Lady Barnard Memorial Fund.

(c) That a further letter be sent to Teesdale Marketing Limited to seek absolute clarity on the remit of this Council's representative on that body.

(B) Views Expressed by Representatives

Councillor Wood expressed his concerns that Councillors who represented this Council on outside bodies were, for the most part, giving their own views at meetings of those bodies, even if those views were controversial/contrary to those of the Council. Councillor Wood was seeking some form of control of the situation. However, it was highlighted that, in reality, this would be extremely difficult to achieve, particularly as some of the issues discussed at outside bodies' meetings were not always known in advance.

An in-depth discussion ensued in respect of this matter, with particular emphasis placed on a recent article in the Teesdale Mercury that quoted a Councillor's comments, made at a Teesdale Local Councils' Forum meeting about a local employer and its alleged employment practices. The comments were perceived as controversial.

Resolved – (a) That a letter be sent to the Site Director of GlaxoSmithKline, Barnard Castle confirming that the views quoted in a recent edition of the Teesdale Mercury were not those of this Council but those of an individual Councillor.

(b) That Councillor Wood be invited to attend the Modernisation Committee meeting, scheduled for 2nd August, 2010 to discuss his general concerns further.

46A. TOURISM INITIATIVES – ATTENDANCES AT MEETINGS

Submitted – A report outlining two Tourism meetings attended by representatives of this Council. The first emanated from the Destination Development Plan for Barnard Castle commissioned by the Barnard Castle Vision and attendees included the Assistant Clerk. The Plan was originally designed in April 2009 and the meeting was convened to discuss a way forward. However, a further meeting was to be arranged which would determine the final 'selling-phrase' that would be used when marketing Barnard Castle.

The second meeting was convened following concerns expressed by the 6 County Councillors for the Teesdale area in respect of tourism promotion for Teesdale. Councillor Mrs Bailes represented this Council. A summary was given in respect of County Durham's various tourism bodies and initiatives, how Barnard Castle and Teesdale fitted into those initiatives and the changes that such bodies were undergoing due to 'cutbacks'. It was confirmed that the County Councillors would endeavour to locate suitable funding channels to improve the situation and a further meeting was to be arranged.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

46B. CONTINUATION MEETING SCHEDULING

At this point of the meeting, it was determined that, due to time constraints, a Continuation Meeting would be required.

Resolved - That a Continuation Meeting, to consider deferred items from this agenda, be scheduled for Monday, 2nd August, 2010 commencing at 6.30 p.m.

47. SERVICE AND PROJECT UPDATES

Submitted – A report providing updates of some of this Council's services and current projects. The nine items included in the report were as follows:-

(1) Dawson Road Play Area – Phase 2

It was reported that Dawson Play (with the help of Groundwork North East) were continuing to pursue two funding applications to effect progress with Phase 2 of the Dawson Road play areas improvement project which comprised the installation of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).

Various 'pros and cons' associated with a MUGA were outlined, including details in respect of floodlighting. Members' views were sought on the appropriate style of the MUGA and an Appendix had been circulated showing three examples to aid deliberation.

It was anticipated that there would be a degree of local residents' opposition in respect of the floodlights and it was confirmed that there would be community consultation prior to the MUGA's planning application being submitted.

It was also reported that the Council could consider offsetting maintenance costs by means of hiring out the MUGA to local groups and organisations. However, it was unclear how the facility would be policed. This matter would be considered again at a later date.

Resolved – (a) That a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) be installed at the Dawson Road play area, subject to the success of funding applications.

- (b) That Option 2 (wooden-boarded) be approved as the preferred type of MUGA.
- (c) That the installation of floodlights be agreed in principle.

