

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING**

3RD SEPTEMBER, 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. A question had been raised in advance and 13 members of the public were present during the 15-minute slot.)

The question was put to the Council and debated. Consequential to the decision of Council on a related matter (Minute 58(ii), below, refers) this issue will not be debated further and has been referred to the Clerk.

PRESENT:- Councillor Harrison (Town Mayor)(in the Chair for Minutes 54 to 58(i) and 59 to 68 inclusive); Councillor Blissett (Deputy Town Mayor)(in the Chair for Minute 58(ii)); Councillors Mrs Bailes, Cooke, Mrs Grady, Mrs Hamilton, Hinchcliffe (Minutes 54 to 57 inclusive), Peat, Robinson, Watson, Wood and Yarker.

Also in attendance:- 13 members of the public.

Officers:- Mr Bosworth (Outgoing Town Clerk), Mr King (Incoming Town Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Assistant Clerk).

54. APOLOGIES:- None.

55. 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 (Town Mayor) declared an interest in Minute 58(ii) left the Chair and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon. Councillor Blissett (Deputy Town Mayor) chaired the meeting during discussion of that matter.

56. WELCOME TO NEW TOWN CLERK

Pursuant to Minute 43(e)/Jul/12, it was confirmed that satisfactory references had been received and therefore Michael King had been appointed as the new Town Clerk and had received the associated appointment letter. Mr King commenced employment with this Council on 3rd September, 2012 and consequently was in attendance at this Council meeting, his first meeting as Town Clerk. The Town Mayor welcomed Mr M. King to his first meeting of the Council.

Resolved – That the situation be noted.

57. ATTENDANCE OF BARNARD CASTLE VISION REPRESENTATIVE

In accordance with the arrangements agreed at Minute 160(b)/Jan/11, Dr Anne Allen from Barnard Castle Vision was in attendance and provided an update on the Vision's current projects, partly based on a briefing note (submitted by Mrs A. Ward of the Vision). Issues discussed included The Witham Hall situation, NeST, The Barney Guild, the Shop Front Improvements scheme, Winning Words (part of the cultural Olympiad), The Market Cross situation and the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership.

Resolved – (a) That Dr Allen be thanked for her attendance.
(b) That the information be noted.

58. COUNCIL MEETING – 23RD JULY, 2012

(i) Minutes

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

(ii) Opening Statement (Councillor Wood)

Submitted – A report by Councillor Wood in respect of the statement made by the Town Mayor (Councillor Harrison) at the Council meeting on 23rd July, 2012 and also made reference to actions made by Councillors Cooke and Watson.

Discussion ensued and Members spoke about the fact the matter had become tedious and irksome and that the issue should no longer be discussed at Council meetings.

Resolved – That it be agreed that the problems which exist between certain Councillors be no longer discussed at Council meetings and that attempts be made to address those problems ‘outside the Council Chamber’.

59. ‘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 three items considered at the meeting were as follows:-

(1) Planning Committee Meeting – 23rd July, 2012 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(2) Planning Committee Meeting – 13th August, 2012 – Minutes

Resolved – That the Minutes be received.

(3) Town Mayor’s Activities

It was reported that, since the last Council meeting on 23rd July, 2012, the Town Mayor and the Deputy Town Mayor (as indicated) had attended the following:-

27 th July	Informal meeting with Deborah Jenkins of Barnard Castle Vision (Town Council Office).
28 th July	(accompanied by the Town Mayoress (Mrs P. Harrison)) Dawson Road Playingfield Celebratory Event.
16 th August	(accompanied by the Town Mayoress) Dickens in Teesdale Event (Market Place and The Bowes Museum).
2 nd September	(Deputy Town Mayor accompanied by the Deputy Town Mayoress (Mrs K. Blissett)) The Bowes Museum’s Official Opening of the Revamped Park.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

60. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES - BARNEY GUILD MEETING – 14TH AUGUST, 2012

Councillor Peat, this Council’s representative on the Barney Guild, provided a verbal report in respect of the Guild’s meeting on 14th August, 2012. Matters discussed included the fact that funding for a Banner Festival had been granted from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership and that funding had been granted from a spin off to the Portas Pilot and the Guild’s 2012 Christmas preparations.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

61. 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) Upper Demesnes Hay Meadow

It was reported that the hay meadow was cut for hay on 22nd July, 2012 and it was considered that the quality of the hay was improving. It was confirmed that there were more hay bales created than in 2011. Some recently scythed grass had been spread onto the hay meadow which should result in the introduction of some new seeds. It was also confirmed that, following a recent walkabout, yellow rattle and red clover, both of which were introduced, had been recognised.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(2) Dawson Road Playingfield Celebratory Event

Pursuant to Minute 45(3)/Jul/12, it was confirmed that the celebratory opening event to acknowledge the completion of the works at the Dawson Road playingfield duly took place on 28th July, 2012. The Town Mayor carried out a ribbon-cutting ceremony and entertainment included a bouncy castle, mega-slide, soft-play, face-painting and Multi Use Games Area activities.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(3) Allotments

It was reported that a meeting of the Allotments and Play Areas Working Group took place on 29th August, 2012 to determine and prioritise allotment improvement projects in respect of the Allotments Improvements Action Plan and an up to date budgetary situation of the 'Allotments Improvements Holding Account' was provided. The Action Plan was circulated for Members information.

Resolved - That, in respect of the Allotments Improvements Action Plan, the following improvement projects, as recommended by the Allotments and Play Areas Working Group, be approved:-

(1) Raby Avenue Allotment Site – Path Improvements:-

- (i) that Fairbairns Limited be requested to carry out improvement works to path ways 1 and 2;
- (ii) that Groundwork North East be requested to carry out improvement works to path way 3; and
- (iii) that improvement works to path way 4 be put on hold until further funds have accumulated in the 'Allotment Improvement Holding Account'.

