

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL  
COUNCIL MEETING**

**17<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2011**

(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 Dixon (Minutes 113 to 121 inclusive), Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Peat, Robinson, Watson and Wood.

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

**113. APOLOGIES:-** Councillor Hinchcliffe.

**114. 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 Harrison declared an interest in respect of Minute 119(B) and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

**115. COUNCIL MEETING – 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2011 – MINUTES**

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

**116. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING – 19<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2011 – MINUTES**

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

**117. '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 seven items considered at the meeting were as follows:-

**(1) Planning Committee Meeting – 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 – Minutes**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be received.

**(2) Modernisation Committee Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 – Minutes**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be received.

**(3) Planning Committee Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 – Minutes**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be received.

**(4) Finance Committee Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 – Minutes**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be received.

**(5) Planning Committee Meeting – 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2011 – Minutes**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be received.

**(6) Christmas Festival Committee Meeting – 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2011 – Minutes**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be received.

**(7) Town Mayor’s Activities**

It was reported that, since the Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, the Town Mayor, accompanied by the Town Mayoress (Miss R. Abrahams), had attended the following:-

18 <sup>th</sup> September	Durham County Council’s Civic Service (St Helen’s Church, Kelloe).
24 <sup>th</sup> September	Barnard Castle Scout Group’s launch of the Teesdale Young Leaders Unit and presentations (Scout Headquarters, Wilson Street).
7 <sup>th</sup> October	Spennymoor Town Council’s Charity Evening (Town Hall, Spennymoor).
16 <sup>th</sup> October	Greater Willington Town Council’s Civic Service (The Methodist Chapel, Willington).

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

**118. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minutes 119A, 119B and 120 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 119A, 119B and 120 below on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Parts 1, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

**119A. DAWSON ROAD PLAYINGFIELD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PHASE 2 – TENDERS**

Pursuant to Minute 90(4(a))/Sep/11, submitted at the Council meeting was a report from Groundwork North East that summarised the tenders received, in respect of the installation of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Dawson Road playingfield, and recommended a preferred tender. Mr O. Graham of Groundwork North East was in attendance to aid Members’ deliberations and answered Members’ questions.

**Resolved** – (a) That the tender from Trevor Atkinson and Company Limited, Mickleton, in the sum of £50,673.36 (Option 2), be accepted.  
(b) That Mr Graham be thanked for his attendance.

**119B. INTERNAL MATTERS**

A report by Councillor Robinson, which had been submitted to all Councillors via his letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2011, in respect of his concerns about an incident that occurred in 2009. It was noted that, as far as this Council was concerned, that matter was considered at the time, and was still considered, closed

**Resolved** – That no further action be taken in this matter.

## **120. 'PLEA FROM THE HEART'**

The Clerk reported verbally in respect of various ongoing difficulties within the Council and sought a way forward.

**Resolved** – That all Members should respect the terms and conditions of the Members' Code of Conduct and treat other Members of Barnard Castle Town Council and its officers fairly and civilly.

(The press and public were permitted to return to the meeting at this point)

## **121. REFERRAL FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE – 2012/13 BUDGET – INITIAL CONSIDERATION**

Reference was made to the recommendation of the Finance Committee, at Minute 27 of the set of Minutes at sub-section (4) of Minute 117 above, regarding the initial consideration of the Council's 2012/13 budget, that no specific guidelines should be imposed on the budgetary process.

A number of issues were discussed, including The Meet Committee's request for a 'one-off' financial donation of £5,000 (recommended for deferral at Minute 19/Sep/11 for consideration as part of this Council's overall 2012/13 budgetary deliberations), the potential staffing proposals due to the Clerk's impending retirement in December 2012, the Council's reserves target of £50,000, the further delay in the introduction of the Corporate Plan, the fact that all Members had been contacted regarding possible 2012/13 projects and the double taxation situation.

**Resolved** – That approval be given to the recommendation of the Finance Committee that no specific guidelines should be imposed on the 2012/13 budgetary process.

## **122. BARNARD CASTLE VISION**

Submitted - In accordance with the standard arrangements, a report incorporating 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, including The Witham Hall situation, the Digital Dale scheme, the Shop Front scheme and the Wayfinding scheme.

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

## **123. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES**

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

### **(1) County Durham Clerks' Co-ordination Group**

It was reported that, at a meeting of the County Durham Clerks' Co-ordination Group (set up during the early stages of the unitary process in County Durham) on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, it was agreed that most of the Group's work was at an end and whatever was left could be incorporated in the work of another body. That body was the County Durham and Cleveland Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks, which discussed similar issues to those discussed by the Group. The Clerk sought authorisation to attend meetings of the amalgamated body.

**Resolved** – That the Clerk be authorised to attend meetings of the County Durham and Cleveland Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

## **(2) Dickens in Teesdale**

It was reported that the Dickens in Teesdale group were progressing with plans for the 2012 celebrations to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens, including this Council's Christmas event. It was confirmed that much depended on funding, part of which would hopefully be awarded by the Teesdale Action Partnership. Other funding applications had been submitted and it was hoped that early indications on each request would be given so that the detailed planning could commence.