(2) Floral Competition 2010

It was reported that a meeting of the Floral Competition Working Group had taken place on 21st June, 2010 to finalise arrangements for the 2010 Competition. The Garden section entrants were judged on 12th July, 2010 by Mr S. Robinson and he was accompanied by the Deputy Town Mayor in the morning and the Town Mayor in the afternoon, with Councillor Yarker attending for the whole of the day and Councillors Blissett and Mrs Hamilton attending for parts of the day. There were 36 entries, all of which were considered to be of a high standard

The winners were announced at the Annual Floral Competition Event on 17th July, 2010. The new categories introduced in 2009 (judged on the day of the Event) saw an increase in entries and it was considered that the Event was successful and enjoyed by all who attended.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(3) Floral Displays 2010

It was reported that it had not yet been possible to install this Council's hanging baskets as delays had been experienced with Durham County Council's contractor who carried out the tests. However, it had been confirmed that the tests should be carried out during the week commencing 19th July, 2010. Elm Ridge Gardens Limited had confirmed that the baskets were awaiting delivery prior to installation and, as such, full payment for the supply of the plants would still be required. With this in mind, the hanging baskets would be installed as soon as the column tests had been carried out and it was highlighted that the delay in the installation had been 'out of this Council's hands'. It was also confirmed that Durham County Council's floral displays were in position in the Town.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(4) War Memorials

Pursuant to Minute 156(2)/Mar/10, an update was provided on the following War Memorials matters:-

- (i) gilding work on the main Memorial in The Bowes Museum grounds, partly paid for by a local businessman;
- (ii) the Memorials were insured for impact damage only, with consequential reductions in the cost and the overall budgetary overspend; and
- (iii) the annual monitoring and inspection of the three Memorials had been carried out on 23rd June, 2010, involving a Services Administrator and Councillor Blissett, and the resultant findings were summarised in the submitted report.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(5) Website

It was reported that, as this Council's current website no longer met the Council's requirements, the Town Council had taken advantage of a Durham County Council scheme involving the design and implementation of websites for local councils. The service was provided free of charge and the Services Administrators would manage the website once it went live (scheduled for late-September/early-October 2010). The current website remained accessible but all detailed information had been deleted.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(6) Newsletter

It was reported that the fourteenth edition of the Newsletter would be published and distributed towards the end of August 2010 and a meeting of the Editorial Board would be scheduled for late July/early August to determine the content of that edition.

It was intended that one of the articles would be about the current economic climate and the budgetary cuts which would ensue at other levels of local government. Members' views were sought regarding the drafting of a statement from this Council's perspective.

Resolved – That the Clerk submit a relevant article to the next Council meeting.

(7) Hay Meadow on Upper Demesnes

Pursuant to Minute 2/May/10, a further update was given on the long-term hay meadow project on the Upper Demesnes, co-ordinated by Councillor Peat, including the process involved in creating the hay meadow and with huge interest generated, a number of local schools already carrying out visits. In addition, the North Pennines Area of Natural Beauty Partnership had become involved.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(8) Market Place Public Toilets

It was reported that little progress had been made in respect of the re-opening of the Market Place public toilets and consequently there would be a relatively large underspend on the relevant budget. The main stumbling block was Durham County Council's view that there should be alternative disabled toilets provision. County Councillor Bell hoped to provide a further update at the Council meeting scheduled for 6th September, 2010.

Resolved – That the situation be noted.

(9) Street and Open Spaces Care

Pursuant to Minute 155/Mar/10, it was reported that the Street and Open Spaces Care Working Group had held its first meeting on 12th July, 2010 to consider the first stages of proposals for a Street Care and Open Spaces Strategy for Barnard Castle. It was determined at that meeting that invitations should be extended to Durham County Council's Street Scene Manager (South) and to representatives from Teesdale Action Partnership's Environment and Clean Streets Task and Finish Group to attend the next Working Group meeting to clarify current initiatives being undertaken to tackle the issue and to establish any inconsistencies.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

48. BARNARD CASTLE VISION

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

49. COUNTY DURHAM PLAN/HOUSING STRATEGY - NEED FOR SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Submitted – A report outlining the need for a Special Council meeting to consider two consultation documents issued by Durham County Council, namely 'The County Durham Plan – Planning for the Future of County Durham – Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper' and 'Building Altogether Better Lives : A Housing Strategy for County Durham 2010-2015 – Issues and Options Paper'. Both documents had response deadlines of 6th August, 2010. It was recommended that the Special meeting took place on Monday,

2nd August, 2010, immediately following the Continuation Meeting (see Minute 46B above) and that the Modernisation Committee meeting scheduled for that evening be postponed until the following week.

