

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING**

6TH SEPTEMBER, 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 Dixon, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Peat, Watson and Yarker.

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

68. APOLOGIES:- Councillors Mrs Bailes, Blissett, Hinchcliffe and Wood.

69. 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. Councillor Mrs Dixon declared an interest in respect of Minute 79 below and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

70. COUNCIL MEETING – 19TH JULY, 2010 AND CONTINUATION COUNCIL MEETING – 2ND AUGUST, 2010 – MINUTES

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

71. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING – 2ND AUGUST, 2010 – MINUTES

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

72. '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 four items considered at the meeting were as follows:-

(1) Planning Committee Meeting – 19th July, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(2) Special Christmas Festival Committee Meeting – 24th August, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(3) Town Mayor's Activities

It was reported that, since the Council meeting on 19th July, 2010, the Town Mayor had attended the following:-

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| 21st July | (accompanied by Town Mayoress (Miss R. Abrahams))
Rededication of St Mary's Parish Church, Newgate. |
| 30th July | Meeting with Ms D. Jenkins of Barnard Castle Vision (Town Council office). |

- 7th August** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Launch of 'My Big Barney Bag' – Photo call (Sarah Louise Claire, Market Place).
- 6th September** 72 Engineer Regiment (V) Military Open Evening and Guest Cricket Match (Barnard Castle Cricket Club).

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(4) Cheque Payments Reform

It was reported that an attempt had been made earlier in 2010 to amend the outdated legislation associated with parish and town councils only normally being able to make payments by means of cheques. As that attempt had failed because of the lack of Parliamentary time, the National Association of Local Councils was pressing on with discussions with the new Government with a view to bringing forward a Legislative Reform Order.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

73. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES – TEESDALE LOCAL COUNCILS' FORUM – MEETING ON 26TH JULY, 2010

It was reported that at the Forum's meeting on 26th July, 2010, representatives from the Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP) and Durham County Council's Local Councils' Support Team attended. Issues discussed at the meeting included the funding arrangements of the TAP and local County Councillors, arrangements surrounding the membership rules of TAP and its Task and Finish Groups, a new County Council handbook for local councils, the County Durham Plan and wind farms. Councillor Cooke was re-appointed onto the County Durham Association of Local Councils' Executive Committee for the year commencing 31st October, 2010.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

74. SERVICE AND PROJECT UPDATES

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

(1) Newsletter

It was reported that a meeting of the Editorial Board had taken place on 2nd August, 2010 to discuss the proposed content of the fourteenth edition of the Newsletter. Whilst that Newsletter was due to be published and circulated by the end of August 2010, a number of factors had resulted in the deadlines having to be pushed back by a number of weeks.

Resolved – That the situation be noted.

(2) Market Place Public Toilets

It was reported that, whilst it had been anticipated that a further update in respect of the Market Place public toilets would be available at this meeting, the relevant information had not been forthcoming. With this in mind, it was re-iterated that the general lack of action might mean that there would be difficult decisions to take in the Autumn budgetary process.

Resolved – That the situation be noted.

(3) Street and Open Spaces Care

It was reported that, pursuant to Minute 47(9)/Jul/10, the Street and Open Spaces Care Working Group had held its second meeting on 24th August, 2010, attended by Durham County Council's Street Scene Manager (South) (Mr J. Bennett) and the Chairman of Teesdale Action Partnership's Environment and Clean Streets Task and Finish Group (County Councillor R. Bell). The Task and Finish Group projects and the duties that the County Council undertook in Barnard Castle were outlined. It was agreed that a walkabout of the Town would be carried out to identify 'hot-spots' i.e. specific areas in need of attention. It was verbally confirmed that that walkabout had been carried out on 3rd September, 2010, attended by Councillors Harrison and Watson, the Assistant Clerk, Durham County Council's Street Scene Manager (South) and a Street Warden.

Discussion ensued in respect of concerns over the remit of the Street and Open Spaces Care Working Group and whether it would be completed in full and issues of duplication between the Street and Open Spaces Care Working Group and the Floral Displays Working Group. Whilst it was considered a natural move for the two Working Groups to be combined, a concern was expressed over the size of the combined Working Group's membership. With this in mind, Councillor Cooke volunteered to resign from the combined Working Group.

Resolved – That the Street and Open Spaces Care Working Group be combined with the Floral Displays Working Group and that the new Working Group's membership for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2010/11 be Councillors Blissett, Mrs Dixon, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Peat and Watson.

75. 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. Specific reference was made at the meeting to the landscape project and the appointment of two members of staff by the Vision.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

76. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL / LOCAL COUNCILS' CHARTER – REVIEW

It was reported that, pursuant to the introduction of the Charter between Durham County Council and local councils (Minute 87(2)/Oct/09 refers), the Charter's first review was imminent. As part of that first review process, two meetings had been arranged to enable representatives of local councils to give their views and comments and representation from this Council was sought. However, it was highlighted that the first meeting clashed with this Council's next Finance Committee meeting which would include an item on the commencement of the 2011/12 budgetary process.

Resolved – (a) That the Assistant Clerk be authorised to attend the Charter Review meeting scheduled for 27th September, 2010 at Marwood Social Centre.
(b) That any questions or comments from Councillors in respect of the Charter be sent to the Assistant Clerk so that they can be raised at the Charter Review meeting at (a) above.
(NOTE – Subsequent to the meeting, Councillor Peat volunteered to attend the meeting (at (a) above as a second representative.)

