

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING****16TH JANUARY, 2012**

(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, Mrs Hamilton, Hinchcliffe (Minutes 167 to 174 inclusive), Peat, Robinson, Watson, Wood and Yarker (Minutes 167 to 178 inclusive).

Also in attendance:- Sergeant C. Knox (Durham Constabulary)(Minutes 167 to 169 inclusive).

Officers:- Mr Bosworth (Town Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Assistant Clerk)(excluding Minute 171).

167. APOLOGIES:- Councillors Blissett, Mrs Dixon and Harrison.

168. 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 Peat declared an interest in respect of Minute 175 and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

169. ATTENDANCE OF POLICE REPRESENTATIVE

In accordance with the arrangements agreed at Minutes 176(b)/Mar/09 and 186(b)/Mar/11, Sergeant C. Knox of Durham Constabulary attended the meeting. Members were informed of current priorities, including scrap metal thefts, Farmwatch and the travellers' period. A 'question and answer' session ensued, with references made to the A66 traffic management arrangements and SmartWater availability.

Resolved – That Sergeant Knox be thanked for his attendance.

170. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minute 171 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 Minute 171 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.

171. NEW BUDGETARY ITEM FOR 2012/13 – FUTURE STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 164/Dec/11, a report in respect of the Council's future staffing arrangements. A decision to defer consideration at the December meeting had allowed the Administrative Support Committee to reconsider the staffing situation (Minute 20/Jan/12 refers). As a result of the issues raised at the previous Council meeting regarding the posts of Clerk and Assistant Clerk, the newly submitted report concentrated on justifying the need to retain both posts. The Administrative Support Committee had unanimously agreed that the two posts were essential. Evidence was provided of the different nature of the two posts, with the Clerk's post essential to develop the role of the Council and generally plan for the future. Lengthy discussion ensued at the meeting on the issues involved.

The submitted report also included the financial implications of a replacement Clerk, with additional costs of £15,775 in 2012/13 and a further additional cost of £1,785 in 2013/14.

Resolved – That the following recommendations of the Administrative Support Committee be approved:-

- (a) confirmation of the continuing need for two senior posts in the organisation (currently the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk);
- (b) the appointment of a new full-time Clerk, on a four-point salary scale commencing at Scale Point 35, and with pension rights, with effect from 1st September, 2012;
- (c) an overlap arrangement for the existing Clerk and new Clerk between 1st September and 7th December, 2012 inclusive;
- (d) the deferment of any consideration of proposals for the remaining parts of the staffing structure so that the new Clerk can have an involvement, proper job evaluations can be carried out and full discussions can take place;
- (e) the inclusion of appropriate advertising costs in the 2012/13 budget; and
- (f) the notification to the Finance Committee of a 2012/13 budgetary bid of £15,775 (in addition to existing staffing costs).

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

172. COUNCIL MEETING – 5TH DECEMBER, 2011 AND CONTINUATION COUNCIL MEETING – 15TH DECEMBER, 2011 – MINUTES

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

173. '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) Planning Committee Meeting – 5th December, 2011 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(2) Planning Committee Meeting – 19th December, 2011 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(3) Finance Committee Meeting – 19th December, 2011 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(4) Planning Committee Meeting – 9th January, 2012 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(5) Administrative Support Committee Meeting – 9th January, 2012 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(6) Town Mayor's Activities

It was reported that, since the Council meeting on 5th December, 2011, the Town Mayor had attended the following:-

11 th December	(accompanied by the Town Mayoress (Miss R. Abrahams)) Spennymoor Town Council's Civic Carol Service (Town Hall, Spennymoor).
13 th December	(accompanied by the Town Mayoress) Barnard Castle School's Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.
15 th December	Opening ceremony for the Market Place public toilets.
21 st December	Richardson Community Hospital's Carol Service.
25 th December	Richardson Community Hospital's Christmas Day Visit.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