Resolved – (a) That a Special Council meeting to consider the County Durham Plan/Housing Strategy be scheduled for Monday, 2nd August, 2010 immediately following the Continuation Meeting.

(b) That the Modernisation Committee meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010 be postponed until Monday, 9th August, 2010 to commence at 7.00 p.m.

50. NORTH WARD VACANCY – UPDATED SITUATION

Submitted – A report updating the North Ward vacancy situation, including reasons for the delay in progressing the matter and outlining the potential costs of an election should one be called for. It was confirmed that the Notice of Election would be published in the immediate future.

Resolved – That the updated situation be noted.

51. CONFERRING OF HONORARY TITLES BY LOCAL COUNCILS

Submitted – A report outlining amendments made to Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 by the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and further recent amendments in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to enable all local councils to confer the honorary titles of freemen or freewomen. Details of how the titles could be conferred were also outlined.

Resolved – (a) That this Council adopts procedures to confer the title of honorary freeman and honorary freewoman.

(b) That, the conferring of two specific nominees with honorary titles be further considered at the Special Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

52. APPLICATION FOR QUALITY STATUS – UPDATED SITUATION

Submitted – A report outlining the difficulties and delays experienced in the Clerk's attempt to submit his application in respect of the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). The qualification had to be obtained before this Council could apply for Quality Status. It was highlighted that the costs of re-registering had not been taken into account during consideration of the 2010/11 Training budget and concerns in respect of potential issues that could delay submission of the application further were also outlined.

Resolved – That the costs associated with the revised CiLCA training situation be approved and financed from the 2010/11 Training budget.

53. ISSUES CONCERNING NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS/COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

54. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT – POSSIBLE FURTHER ACTION

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

55. PARTIAL COLLAPSE OF THE CASTLE OUTER WARD PERIMETER WALL – UPDATED INFORMATION

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

56. CEMETERY PROVISION IN BARNARD CASTLE – UPDATED INFORMATION

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

57. THE BOWES MUSEUM PARK MASTER PLAN PROJECT – UPDATED INFORMATION

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 28/Jun/10, the resultant letter from this Council and the reply letter from the Museum's Director in respect of The Bowes Museum Park Master Plan project. It was confirmed that all Councillors had been invited to a meeting with representatives of The Bowes Museum on 6th August, 2010.

Resolved – That the invitation to the meeting with The Bowes Museum's representatives on the Park Master Plan Project be accepted.

58. OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR BANK HOLIDAYS

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

59. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minutes 60 and 61 below)

Resolved – That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to at Minutes 60 and 61 below on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Parts 1 and 7 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

60. TOWN COUNCIL'S OFFICE

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Continuation Council meeting scheduled for 2nd August, 2010.

61. TOWN HEAD ALLOTMENTS – SPECIFIC LEGAL AGREEMENT

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 166/Mar/10, a new draft Agreement prepared by this Council's legal advisor for Members' consideration.

Resolved – That the draft Agreement be approved.

**CONTINUATION COUNCIL MEETING
2ND AUGUST, 2010**

PRESENT :- Councillor Cooke (Town Mayor)(in the Chair); Councillors Mrs Bailes, Mrs Dixon, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Peat, Watson and Yarker.

Officers:- Mr Bosworth (Town Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Assistant Town Clerk).

38B. APOLOGIES:- Councillors Blissett and Wood.

39B. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 20/Jun/07 refers), Members were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the Continuation meeting 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.

48. BARNARD CASTLE VISION

Submitted - In accordance with the standard arrangements, a briefing note (jointly written by Mrs A. Ward of the Barnard Castle Vision and the Clerk) providing an update on the Vision's ongoing projects.