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

Pursuant to Minute 55/Aug/10, it was reported that this Council had sent a further letter to Durham County Council in respect of the repairs to the Castle's outer ward perimeter wall on the basis that it was that Council's responsibility. However, the subsequent response from the County Council stated that, to that Council's knowledge, English Heritage had not

made the statement referred to at Minute 55/Aug/10 and confirmed that that Council did not own the area of wall in question. However, it was confirmed that discussions were still ongoing between the County Council, English Heritage and Raby Estates but that the whole matter was no further forward.

Resolved – That the updated situation be noted.

78. CEMETERY PROVISION IN BARNARD CASTLE – UPDATED INFORMATION

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 56/Aug/10, a report providing an update, including the resultant letter from this Council and Durham County Council's subsequent reply, in respect of the diminishing cemetery provision in Barnard Castle. Discussion ensued on the options available and it was considered that the matter was not being progressed by the County Council with the urgency it deserved.

Resolved – That a further letter be sent to Durham County Council seeking further progress in this matter.

79. THE BOWES MUSEUM PARK MASTER PLAN PROJECT – BRIEFING – 6TH AUGUST, 2010

It was reported that, pursuant to Minute 57/Jul/10, the briefing meeting took place on 6th August, 2010 at The Bowes Museum. The presentation was considered to be detailed and informative and included an opportunity for Members to ask questions and provide comments. Documentation was provided and a promise made that this Council would be kept informed of progress with the Project, with Members to be invited to a further meeting once the next stage had been reached.

Resolved – That the situation be noted.

80. CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

Submitted – A report providing information in respect of various consultation documents. The five consultation documents included in the report were as follows:-

(1) Draft Library Strategy

It was reported that, following a review of public libraries undertaken by the previous Government, Durham County Council had produced a draft Library Strategy. The aim of the review was to ensure that libraries were fit for purpose for the 21st Century. The deadline for comments was 7th September, 2010.

The report included details of six key outcomes that had been identified to enable the offering in the County's libraries to meet the changing needs of its communities and the challenges from central Government. The report also gave details of what had been achieved to date, the challenges and how the County Council aimed to achieve the outcomes.

Resolved - That Durham County Council be informed that this Council agrees with the draft Library Strategy.

(2) Draft Statement of Licensing Policy for 2011 – 2014

It was reported that the County-wide Licensing Policy introduced by the County Council, at its inception was being reviewed and updated. A table outlining the proposed policy changes and updates was provided and the deadline for the submission of comments was 1st October, 2010. Licensing Objectives and the main licences and permissions considered by the policy were outlined.

Resolved – That Durham County Council be informed that this Council agrees with the draft Statement of Licensing Policy for 2011 – 2014, subject to the following comment:-

That licences should still be available for collection at Durham County Council's Customer Access Point in Barnard Castle.

(3) Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

It was reported that the County-wide Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy introduced by the County Council at its inception, was being reviewed and updated. The deadline for the submission of comments was 22nd September, 2010.

Three main issues were intentionally omitted from the original policy due to time constraints but were included in this review, namely Zoning (the areas taxis could be operated within), Quantity Regulation (the number of taxis allowed to operate in a zone) and Colour Policy (whether taxis should be of a specific colour).

Resolved - That Durham County Council be informed that this Council agrees with the draft policy on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire, subject to the following comments:-

- (a) County Durham should continue to have 7 separate zones for hackney carriages;
- (b) the number of hackney carriages should not be subject to quantity restriction and a limitation on numbers; and
- (c) there should not be a colour policy for all hackney carriages/private hire vehicles.

(4) Bus Services

It was reported that, as a result of probable imminent funding reductions, Durham County Council had opened a consultation process to help decide how expected reductions in its public transport budget should be implemented. The deadline for comments was 24th September, 2010. Details of bus subsidies were outlined.

Resolved – That Durham County Council be informed that this Council feels that it is unable to answer the consultation question on bus services priorities, due to the rural nature of Teesdale and its already sparse bus services.

(5) Durham Police Authority – The Future of Local Policing

It was reported that Durham Police Authority was undertaking a public consultation on the future of local policing. The Police Authority wanted to represent the public view in their response to the Home Office consultation 'Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People'. The closure date for the consultation was 8th September, 2010.

It was confirmed that members of the public could only provide their views via a questionnaire on Durham Police Authority's website or via a telephone survey.

Resolved – That Members are to participate in the Durham Police Authority consultation on an individual basis.

81. REVIEW OF COUNTY DURHAM ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES – UPDATE

It was reported that, whilst it was anticipated that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of electoral arrangements in County Durham would be published in late Summer/early Autumn 2010, the Commission had recently announced its intention to defer publication until 2011. This was because new information had been provided by Durham County Council which had shed new light on how many electors were forecast to be living in each Ward in the coming years. The review would not therefore be forthcoming until the outcome of the current electoral canvas was known.

Resolved – That the updated situation be noted.

82. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minutes 83 to 86 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 83 to 86 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.

83. REVIEW OF AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 36(a)/Jun/10, a report confirming that negotiations had been undertaken with this Council's current Internal Auditor in respect of the level and detail of the 2009/10 internal audit works and that a positive outcome had been achieved.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

84. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 60/Jul/10, a report outlining a potential new office accommodation rental option, including details of the likely overall annual costs and the associated budgetary impact.

Resolved – (a) That the option presented is considered unfeasible.
(b) That accommodation options for the relocation of this Council's office continue to be investigated.

85. CLARIFICATION OF PREVIOUS AUDIT PROCESSES

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 37/Jun/10, a report providing an update on the situation in respect of a previous audit process and confirming that the situation would take some time to be fully resolved.

Resolved - That the updated situation be noted.

86. STANDARDS COMMITTEE MATTERS

Submitted – A report providing an update on Standards Committee matters, including details of a proposed meeting between Members and a relevant officer.

Resolved – That attempts be made to reschedule the proposed meeting to a more realistic date.