(2) Raby Avenue Allotment Site – Trees – that Hamsterley Tree Surgeons, Hamsterley be requested to carry out the cutting back/removal of some of the trees which border the site adjacent to Orchard Brae.

(3) The Demesnes Allotment Site - Unallocated area – that the area be turned into a communal wildlife flower/herb area contained in raised beds, i.e. for this Council to source the materials and for the labour, planting and long-term maintenance elements to be provided by the tenants.

62. COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY EVENTS – FUTURE POLICY

It was reported that, at a meeting of the Floral Competition Working Group on 9th August, 2012, a review was undertaken of the 2012 Competition, with matters referred to including the disappointing number of entries, the amount of work involved in respect of the 'Show Day' and the lack of commitment from the general public to the whole arrangement. Subsequently, the Working Group recommended that the Garden Competition should be retained, the 'Show Day' event should be discontinued and that consideration should be given to a Community Event which had a broader appeal.

Resolved – That a Working Group, consisting of Councillors Blissett, Mrs Grady, Harrison (Town Mayor), Peat, Robinson and Yarker be constituted to formulate a Policy on the Council's Community Events programme with subsequent recommendations being submitted to the full Council meeting schedule on 15th October, 2012.

63. CHANGE OF CLERK – ASSOCIATED ARRANGEMENTS

Submitted – Pursuant to the employment of the new Town Clerk (see Minute 56 above), a report outlining the outgoing Town Clerk's preferred working arrangements until his departure at the end of October 2012.

It was also reported that, due to the outgoing Clerk's departure being brought forward, his revised arrangements would mean that he would not be organising the large-scale Christmas Festival Event beyond his departure date with the responsibility being subsequently transferred to the contractor. It was therefore recommended that, as a saving on staffing costs would be made due to his early departure, an amount of that saving be transferred across to the events budget for use on the Christmas Festival Event to cover costs associated with that transfer of responsibilities.

Resolved – (a) That the detailed arrangements regarding the change of Clerk be noted.
(b) That £1,500 be transferred from the 2012/13 Staffing Review budget to the 2012/13 Events budget to meet the consequential costs to be incurred on the Christmas Festival Event.

64. REVIEW OF THE TOWN COUNCIL – DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 27(1)(B)/Jun/12, a report outlining the outgoing Clerk's recommendation to achieve completion of the report in respect of the decision-making structures of the Council (which form part of the Modernisation Committee's work on the review of the Council), i.e. to work from home two/three days a week until his final week at work (week ending 19th October, 2012).

Resolved – That the outgoing Clerk be authorised to complete the decision-making structures report prior to his departure on 19th October, 2012.

65. MARKETS AND STREET TRADING CONSULTATION

Pursuant to Minute 49/Jul/12, it was reported that, whilst further information had been received from Durham County Council regarding this Council's interest in being responsible for Barnard Castle's Wednesday market, an offer had been received from a County Council officer who had overall responsibility for markets and the associated consultation exercise to provide a presentation to the Council followed by 'questions and answers'.

Resolved – (a) That a Special Council meeting be convened for Monday, 10th September, 2012 commencing at 6.00 p.m. to consider Durham County Council's Markets Strategy and this Council's potential interest in assuming responsibility for the Wednesday market in Barnard Castle.

(b) That, because of his annual holiday, Councillor Watson be allowed to submit an additional report in respect of the matter.

66. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2011/12 – FINAL REPORT

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 32/Jun/12 and following completion of the 2011/12 Audit by this Council's External Auditor, a report seeking approval of this Council's 2011/12 Annual Return. The External Auditor had raised three issues requiring decisions from Members, one relating to the fact that the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders required updating as they referred to an outdated version of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the second relating to the Fixed Assets figure and the third relating to Section 1 not adding up by £1 due to rounding.

Resolved – (a) That the 2011/12 Annual Return be approved and accepted, with the issues raised being dealt with as now determined.

(b) That advice be sought on the £1 rounding matter.

(c) That the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders be updated to reflect the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

(d) 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.

67. PAYMENTS BY LOCAL COUNCILS – CONSULTATION

Submitted – A report seeking Members' views of the Government's proposal to repeal Section 150(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 which states that "Every cheque or other order for the payment of money by a parish or community council shall be signed by two members of the council", by means of a Legislative Reform Order under Section 1 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006, so that local councils could adopt modern methods of payment and alternative means of control. It was confirmed that this Council conformed to the two signatory rule for all payments made and appropriate control procedures were in place.

Resolved – That the Department for Communities and Local Government be advised that this Council does not agree that the two-signature rule for local councils should be removed from legislation until alternative, associated systems to maintain sound financial control have been established.

68. COUNTY DURHAM PLAN

Pursuant to Minute 48(1)/Jun/11, it was reported that Durham County Council would soon be consulting on the next stage of the County Durham Plan (the new Local Development Framework for County Durham), i.e. the County Durham Plan Preferred Options Report. Whilst it was noted that a relevant report would be submitted to the next scheduled Council meeting on 15th October, 2012 so that this Council could give full consideration to the issues relating to Barnard Castle in the Report, it was reported that the County Council had organised consultation events across the County to enable local councillors and residents to view proposals for their community and speak to Council officers. In addition, Area Action Partnership Board meetings in September and October would include a presentation on the Plan, along with a question and answer session with Council officers which town and parish councillors could also attend.

Resolved – (a) That, if possible, Members will attend either the consultation event or the Teesdale Action Partnership Board meeting in respect of the County Durham Plan Preferred Options Consultation.

(b) That a Durham County Council officer be requested to attend the next ordinary Council meeting scheduled on 15th October, 2012 in respect of the County Durham Plan Preferred Options Report.