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

## **(3) Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership**

It was reported that, subsequent to the Partnership's Heritage Lottery Fund bid being successful, the set-up of the Partnership required streamlining in line with Lottery Fund expectations. A Partnership Board had therefore been set up which replaced the Steering Group. Whilst Board members had yet to be officially announced, Councillor Peat had advised that he had been accepted as a member but as Mr Peat, not as a representative of this Council. The Steering Group (and Councillor Peat's membership thereof) would therefore be deleted from this Council's Representation on Various Bodies list. Whilst concerns were expressed at the lack of local council representation on the Partnership Board, any necessary feedback would still be supplied by Councillor Peat to the office, with information then supplied to Members.

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

## **(4) Teesdale Local Councils' Forum – Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2011**

It was reported that, at the Forum's meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, those in attendance included Sergeant Knox from Durham Constabulary, Brian Kitching from Durham County Council (who gave a presentation on Winter Maintenance) and Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership officers. Reports were also provided on the deliberations of the Teesdale Action Partnership, the County Durham Association of Local Councils' Executive Committee and the County Durham Clerks' Co-ordination Group. A new Constitution for the Forum was agreed and the continuing problem of metal thefts was discussed.

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

## **(5) Teesdale Residents' and Travellers' Forum – Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2011**

It was reported that, at the Forum's meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, issues discussed in respect of Barnard Castle included the fact that investigations would be made into a potential funding opportunity to target-harden the lower Demesnes aesthetically, as opposed to the concrete pipes, via The Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership, a letter-drop to all local residents who used the overhead barrier and drop bollard on the lower Demesnes, to highlight the importance of their use, was being considered and the fact that the Police had contacted the land agent of Harmire Enterprise Park to schedule a meeting to discuss the possibility of a Temporary Area of Acceptance being established at that site.

It was reported at the meeting that the Forum was considered to be a role model and a request by the Traveller Liaison Service had been received for the Forum to hold a special meeting so that Weardale County Councillors could attend to gain an insight into the Forum's set-up, with a view to a Forum being established for that area.

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

## **124. SERVICE AND PROJECT UPDATES**

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

### **(1) Market Place Public Toilets**

Pursuant to Minute 90(3)/Sep/11, it was reported that the work on the revamped Market Place public toilets was almost finished, with the anticipated completion date being 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011. Once complete, an opening ceremony would take place involving the Town Mayor, the Chairman of Teesdale Action Partnership and County Councillor Bell.

It was also reported that little progress had been made in respect of the detailed working arrangements once the toilets were open, including the opening hours, frustrating because decisions needed to be taken in respect of this Council's 2012/13 budget.

**Resolved** – That Durham County Council be informed that the detailed working arrangements and plans should be made available to this Council as a matter of urgency.

### **(2) Mini Golf – Review of 2011 Season**

Submitted – A summary of the 2011 Mini Golf season and the relevant income and expenditure figures. The Mini Golf Supervisor, as part of his duties, had submitted an 'end-of-term' report and an inventory of equipment. The main issues raised were summarised, including the need for some repair work.

**Resolved** – (a) That the overall situation be noted.  
(b) That the repairs outlined in the submitted report be authorised.

### **(3) Floral and Open Spaces Issues**

Pursuant to Minute 90(2)/Sep/11, it was confirmed that the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership had been successful in its final bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, with all the proposals being approved, and it was hoped that a formal start to the programme could commence by late October 2011.

It was also confirmed that the Partnership had submitted the planning application for the Scar Top scheme as a whole to Durham County Council and it was confirmed at the meeting that the application details had been received for this Council's future consideration.

It was also reported that, in respect of the Garden of Remembrance, a meeting had taken place between the Assistant Clerk and Durham County Council's Strategy Officer (Grounds) with a view to establishing a timescale as to when all the necessary tree work would be carried out, as it was considered unwise to progress with an improvement scheme, only for it to be spoilt by the tree work. Subsequent to this Council's bid for £20,000 in respect of the Garden of Remembrance project and the fact that only £10,000 had been allocated in the Partnership's final submission (Minute 90(2)(A)/Sep/11 refers), the officer was also requested to provide a quotation for the revamp works based on the previously agreed design (Minute 179(g)/Mar/11 refers), with a view to examining the details of the project again.

**Resolved** – (a) That the information be noted.  
(b) That a Special Council meeting be scheduled for Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011 to consider the Scar Top planning application.

#### **(4) Poppy Appeal/Remembrance Sunday**

It was reported that arrangements for the 2011 Poppy Appeal were well underway. It was emphasised that procedures had been put in place to ensure that the arrangements generally worked smoothly and that it was imperative that this Council abided by the strict rules laid down by the Royal British Legion regarding collection dates. It was also reported that, to complement the Street Collection, two local volunteers would be running a poppy stall at the Farmers' Market and Barclays had once again kindly agreed to carry out the counting process.

The Council's arrangements for Remembrance Sunday were also well advanced, with the majority of the basic arrangements in place.

