

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING**

6TH DECEMBER, 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, Harrison, Peat, Watson and Yarker.

Also in attendance:- Police Constables H. Marsh and S. Purchase (for Minute 116 only).

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

114. APOLOGIES:- Councillors Mrs Dixon, Hinchcliffe and Wood.

115. 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.

116. ATTENDANCE OF POLICE REPRESENTATIVE

In accordance with the arrangements agreed at Minute 176(b)/Mar/09, Police Constables H. Marsh and S. Purchase from Barnard Castle Police attended the meeting. Members were informed of current priorities (including Operation Winter Nights and Operation Spindewood) and performance detection rates. A 'question and answer' session ensued, with references made to telephone and e-mail scams, liaison arrangements between local police forces and the changes to police officers' roles and locations.

Resolved – That Police Constables Marsh and Purchase be thanked for their attendance.

117. COUNCIL MEETING – 18TH OCTOBER, 2010 – MINUTES

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

118. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING – 8TH NOVEMBER, 2010 – MINUTES

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

119. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING – 15TH NOVEMBER, 2010 – MINUTES

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

120. '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 eleven items considered at the meeting were as follows:-

(1) Planning Committee Meeting – 25th October, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(2) Finance Committee Meeting – 1st November, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(3) Administrative Support Committee Meeting – 8th November, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(4) Modernisation Committee Meeting – 8th November, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(5) Planning Committee Meeting – 15th November, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(6) Christmas Festival Committee Meeting – 15th November, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(7) Finance Committee Meeting – 22nd November, 2010 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(8) Town Mayor's Activities

It was reported that, since the Council meeting on 18th October, 2010, the Town Mayor had attended the following:-

- 14th November** (accompanied by Town Mayoress (Miss R. Abrahams))
Remembrance Sunday – Church Service and Further Act of Remembrance.
- 19th November** Meeting with Ms D. Jenkins of Barnard Castle Vision (Town Council office).
- 26th November** (accompanied by Town Mayoress)
Town Council's Christmas Festival Event 'Around the Tree'.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(9) Statement of Community Involvement

It was reported that Durham County Council had prepared a Statement of Community Involvement which set out the County Council's strategy for facilitating the meaningful and continuous involvement of local communities and other interested parties and organisations in the preparation of the County Durham Plan and in the consideration of planning applications which were determined by the County Council. It was noted that the Statement was not a consultation document.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(10) Housing Strategy for County Durham 2010-15 Delivery Plan

It was reported that Durham County Council had published its new Housing Strategy for County Durham 2010-15 Delivery Plan following the consultation that took place between June and August 2010 (Minute 65/Aug/10 refers). The Plan reflected a step-change in the strategic vision and delivery mechanisms to meet the challenging housing, economic, social and environmental needs of the communities within the County.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(11) Waste Management and Recycling Services Survey

It was reported that Durham County Council was undertaking a consultation survey in respect of waste management and recycling services within the County. It was noted that, whilst the survey had been classed as a consultation, it sought the views of residents only on a range of issues from the way waste and recycling was collected from people's homes, to the use of other recycling facilities in the community and how waste could be dealt with in the future. Members were encouraged to take part in the survey as individuals and to inform members of the public of the survey's existence. The consultation would end on 4th January, 2011.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

121. REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES

(A) Modernisation Committee – 2011/12 Training Programme

Reference was made to the recommendation of the Modernisation Committee, at Minute 35 of the set of Minutes at sub-section (4) of Minute 120 above, regarding the 2011/12 Training Programme.

The Modernisation Committee had considered a wide-ranging list of competing training needs and had been mindful of the fact that a substantial amount of training had been carried out during the previous two years. In the light of this and whilst training continued to be important, the Committee had acknowledged that a small diminution in the level of training could be recommended. Consequently, the Committee had recommended a 2011/12 budgetary allocation of £1,200 (decrease of £300) to the Finance Committee meeting on 22nd November, 2010 and this had been agreed by the latter Committee.

Resolved – That the following 2011/12 training programme (as recommended by the Modernisation Committee) be approved:-

Delegate	Course
All Councillors	Chairing Meetings Planning updates
Councillors (and staff)	Member/officer relationships Risk Assessment Freedom of Information Data Protection Financial Matters and Budgets
Services Administrator	Technology Updates
Second Services Administrator	HM Revenue and Customs Training

Ideally for 2011/12 funding but probable deferment until 2012/13

Councillors (and staff)	Power of Well Being
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(B) Finance Committee – Ordering Procedures for Works, Goods and Services

Reference was made to the recommendation of the Finance Committee, at Minute 31 of the set of Minutes at sub-section (7) of Minute 120 above, regarding a general tightening up of the processes involved in this Council's ordering procedures for works, goods and services.

