



Bishop Auckland Town Council

Council Meeting

26th March 2024

Minutes

Present: Cllr S Zair (Chair), Cllr M Harker, Cllr L Zair, , Cllr K Lawson, Cllr M Siddle, Cllr D Wilson, Cllr K Fryatt (nee Eliot), Cllr H Balmer-Howieson

Also Present: Sarah Harris -Town Clerk, Vicki Booth-Assistant Town Clerk,

TC115/23 Apologies for absence –Cllr J Blackburn, Cllr A Zair

Resolved: Members noted and accepted the absences

TC116/23 Declarations of Interest – Members were invited to declare any interest they may have.

Resolved: None declared

TC117/23 Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the following meetings:

- 27th February 2024 – Full Council
- 12th March 2024 – Policy and Resources Committee
- 13th March 2024 –Allotment Committee

Resolved: That the above Minutes have been receive. Cllr S Zair noted his apologies were absent from the allotment committee minutes, this error has been noted and rectified. The Town Council agreed to adopt all recommendations contained within them.

TC118/23 Matters Arising – The Clerk highlighted that the new CCLA bank account is not yet active, there has been a delay due to staffing levels and payment transfer issues. The Clerk went on to advise there had been an issue with Darlington Building Society and they had linked a none BATC account to the BATC account. Sarah has raised a complaint with DBS given the serious breach and this is being investigated. Asked members if they want to continue with the account or look to close it.

Resolved: That members agreed to continue with the account.

TC119/23 Public Participation – No members of the public raised any questions.

TC120/23 Reports

TC121.1/23 Durham County Council – Cllr Sam Zair reported that the viaduct upgrade is nearly finished and the discussed the other town centre developments.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

TC121.2/23 AAP -Cllr Harker attended the AAP meeting and advised he was concerned there was insufficient explanations on projects put forward for funding for members to vote on projects. There needed to be more substantial understanding of value for money and a more rigorous approach.

TC121.3/23 Stronger Towns Board – Cllr Zair advised that a governance review has been agreed and is underway. The Clerk is an officer on the governance review group. The artist hub is currently 12 months behind schedule and a change request needs to be submitted.

Cllr Harker attended the CDALC meeting and advised Mary Hoy is the new president.

Resolved: that members noted the updates and asked if the governance review will be made public.

TC121.4/23 Outside Bodies - Cost of Living – Cllr Siddle updated that the group were still working and video had been produced. The group hope to be able to get more exposure to the work they are doing. They have produced a fact sheet which is available in a range of places. Cllr Zair also updated that the cost of living is also on DCC radar and he provided some information (see file copy)

Resolved: that the report be noted.

TC122/23 Report of the Mayor – The Mayor gave a summary of the events he has attended in the community. He advised that the donated print from The House of Smudge raised £325 in raffle tickets and the winner was a local lady who went back to the House of Smudge and purchased a second print to compliment the first so it raised money for charity and supported a local business.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

TC123/23 Report of the Town Clerk –

TC123.1/23 The Clerk gave an update on the forthcoming internal audit and advised Derek Shingleton would be helping with yearend as he did last yea, and Gordon Fletcher has been appointed as Internal Auditor again.

Resolved: that members noted the year end arrangements

TC123.2/23 Room usage by Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB). They currently receive a donation of £3,000 from BATC along with the use of a room for 1 morning per week. They have completely withdrawn from the Four Clocks Centre but still want a presence in the town. Requested to use a room another 2 days but advised they could not pay the going rate of £20 per hour.

Resolved: that members requested a representative to attend a future meeting to discuss the needs of CAB and their direction of business.

TC123.3/23 Bishop Auckland Food Festival is to be held in April and The North East Rock Choir will perform. BATC has been approached with a request for the members of the choir to be able to use the office as a base and to keep their personal belongings safe and will be accompanied by a Durham County Council staff member.

Resolved: that members agreed for the Rock Choir to use the room with a DCC staff member during the event.

TC124/23 Finance -

TC124.1/23 Statement of Payment (attached) was presented

Resolved: that members considered the report, and agreed the payments. the annual Building Compliance contract at a cost of £1755.91 was also approved for renewal.

TC124.2/23 Request for quote for fence repairs to be considered at a cost of £520 for Edge Hill allotments until the hedges can be cut back after nesting season.

Resolved: That members approved the works

TC124.3/23 Request for members to consider the quote regarding repairs to the road and new land at Woodhouse Close allotments in order for the potholes to be managed on a more permanent basis and to get the new allotments up and running as soon as possible.

Resolved: That members agreed the quote and approved the works

TC124.4/23 Request for members to consider the hedge works for Edge Hill once nesting season has ended as the previous contractor let us down.

Resolved: that members agreed a new contractor and the quote for works.

TC1024.5/23 SLA for DCC Commercial Services for the provision of building compliance

Resolved: that members noted the renewal

TC125/23 Community Fund Applications An overview was given regarding the application received from Bishop Auckland Business Connect. No pound amount was requested on the application. They are in their infancy with only 1 meeting having taken place.

Resolved: that members requested the group be more established with their terms of reference and objectives set then attend a future meeting to present to the council before an application will be considered.

TC126/23 – Correspondence – The office has received three telephone calls, one email and one letter regarding the precept increase.

Resolved: that members agreed that issuing a statement prior to the community receiving their revised council tax bills was a good strategy and one they should continue with going forward.

Cllr Siddle highlighted that he had been approached by the Angling club regarding concerns over the increased costs of licencing from DCC.

Resolved: that members noted the report, and DCC cllrs would feedback to DCC.

TC127/23 - Exclusion of the Press and Public.

TC128/23 HR – members were updated regarding HR matters.

Resolved: that that members agreed that:

- Appoint Cllr Lawson, Harker, Siddle and Fryatt members to secure staffing arrangements as priority
- Appoint temp clerical cover Recruit to temp Clerical admin role via recommended contractor.
- Secure formalised additional allotment support by recommended contractor.
- Upgrade the Deputy Clerks Financial Access to Lloyds accounts to ensure that payments can be set up and made, and cheques signed.
- Reduce the number of committee meetings and only hold full council meetings
- Commission third party delivery for heritage festival
- Commission third party delivery via community partners for ward and in year event activity where possible