

Minutes of the **MEETING** of **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wesley Room at the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2015** at 6.00 p.m.

**Present:** Councillor Race (Mayor), and Councillors Anderson, Blackburn, Brownson, Golightly, Lethbridge, Wilson, A. Zair, L. Zair and S. Zair

**Also Present:** Jean Clarke (Woodhouse Close Church), Clive Auld (Bishop Auckland Town Team) and David Anderson (Town Clerk)

R. Beal, A.J. Breeze, R. Burriss, C. Cassidy, D. Cottrell, D. Dolby, S.A. Gregory, L. Harris, D. Hodgson, M.B. Hopson, K. Johnson, S. Launder, J. Leathley, M.J. O'Neill, S. Quigley, A. Robertson, J. Webb and D.V. Williams. (UKIP)

**TC.112/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fleming

**TC.113/14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised under this item.

**TC.114/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

**TC.115/14 FOOD BANK**

Jean Clarke, Woodhouse Close Church, gave a presentation on the operation of the Food Bank based at the Church.

Mrs Clarke explained that the food bank was located in the 102nd most deprived ward out of more than 32,000 in the country and therefore provided a much needed service.

Whilst the food bank was run from the Church they supported people from all backgrounds. The group saw their support as giving a hand up rather than giving a hand out. The centre had dealt with 540 cases in 2014. It was expected that the forthcoming year would be equally as busy as the number of repeat visits were becoming more frequent. They often helped people who were waiting for benefit payments to be made, which sometimes took longer than expected.

Members expressed their gratitude to Jean and volunteers at the Church for all their work supporting people in need.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

**TC.116/14 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2014**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

**TC.117/14 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

- a. Planning, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014
- b. Finance Committee, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes be approved and adopted.

There were no matters arising

**Signed:** .....  
**Town Mayor**

#### **TC.118/14 REPORT OF TOWN MAYOR**

The Mayor reported that he had attended the following events since the last Council meeting including.

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2014 | Officiated at 'Race to the North Pole' event at Tesco Extra in aid of Diabetes UK |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2014 | Attended Carol Service at Auckland Castle Chapel                                  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2015   | Attended event to celebrate St John's School achieving Leadership Academy Status  |

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

#### **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND TRAINING EVENTS**

#### **TC.119/14 TOWN TEAM**

Clive Auld updated members on recent activities of the Town Team, including details of this year's Christmas programme held on 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

Small Business Saturday had also taken place on 6<sup>th</sup> December. Twenty small business in the town had taken part in the event. Participating businesses had offered a range of discounts and deals to encourage people to shop local. The event was currently being evaluated.

Preparations were ongoing for banners to be installed again in 2015 in time for the Food Festival. Consideration was also being given to holding an Armed Forces Day.

It was noted that Living Streets were carrying out a street audit on 20th February 2015 to evaluate the quality of streets and spaces from the viewpoint of those who use them rather than those who manage them. This would involve small groups of local people, public, traders, businesses and councillors, walking a particular route in the town to identify what works well, what could be improved and what should be done. The resulting report would set out recommendations which will be presented to the County Council. It was vitally important that local people have an involvement in this exercise at this time of great change.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

#### **TC.120/14 THE BIG LOCAL – GAUNLESS GATEWAY**

Members were updated with regard to the Big Local project. Meetings were taking place with local community groups to appraise them of the project and potential outcomes.

A meeting had taken place with the national representative of the Big Local to discuss the proposed project.

The Gaunless Gateway Santa Run had taken place on 16<sup>th</sup> December. This involved Santa visiting various locations within the Gaunless Gateway area to hand out free goody bags to children.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

Signed: .....  
Town Mayor

#### **TC.121/14 LOCAL COUNCIL WORKING GROUP**

Members considered the notes of the Local Councils Working Group held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The Working Group was made up of representatives of County Durham Association of Local Councils and Durham County Council and met on a quarterly basis to improve working relationships and promote joint initiatives between the County and local councils.

The following topics had been discussed at the meeting:-

- **Communications.** It had been agreed that key messages should be distributed to all town and parish councils and within County Council services and be discussed at Larger and Smaller Local Council Forums.
- **Joint Working in Mid Durham,** which highlighted examples of good practice
- **Local Council Tax Revenue Support Grant,** with regard to the methodology for distributing grant. A seminar was to be arranged to explain the process.
- **Durham Ask,** an opportunity for local communities and organisations to take over the management and delivery of services and facilities by the transfer of assets to local community control. Expressions of interest were welcome from town and parish councils.
- **Fly Tipping.** Details were given of an initiative to use concealed cameras to tackle fly tipping. There were opportunities for local councils to participate in the initiative.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

#### **REPORT OF TOWN CLERK**

#### **TC.122/14 COUNCIL TAX 2015/16, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 – 2017/18**

Consideration was given to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18 and in particular the proposed budget for 2015/16.

It was noted that in addition to inflationary pressures the Council's funding was also vulnerable to the effects of the Localisation of Council Tax Support regime which had the unintended consequence of reducing the Town Council's Tax Base, thereby reducing the ability to raise revenue.

The Government had made a grant available, however this did not make up the entire shortfall. Durham County Council had informed local councils that the allocation would reduce year on year in line with the reduction of revenue grant paid by the Government to it. Grant forecasted up to 2017/18 was included in the MTFP.

In addition, it was noted that the Secretary of State's powers to impose a referendum on principal councils where increases in Council Tax were above a certain level, may be extended to local councils. This would limit the Council's ability to deliver additional services. An announcement had not yet been made, however indications were that if this regime was imposed on local councils it may only apply to those Parish/Town Council that levy a Council Tax above the level of the smallest district councils, i.e. around £160 - £170 (Band D). An announcement was not expected until mid February, however Durham County Council had requested notification of local councils precepts by no later than 31<sup>st</sup> January 2015.

Bishop Auckland Town Council would not be affected if the referendum regime was extended as anticipated. However any announcement by the Secretary of State would be reported to Members and the Council Tax and precept would be revisited if necessary.

Signed: .....  
Town Mayor

The Finance Committee had considered the MFTP, incorporating budget proposals for 2015/16 at its meetings held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015. All Members had been invited to the meeting to participate in the preparation of budget proposals.

Detailed consideration was given to the Finance Committee's proposals. Income from allotment rent was included, however these had previously been ring-fenced to support delivery of the service and necessary improvements to allotment sites. It was proposed that this approach continue for the period of the MFTP.

The resulting Council Tax would be £38.03 (Band D) which represented an increase of £1.80 (4.95%).

**RESOLVED:** That the MFTP 2015/16 – 2017/18 and budget proposals 2015/16 be approved.

#### **TC.123/14. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER CONSULTATION EVENT**

Consideration was given to attendance at a consultation event arranged by the Police and Crime Commissioner which sought to improve engagement between the Commissioner and Town and Parish Councils/Meetings.

The event, which would be held on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015, was timed to coincide with the consultation on the refresh of the Police and Crime Plan 2015-17, and the proposals for the Policing Precept for 2015-16.

**RESOLVED::** That Councilors Fleming attend the event.

#### **TC.124/14 ROYAL GARDEN PARTY**

Consideration was given to making a nomination to CDALC for a representative to attend the Royal Garden Party on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor L. Zair be nominated to attend the Royal Garden Party.

#### **TC.125/14 PROVISIONAL MEETINGS DATES 2014/15**

Consideration was given to a calendar showing provisional dates of meetings for the 2014/15 municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** That the diary of meetings be approved.

#### **TC.126/14 TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

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

- Beryl Anderson, Kate James, Bishop Auckland Food Festival (3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015)

Signed: .....  
Town Mayor