

Minutes of the meeting of **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wesley Room at the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 15th JANUARY 2019** at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Fleming (Mayor), and Councillors, Blackburn, Brownson, Chappell, Cullen, Tucker, Wilson and A. Zair

Also Present: C.S. Auld and N Bryson (Bishop Auckland Town Team)
David Anderson (Town Clerk)

Public in Attendance: Alan Anderson (Bishop Auckland Town Team), Jean Clarke Woodhouse (Close Church and Community Centre) and Colin Raine (Conservatives)

Two other members of the public were present but did not sign the attendance record. In accordance with data protection rules their names are not recorded.

TC.118/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted by Councillors Allen, L. Zair and S. Zair.

TC.119/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item No 9.1 Bishop Auckland Town Team - Request for Funding to Support Events in the Town Centre

Councillors Blackburn and Brownson declared an 'other registerable interest' in respect of this item and took no part in the voting thereon.

TC.120/18 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Raine queried the Council's views on the purchase of the former Poundworld store by Amber Taverns to create a new public house. Rumours were that a petition was circulating to prevent the licensing of the premises.

It was noted that the licensing application was included on the agenda for consideration and therefore discussion on this was deferred. (See Minute No TC.126/18).

Mrs Clarke, Woodhouse Close Community Centre, explained that she and a colleague were present at the meeting to offer support for the Mayor, Councillor Fleming. They were saddened and disappointed by a recent Facebook post which appeared to be from someone that wasn't at the meeting where alleged remarks had been made. She stated that Cllr Fleming had been a gracious and active supporter of their work on Woodhouse Close and local area in supporting their crisis work including the foodbank. He was a regular visitor to the centre, took an interest in what was happening and helped where he could.

Councillor Fleming stated that his words had been taken out of context and exaggerated for political purposes. He explained that at the Finance Committee meeting he was reflecting on a comment made by another Councillor who would not support a winter clothing fund as it would open a can of worms, indicating that some would misuse the fund. He had commented that he wanted to help those who were in genuine need and made no reference to the foodbank or Woodhouse Close.

Councillor Tucker announced that due to increased work commitments she was resigning from the Town Council with immediate effect. She then criticised the Town Council for its decision to purchase its own premises describing it as fiscal

Signed:
Town Mayor

irresponsibility and urging the Council to reconsider its decision. (See also Minute No TC.132/18 below)

Councillor Tucker clarified that she would not be resigning as a County Councillor and left the meeting.

Mr Raine then questioned Councillor Fleming on the alleged remarks made at the Finance Committee meeting. Councillor Fleming referring to his previous statement, reiterated that his words had been taken out of context.

PRESENTATIONS

TC.121/18 THE AUCKLAND PROJECT

It was noted that Liz Fisher was unable to attend the meeting. This item was therefore deferred to the next Council meeting.

TC.122/18 BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN TEAM

Core Team

Nigel Bryson, Chairman of the Town Team, gave an update on activities of the Town Team.

Reference was made to a funding application to help the Town Team host a number of events in the forthcoming year. The Town Team was grateful for funding awarded by the Town Council in 2018/19 which allowed a number of events to be held, including the 1940's event.

The Core Team had met on 9th January. An update was given on the Heritage Action Zone's projects. Progress was reported on the works being undertaken to bring the West Mural Tower back into use. The structure was a Grade I listed building in the grounds of Auckland Castle.

Kynren reported that the show dates for 2019 were to be announced.

Work on the masterplan was continuing. It was expected that the Plan would be published in spring.

The next Town Team meeting was scheduled to be held on 28th February 2019.

Events Team

Clive Auld, Chairman of the Events Team, gave an update with regard to recent activity of the Events Team.

The Advert Windows project had been a great success building on the previous year. A display had been created in the Newgate Centre advertising the project. Two large screen TV's had been obtained to promote the work of the Town Team.

Santa Claus in Newgate Centre had again proved very popular with over 600 photos taken.

An events brochure was being drafted setting out events to be held in the town centre in 2019. The brochure was to be funded by sponsorship

RESOLVED: That the information be noted

Signed:
Town Mayor

TC.123/18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Town Council	11 th December 2018
Planning Committee	11 th December 2018
Finance Committee	8 th January 2019

With respect to the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11th December 2018, Councillor Chappell stated that she had not been against CYP2 Action 18, 'Investigate options for the creation of a fund aimed at alleviating child poverty in the town. (Possible winter/warm clothing, school uniform fund)' in its entirety, merely against the proposal to establish a winter/warm clothing, school uniform fund.

Councillor Blackburn proposed that the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record. Councillor Brownson seconded.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and recommendations contained therein be adopted

There were no further matters arising

TC.124/18 REPORT OF MAYOR

Members noted a report of the Mayor detailing the events attended since the last meeting. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Referring to information circulated at the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 8th January 2018 which showed a nil balance in the Lloyds Bank 'Mayors Account', Councillor Chappell enquired how much had been raised by the Mayor as the account was empty. It was explained that the Council had introduced a new accountancy system during the current financial year. On the advice of the accountant the Mayor's fund was accounted for within the accounting system rather than a separate bank account. The 'Mayor's Charity' account held at Lloyds Bank was therefore redundant and would be closed. This had been reported to the meeting of Finance Committee held on 12th June 2018 (Minute no FIN.4/18 refers).

Although the exact amount raised by the Mayor in support of Woodhouse Food Bank was not at hand it was believed that it was approximately £2,500.