174. REFERRAL FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE – TOWN COUNCIL'S WARD BOUNDARY EXTENSION

Reference was made to the recommendation of the Finance Committee, at Minute 46 of the set of Minutes at sub-section (3) of Minute 173 above, regarding the Town Council's ward boundaries and the fact that this Council had previously agreed to contact Durham County Council, at the appropriate time, under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to extend the external boundary of the Town Council's area to include Darlington Road, High Riggs and North Field (Minute 21(b)/Jun/09 refers). Whilst those areas were all currently in the Marwood Parish, it was considered that the residents from those areas all benefitted from the Town Council's services and should therefore contribute to this Council's Precept.

Resolved – That, the Finance Committee's recommendation to now contact Durham County Council, under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to extend the external boundary of the Town Council's area to include Darlington Road, High Riggs and North Field, be approved.

175. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OFF DARLINGTON ROAD – PUBLIC MEETING

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 160/Dec/11, a report by Councillor Watson (including a number of recommendations) outlining various planning policies considered relevant to the proposed development off Darlington Road so that this Council could consider formulating an initial view. A map showing the identified strategic housing land in Barnard Castle was also circulated, as was a proposed response to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment consultation. An alternative shorter response was discussed.

Resolved – (a) That Taylor Wimpey and Durham County Council's Planning Department be advised that this Council supports, in principle, the proposed development off Darlington Road.

(b) That, notwithstanding the decision at (a) above, Taylor Wimpey and Durham County Council's Planning Department be advised that this Council considers that any affordable housing provision included in the development should specifically meet the needs of first-time buyers instead of being social housing.

176. SERVICE AND PROJECT UPDATE – POPPY APPEAL

Pursuant to Minute 158(3)/Dec/11, it was reported that the total of monies which had been collected during the 2011 Remembrance-tide period amounted to £9,151.93. The public had been informed of this total via a letter published in the Teesdale Mercury and individual 'Thank You' notes had been distributed to all those individuals, organisations and businesses who had taken part. It was noted that this was the highest total raised since the Council took over the administration of the local Appeal in 2006.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

177. 2012 OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY

Pursuant to Minute 161/Dec/11, it was reported that the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk had attended a meeting on 13th January, 2012, arranged by the Teesdale Action Partnership, which discussed potential local celebratory ideas with a view to a co-ordinated approach in respect of the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay, including the fact that a number of associated events were already organised to take place, arranged by various bodies, during the run-up to and after the day the Torch Relay was scheduled to pass through the Town. It was agreed that the Partnership Co-ordinator would oversee the associated events and this Council would co-ordinate any events for the day of the Torch Relay. A further meeting between the Partnership Co-ordinator and the Clerk was to take place to progress the arrangements.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

178. ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

It was reported that, in accordance with the standard arrangements, this Council had been invited to put forward a nominee to attend a Royal Garden Party on 22nd May, 2012. The criteria was outlined and it was confirmed that, for a number of years, this Council had decided that the outgoing Town Mayor should be nominated. Whilst, in this instance, the outgoing Town Mayor (Councillor Cooke) had not previously attended a Garden Party, he declined to be nominated. It was confirmed that only Councillor Yarker had attended a Garden Party and could not therefore be nominated again. Councillor Blissett had been nominated in recent years. The standard arrangement was for a ballot to be held.

Resolved – That Councillor Blissett be nominated to attend the 2012 Royal Garden Party.

179. WOODLEIGH – LONG-TERM FUTURE

Pursuant to Minute 91/Sep/11, it was reported that a tentative enquiry had been made to Durham County Council's Asset Management Department in an attempt to establish the future plans for Woodleigh once The Witham Hall staff had moved back to the Hall following renovations. A reply had been received stating that the County Council was not yet in a position to consider the future use of Woodleigh beyond Autumn 2013, the latest anticipated date for the completion of The Witham Hall renovations. It was noted that the County Council had acknowledged this Council's specific interest in Woodleigh and that a diary note had been made in this Council's office to raise the issue again in due course.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

180. SKIPTON – EAST LANCASHIRE RAIL ACTION PARTNERSHIP

Submitted – A report outlining the details of a request for support from the Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, a volunteer group who were campaigning for the re-instatement of the Colne – Skipton railway line (part of the national network), an 11.5 miles missing rail link between Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Resolved – That the Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership be advised that this Council supports the campaign for the re-instatement of the Colne – Skipton railway line.

181. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S MEDAL

Submitted – A report in respect of the Durham County Council Chairman’s Medal, including the fact that the Medal was launched to encourage ambition and success and was presented to individuals, groups and organisations in County Durham to recognise significant achievement and outstanding effort in all walks of life. This Council had received an invitation from the Teesdale Action Partnership to nominate an individual or organisation for a Chairman’s Medal and the criteria was outlined.

Resolved – That Barnard Castle Cricket Club and The Hub both be individually nominated for a Durham County Council Chairman’s Medal.

182. REVIEW OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute 159(3)/Dec/11 and in response to this Council’s comments in respect of the consultation on the future provision of household waste recycling centre facilities, the reply letter received from Durham County Council’s Strategic Waste Manager.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

183. SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED LOCAL COUNCILS’ FORUM

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 141/Oct/11, a report providing an update in respect of the setting up of a Small and Medium-Sized Local Councils’ Forum in County Durham, including the fact that the Forum’s first meeting would take place on 17th February, 2012. It was also reported that, whilst representation on the Forum would be a maximum of two, which could be one Member and the Clerk or two Members, authority had already been given to the Clerk to attend the Forum; therefore, a second representative from this Council was now sought.

Resolved – That, in addition to the Clerk, authority be given for the Town Mayor to attend meetings of the Small and Medium-Sized Local Councils’ Forum.

184. CONDITION OF ACCESS ROAD TO ORCHARD BRAE

Submitted – A report by Councillor Watson in respect of the condition of the access road to Orchard Brae, following the receipt of a complaint from a constituent, including the inadequate maintenance of the road, dog fouling issues and the lack of response from Durham County Council in respect of those issues. Councillor Watson’s recommendations in the report sought the support of this Council to address the issues directly with the County Council. However, the Clerk referred to other courses of action available to Ward Councillors and queried whether meetings with Durham County Council were always beneficial.

Discussion ensued and it was considered that this matter could have been progressed to resolution via an alternative course of action, e.g. for Councillor Watson to obtain the relevant Durham County Council officer details from this Council’s office and to take responsibility for progressing the issue himself or by highlighting the issue to the relevant County Councillor.

Resolved – That, in the first instance, Ward Councillors make every attempt to resolve their constituents’ issues themselves, with issues only to be raised at full Council meetings when all other avenues have been explored.

185. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (in respect of Minutes 186 to 188 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 186 to 188 below on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Parts 1, 3, 4 and 7 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

186. REFERRAL FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE – RISK ASSESSMENT AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Reference was made to the recommendation of the Finance Committee, at Minute 47 of the set of Minutes at sub-section (3) of Minute 173 above, following a review by that Committee of this Council's Risk Assessment and Financial Management document.

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

187. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Submitted – As part of the process of this Council creating a library of policy and procedural documents, a report outlining a model Equal Opportunities Policy, to demonstrate that this Council recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer to treat people fairly, openly and honestly, and a Health and Safety Policy, to show that this Council recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all its employees.

Resolved - That the Equal Opportunities Policy document and the Health and Safety Policy document, as now submitted, be approved.

188. REFERRAL FROM MODERNISATION COMMITTEE – PROCEDURES AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Resolved – That, in view of the general lack of Members in attendance at this point in the meeting, particularly those without any direct involvement in the matters referred to in the submitted report, consideration of this item be deferred to the Council meeting scheduled for 5th March, 2012.