The Town Mayor and the Clerk both reported on their separate meetings with the Vision's Chairman. It was confirmed that different issues were discussed at the two meetings so that duplication was avoided. A short report was also provided on the briefing session for Councillors held at NeST on 29th July, 2010.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

53. ISSUES CONCERNING NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS / COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Submitted – A report outlining issues in respect of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). The issues included in the report were as follows:-

(A) CDALC's Executive Committee – Nominations of Candidates

It was reported that a request had been received from CDALC for nominations of candidates for positions on CDALC's Executive Committee. The present incumbents were willing to be renominated.

Resolved – That no nominations be made for positions on CDALC's Executive Committee.

(B) Parish and Town Council Support Compact

It was reported that Standards for England had announced that a Parish and Town Council Support Compact had been drafted. The Compact was designed to formalise the way that a County Association of Local Councils and the Standards Committee of a principal authority would work together with local representatives of the Society of Local Council Clerks to support local councils in their area. The desired outcomes were detailed. However, it was acknowledged that the Compact was drafted before notification of the Government's planned Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the proposal to abolish the Standards Board regime. Further information was being sought at national level on the Government's plans as to how local councillors would in future be held to account.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(C) NALC's Manifesto for Future of Local Councils

It was reported that NALC had drafted a manifesto which set out that organisation's ideas for the future of local councils. NALC recognised that there was a fundamental need for greater recognition of the positive contribution local councils made. It was acknowledged that the right environment must be created for local councils to work with a range of partners at local level, as well as each other, to best serve local people. The manifesto's aims were outlined.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

54. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT – POSSIBLE FURTHER ACTION

Pursuant to Minutes 119/Dec/09 and 143/Jan/10, it was reported that the Sustainable Communities Act Amendment Bill had passed into law just before the end of the previous Parliament, giving local councils the powers to be fully involved in the process of deciding how public monies should be spent in their areas. However, all local councils were now

being asked to support Early Day Motion 178 which urged the Government to deal with the implementation of the provisions of the Act, as amended.

Resolved – That a letter be sent to be sent to Ms. H. Goodman, M.P. asking her to sign the Early Day Motion 178 in support of the implementation of the provisions of the Sustainable Communities Act Amendment Bill.

55. PARTIAL COLLAPSE OF THE CASTLE OUTER WARD PERIMETER WALL – UPDATED INFORMATION

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 186/Apr/10, the letter sent by this Council to Durham County Council incorporating a request that that Council should carry out the necessary repairs to the Castle wall and the subsequent reply letter from the County Council's Head of Planning.

Councillor Watson provided a verbal update stating that English Heritage had confirmed that responsibility for this section of the Castle wall was Durham County Council's. However, that Council had yet to confirm that this was the case.

Resolved – That a letter be sent to Durham County Council requesting confirmation that that Council is to carry out the necessary repairs to the Castle wall.

56. CEMETERY PROVISION IN BARNARD CASTLE – UPDATED INFORMATION

Pursuant to Minute 27/Jun/10, it was reported that the County Council's Bereavement Services Manager had responded to this Council's letter by stating that there were approximately 100 spaces left in Barnard Castle's cemetery, with an average of 15/20 burials/reservations per year. He further stated that a planned bereavement services seminar had been cancelled twice due to unforeseen circumstances. Reference was also made to 'future efficiency savings'.

Resolved – That a further letter be sent to Durham County Council to request that that Council progresses the additional cemetery provision in Barnard Castle issue as a matter of urgency and that clarification be provided in respect of the reference to 'future efficiency savings'.

58. OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR BANK HOLIDAYS

A suggestion was put forward that normal office hours should be maintained during the Christmas/New Year period and Members' views were sought as to the office closing early on the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

Resolved – That this Council's office remain open on normal working days throughout the Christmas/New Year period and that an early close on Christmas Eve of 12.00 noon be agreed.

59B. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minute 60 below)

Resolved – That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matter referred to at Minute 60 below on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

60. TOWN COUNCIL'S OFFICE

Submitted – A report on potential new office accommodation in conjunction with an arrangement with Durham County Council. However, it was confirmed that that office accommodation would not be available for some time and that alternative accommodation for the immediate future would continue to be sought.

Resolved – That Durham County Council be advised that this Council agrees in principle to joint working arrangements in respect of office accommodation, subject to an acceptable location being agreed.