**Resolved** - That the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Sunday arrangements be noted.

#### **(5) Christmas Festival Event**

Pursuant to Minute 24 of the set of Christmas Festival Committee Minutes at sub-section (6) of Minute 117 above, it was confirmed that arrangements for the Event, to take place on Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2011 commencing at 6.00 p.m., were ongoing, based on the previous years' format. This format was considered to have worked well in previous years and should therefore remain, albeit with a few modifications, including a Dickensian/Victorian feature and potential new entertainment options included in the Methodist Hall activities. It was also confirmed that the Mini Golf hut would still be available for use as Santa's Grotto as it was anticipated that the Scar Top improvements would not commence until at least the early part of 2012.

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

### **125. REPLACEMENT MINI GOLF COURSE – FUNDING ISSUES**

Submitted – A report providing an update in respect of the replacement Mini Golf course and hut, as part of the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership's Scar Top improvement project, including the consideration of the provision of an improved and expanded Mini Golf service, (with a possible extended season, longer opening hours and the possible provision of two further seasonal jobs), the fact that the commencement of the project was delayed and specific references to the funding situation. It was confirmed that initial investigations had shown that the type of course which was considered to be required would cost approximately £70,000 and therefore further funding would be required in addition to the £22,243 already earmarked for the project (£20,000 committed by the Partnership and £2,243 committed by this Council).

**Resolved** – (a) That the overall situation be noted.

(b) That Groundwork North East be appointed to provide support on the Mini Golf project, particularly in respect of funding.

(c) That a positive approach be taken to the possible provision of a small amount of additional funding via the 2012/13 budgetary process.

### **126. CONSULTATION MATTERS**

#### **(1) Boundary Commission for England – 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in England - Stage One Consultation**

Submitted – A report summarising the Boundary Commission for England's first stage of its review of Parliamentary Constituencies in accordance with new rules laid down by Parliament in February 2011, i.e. to reduce the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502 and with every constituency (apart from two specific exceptions) to have an electorate no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473. The final recommendations of the review would be submitted to Government by 2013.

The Commission proposed a Consett and Barnard Castle constituency that crossed the County boundary between Northumberland and County Durham by including the wards of Haltwhistle and South Tynedale. The constituency also included a number of wards from the existing North West Durham and Bishop Auckland constituencies. The Commission stated that, although this proposed constituency was very rural in nature, there were a number of roads across the County boundary that linked the north and south of the constituency. It was noted that two public hearings were being held during the Stage One consultation period in November 2011 and that the deadline for this Stage of the consultation was 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2011.

Discussion ensued and some concerns were expressed that the area of the proposed Constituency was too large.

**Resolved** – (a) That the Boundary Commission for England be advised that this Council agrees with the proposed Consett and Barnard Castle constituency.  
(b) That Councillor Watson be authorised to attend a public hearing to present this Council's view in respect of the proposed Consett and Barnard Castle constituency.

## **(2) Durham County Council – Community Buildings Review**

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 109/Sep/11, a report summarising Durham County Council's Community Buildings Review consultation. It was noted that there were no County Council community buildings in Barnard Castle. However, it was confirmed that the County Council was also reviewing its Grant Aid scheme, a scheme that was available to community associations who owned and managed their own buildings. It was confirmed that The Witham Hall was one such community association that had previously benefitted from this scheme but it was unclear whether such grant aid would be required in the future, once The Witham Hall had undergone its imminent revamp. It was reported that further consultation events specifically for the Grant Aid Scheme had been arranged and it was recommended that representatives of this Council should attend one of those meetings before a decision in respect of the Grant Aid Scheme was reached.

**Resolved** – That Councillors Blissett, Robinson and Watson be authorised to attend one of the Grant Aid scheme consultation events.

## **127. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2010/11 – FINAL REPORT**

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 34/Jun/11 and following completion of the 2010/11 Audit by this Council's External Auditor, a report seeking approval of this Council's 2010/11 Annual Return. The External Auditor had found no issues arising and therefore there were no further actions to be taken.

**Resolved** – (a) That the 2010/11 Annual Return be approved and accepted.  
(b) That the Council's thanks be conveyed to the office staff, in particular Mrs J. Smith, Services Administrator, for the efficiency displayed in the matter.

At this point of the meeting, it was determined that, due to time constraints, the remaining outstanding items would be considered at the Special Council meeting determined at Minute 124(3) above.

## **128. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY TRAINING**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

**129. BARNARD CASTLE ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER 2011 – CONSULTATION**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

**130. ROTARY CLUB OF BARNARD CASTLE – TALK BY CLERK**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

**131. PRESENTATIONS TO TOWN COUNCIL**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

**132. SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED LOCAL COUNCILS' FORUM**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

**133. PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF TEESDALE HOUSE (Councillor Watson)**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

**134. METAL THEFTS**

Consideration of this item was deferred to the Special Council meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.

(NOTE – The deadline for comments on the Road Traffic Regulation Order referred to at Minute 129 above was 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 and consequently that item was not considered at the Special Council meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011.)