In relation to an event held on 20th December 2018 to help increase donations of food for Woodhouse Close Foodbank, it was queried if the event would be repeated as it had been very well supported. The Mayor responded that it was very likely that a similar event would be held again. Jean Clarke, Woodhouse Food Bank representative, said that they would welcome donations of non-perishable food in general. At the current time semi-skimmed UHT milk was needed.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

REPORT OF TOWN CLERK

TC.125/18 BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN TEAM - REQUEST FOR FUNDING TO SUPPORT EVENTS TO BE HELD IN THE TOWN CENTRE.

Consideration was given to a request from Bishop Auckland Town Team for funding to support events held in the town centre aimed at enhancing footfall. (For copy see file of Minutes).

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Town Mayor

RESOLVED: That a grant of £5,000 be awarded to Bishop Auckland Town Team from 2019/20 financial year to support events to be held in the Town Centre.

TC.126/18 NEW LICENSING APPLICATION, TAP AND TUN 23 NEWGATE STREET BISHOP AUCKLAND

Consideration was given to a new licensing application in relation to 23 Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland that had been submitted to Durham County Council for determination. Details of the application were circulated for consideration. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were of the opinion that the application was to be welcomed as it was an indication that new businesses were seeking to invest in the town which reflected positively in the future of the town centre. It was felt that the new public house would bring new jobs, increase footfall and vitality of the town centre.

RESOLVED:

1. That the application be supported.
2. That Durham County Council be informed accordingly.

TC.127/18 REVIEW OF LOCAL COUNCILS CHARTER

Consideration was given to a report regarding a review of the Local Councils Charter, which set out the basis of a working relationship between Durham County Council and parish and town councils within the county. (For copy see file of Minutes).

A draft document had been considered by the Town Council at its meeting held on 25th July 2017. At that time Members felt that greater emphasis should be put on the two tiers of local government working together on the basis of mutual respect to deliver services and outcomes for local people. It was noted that this had been reflected in the revised draft document.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revised Local Councils Charter be supported.
2. That the County Durham Association of Local Councils be advised accordingly.

TC.128/18 REVIEW OF ALLOTMENT RENT 2020/21

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk with regard to the annual rent review relating to 2020/21. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were reminded that the Town Council was required to give tenants 12 months notice of any increase in rent. Consideration was given to a table showing rent history from 2010/11 to 2019/20, together with a comparison of rent paid by tenants of Durham County Council allotments.

RESOLVED: That rent for 2020/21 remain at 50p per square meter with a 50% discount applied if the plot is more than half cultivated.

TC.129/18 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 TO 2021/22 AND COUNCIL TAX 2019/20

Members noted that Finance Committee considered the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22 and Council Tax 2019/20 at its meeting held on 8th January 2019. (Minute No FIN.44/18 refers).

Signed:
Town Mayor

A copy of the report considered by the Finance Committee had been circulated to all members of the Council and in line with normal practice all members of the Council were invited to attend the meeting.

Council Forward Plan

Council, at its meeting held on 11th December 2018, agreed a Forward Plan, detailing actions to be taken to help achieve a number of aspirations that had been developed taking into account the key outcomes of consultation.

Given the Council's limited resources it was not possible to allocate sufficient funds to achieve all actions. Finance Committee had therefore recommended to allocate funds to the highest priority actions.

An allocation had also been recommended to fund an additional member of staff so that actions within the Plan could be delivered.

Referendum Principles

The Government had advised that referendum principles would not be extended to town and parish council for 2019/20.

In making recommendations to increase Council Tax, the Finance Committee was mindful of the referendum principles which stated that a referendum would be triggered if council tax increases were 2% or above or over £5.00 whichever is higher. The suggested increase in Council Tax was therefore kept within those parameters.

Recommendations of Finance Committee

Detailed consideration was given to the recommendations of the Finance Committee, held on 8th January 2019, which resulted in a Council Tax of £51.20 (Band D) and increase of £4.92 (10.63%). It was noted that almost two thirds of properties within the Town Council area fell within Band A and therefore the increase for the majority of households would be 27p per month.

The MTFP had been amended to reflect anticipated changes in relation to purchase of new accommodation for the Council offices. For budgeting purposes, it had been assumed that the Council would be relocated to the new office on 1st April 2019.

It was suggested that the proposed budgets within the aspiration for a 'Better Bishop Auckland for Children and Young People', specifically actions 13, 16 and 17, be pooled and further consideration be given at a later date.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Council's budget for 2019/20 be set at £249,877 resulting in a precept of £213,292 equivalent to a Band D Council Tax of £51.20 representing increase of £4.92 (10.63%) on the previous year.
 2. That the resulting Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22 be agreed

TC.130/18 TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

The following would be invited to attend an appropriately timed meeting to update the Town Council on their activities:

- Liz Fisher, The Auckland Project (5th March 2019)
- Bishop Auckland Masterplan (special meeting)

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Town Mayor

- Annalisa Ward, Heritage Action Zone (possibly combined with Masterplan meeting)
- Debbie Connell, Durham County Council, Summertime Activities
- WiFi Demonstration - informal sessions to be arranged

TC.131/18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In accordance with the provisions of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council excluded the press and public for the remaining items on the agenda by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted since publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.

REPORT OF TOWN CLERK (CONTINUED)

TC.132/18 OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

A verbal update was given in relation to progress made in relation to the purchase of office accommodation.

In relation to comments made in Councillor Tucker’s letter of resignation regarding new office accommodation, Members stated that the Council had not taken the decision to purchase its own premises lightly. A significant number of potential buildings had been considered over a number of years, including some located on the high street and in Cockton Hill and Kensington as suggested by Councillor Tucker.

The current proposal met all of the Council’s criteria and was the most cost effective considered. The cost of the project would be part funded by a low cost loan from the Public Works Loans Board with the interest fixed for the duration of the loan. Estimates had been considered by the Council on a number of occasions that indicated that the purchase of the building would be cost neutral.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

Signed:
Town Mayor