The Finance Committee had considered a proposed procedure which was based on a list of actions currently carried out by the office and which also worked within the parameters set out in the (as recommended by the Finance Committee) Council's Financial Regulations.

Resolved – That the procedure (as recommended by the Finance Committee) for ordering works, goods and services be approved.

122. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES

(1) Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership Steering Group

Councillor Peat, this Council's representative on the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership's Steering Group, circulated an update of the Partnership's work provided by the Partnership's officers, including details of recent events to promote the project. A public exhibition and consultation exercise was expected to be carried out in respect of the Scar Top proposals.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(2) Teesdale Local Councils' Forum – Meeting on 29th November, 2010

It was reported that, due to inclement weather, this meeting had been cancelled. It had not been decided whether an additional meeting would be scheduled before the next meeting on 21st February, 2011.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(3) Tourism in Teesdale – Meeting on 5th November, 2010

Pursuant to Minute 46A/Jul/10, it was reported that Councillor Mrs Bailes had attended a follow-up meeting in respect of tourism promotion for Teesdale, convened by County Councillor Bell, on 5th November, 2010. The meeting had also been attended by officers from Visit County Durham. A tourism initiative film titled 'Durham Dales – Escape to a Living Heritage' had been shown and it had been noted that Teesdale was not mentioned in the film. It had been confirmed that no additional funding had yet been sourced to contribute towards tourism initiatives in Teesdale. However, endeavours were still being made. It had also been acknowledged that whilst several local organisations, such as the Barney Guild and Teesdale Marketing, had tourism projects ongoing, there was a lack of consistency.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

123. TOWN'S COAT OF ARMS

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 25/Jun/10, a report confirming that the Department for Communities and Local Government had informed this Council that the formal transfer of the Armorial Bearings, i.e. the Town's Coat of Arms, from the former Barnard Castle Urban District Council to this Council had been effected by means of the Local Authorities (Armorial Bearings) Order 2010 (No. 2682). A copy of the Order was attached to the submitted report.

Reference was made to the number of organisations who currently used the Coat of Arms and it was stated that a further report would be submitted to full Council explaining the overall situation and the options available to this Council.

Resolved - That the information be noted.

124. ALLOTMENTS ISSUES

Submitted – A report confirming that a meeting of the Allotments and Play Areas Working Group had taken place on 10th November, 2010 mainly to determine 2011/12 budgetary bids (reported separately to the Finance Committee) but also to discuss the following issues:-

(1) Allotment Representatives

The history and the current situation of the Allotment Representatives role had been outlined and it was noted that with the refinement of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, the associated Allotment Rules and the increase in administrative support from the office, this Council's Allotments service generally ran quite smoothly, with the Representatives not being required to attend any meetings of this Working Group for some considerable time and generally not being used on an official basis. However, it was considered that they could still prove useful on an unofficial basis. The Working Group therefore considered that there was no further official requirement for Allotment Representatives.

Resolved – That the official role of the Allotment Representatives be discontinued.

(2) Allotments Improvements Action Plan

Pursuant to Minute 158(c)/Mar/10, a report had been submitted outlining the improvement ideas received from tenants, with the proposed Allotments Strategy becoming an Allotment Improvements Action Plan. A table listing the requested improvements had been circulated and Working Group Members were asked to consider which projects should be carried out during 2010/11, which projects should be deferred until further funding was available and which projects were beyond this Council's powers, with the resultant Action Plan submitted to this meeting.

Discussion had also ensued at the Working Group meeting in respect of the Allotments budget being a self-funding service and a recommendation had been submitted to the Finance Committee meeting on 22nd November, 2010 that any potential underspends from the 2010/11 Allotments budget and future Allotments budgets be transferred to a specific 'Allotments Funds Reserve Account', partly to enable the Allotment Improvements Action Plan to work effectively. This had been agreed by the Finance Committee.

Resolved – That the Allotments Improvements Action Plan, as submitted, be approved.

(3) Allotment Rental Charging Policy

The Working Group had considered the current allotments half-plot situation, with each half-plot tenant paying half of the annual plot rental. However, recent advice indicated that, whatever the size of the plot, the same rental amount should be charged across-the-board as all tenants received equal facilities, e.g. water supply and general maintenance, and the cost of administering each plot was also equal. It was acknowledged that the majority of the plots on this Council's allotment sites differed in size.

The Working Group resultantly considered that a brief allotment rental charging policy should be included in this Council's Allotment Tenancy Agreement. Should this policy be approved, those tenants who currently paid half of the rental amount would be contacted

as soon as possible to advise them of the decision, albeit that the new arrangement could not be introduced until 1st April, 2012 (under the 12 months' notice rule).

Resolved – That an Allotment Rental Charging Policy be included in this Council's Allotment Tenancy Agreement, worded as follows:-

2c. The annual rental payment per allotment garden shall be the same, regardless of the size of the allotment garden.

and be introduced in respect of the 2012/13 allotment rental requests.

(NOTE – Councillor Harrison declared an interest declared an interest in respect of sub-section (3) above and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.)

125. 'BOOM TOWN BARNEY' – TEESDALE MERCURY ARTICLE

Councillor Mrs Hamilton had asked for this agenda item in view of comments from a number of the Town's retailers who considered the Teesdale Mercury's article to be an exaggeration of the actual economic situation in Barnard Castle as some retailers were struggling to survive. Discussion ensued and, whilst one retailer had submitted comments to the effect that the article gave a positive message, it was agreed that the Town's economic position had not been accurately presented in the Teesdale Mercury's article.

Resolved – That the concerns be noted.

126. WEBSITE UPDATE

Submitted - Pursuant to Minutes 47(5)/Jul/10 and 95(3)/Oct/10, a report confirming that the Town Council's new website was now 'live'. A brief demonstration and overview of the site were provided at the meeting and it was noted that every attempt would be made to promote the new website and keep it regularly up-to-date.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted.

(b) That the staff involved be congratulated on the quality of the new website.

127. TRAINING MATTERS

Pursuant to Minute 101/Oct/10, it was confirmed that, the outstanding 'Being a Good Councillor' Module 4 (Management and Meetings) and Module 5 (The Council and the Community) had been scheduled for 2nd and 9th March, 2011 respectively.

It was also reported that an opportunity had arisen for representatives of this Council to attend a training course (which fitted into this Council's Training Programme) entitled 'Financial Matters and Budgets'.

Resolved – (a) That the 'Being a Good Councillor' training be noted.

(b) That the Clerk and Second Services Administrator be authorised to attend the 'Financial Matters and Budgets' training scheduled for 15th December, 2010.

(NOTE – That training at (b) above was subsequently cancelled.)

128. SCHEDULING OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

It was reported that, due to the inclement weather and following discussion with the Town Mayor, a Special Council meeting was needed to consider a number of items that resultantly had to be omitted from this agenda.

Resolved - That a Special Council meeting be scheduled for Monday, 13th December, 2010 commencing at 6.00 p.m.

129. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minutes 130 to 133 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 130 to 133 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.

130. RISK ASSESSMENT AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Submitted – Pursuant to Minutes 27/Jun/09 and 118/Dec/09, a report incorporating this Council's Risk Assessment and Financial Management document in accordance with the decision to review the document during the cycle prior to the formulation of the budget each year. It was noted that this exercise would normally incorporate a review of the effectiveness of this Council's internal audit process but that review had already taken place, with the appointment of Mr G. Fletcher as the Council's Internal Auditor (Minute 104/Oct/10 refers).

Resolved – (a) That the Risk Assessment and Financial Management document, as now submitted, be approved.

(b) That a review of the structure of the Risk Assessment and Financial Management document be carried out before its next annual review.

131. INTERNAL AUDIT - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 104/Oct/10 and the appointment of Mr G. Fletcher to carry out this Council's internal audit for 2010/11, a report incorporating a Terms of Reference document. The document outlined the scope of the internal audit and the responsibilities of each party.

Resolved - That the Terms of Reference document, as now submitted, be approved.

132. COUNCIL'S OFFICE (44B GALGATE) – INCREASE IN RENTAL

Submitted – A report indicating that an increase in this Council's office rental agreement had been received from the landlord. It was noted that the Finance Committee had already accommodated the proposed increase in its recommendations for 2011/12.

Resolved – That the proposed increase in rental be agreed.

133. STANDARDS COMMITTEE MATTERS

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 107/Oct/10, a report providing a further update on Standards Committee matters. Discussion ensued in respect of a meeting between Members and a relevant officer of Durham County Council and the proposed abolition of the Standards Board regime.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted.

(b) That, in respect of the proposed abolition of the Standards Board regime, discussions be undertaken with the County Durham Association of Local Councils with a view to the setting up of a replacement system.