

Minutes of a **MEETING** of **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wesley Room at the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2014** at 6.00 p.m.

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

**Also Present:** Clive Auld (Bishop Auckland Town Team) and David Anderson (Town Clerk).

**TC.150/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lethbridge

**TC.151/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised under this item.

**TC.152/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors A Zair, L Zair and S. Zair declared an interest in respect of Item No. 11(2) Feildon Bridge, St Helens Auckland, - Planning Decision, and left the meeting during discussion and voting thereon.

**TC.153/13 DAISY ARTS**

Jane Crawford, Director, gave a presentation on the background and activities of Daisy Arts. In particular Jane highlighted the recent Febfest exhibition, an annual event held this year in the McGuinness Gallery, Bishop Town Hall from 10<sup>th</sup> February to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

The event included a schools exhibition with work created in the theme of Japan: Art and Culture. There were also workshops covering 5 days during the February half term school break held at various locations around Bishop Auckland.

Exhibitions from Febfest had also been displayed at Palace Green, Durham.

The Mayor indicated that he had attended the Febfest and had been very impressed with the quality of work produced by the students.

Febfest had developed into an annual event and had become part of the arts calendar.

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

**TC.154/13 AUCKLAND CASTLE TRUST**

Liz Fisher, Deputy Director – Communities, Auckland Castle Trust gave a presentation updating Members on the Trust's plans for the development of Auckland Castle.

It was noted that Jonathan Ruffer was particularly keen that any development at the Castle benefited the wider community. The Castle was therefore asking visitors to use the long stay car park at North Bondgate so that town centre retailers would benefit from increased footfall.

There were plans to develop a Welcome Centre outside the Castle entrance at the corner of the Market Place. The renowned architect Níall McLaughlin had been commissioned to design the Welcome Building, which would house a visitors centre, art gallery and viewing platform.

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

A designer had also been commissioned to develop the walled garden into a visitor attraction in its own right. An extension was planned to the Scotland Wing to provide exhibition space to celebrate 5,000 years of faith, showing the impact of culture, faith and religion. The Castle Trust was working with the National Museum on this project.

In the first three weeks of opening to the public over 1,000 paying visitors had visited the Castle. Members it was also commented that traders had also reported new people in shops.

The Mayor thanked Mrs Fisher for the presentation and wished the Castle every success with their ventures, commenting that this was an exciting period for Bishop Auckland.

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

#### **TC.155/14 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014**

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

There were no matters arising.

#### **TC.156/14 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

- a. Planning Committee, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014
- b. Policy & Strategy Committee, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014
- c.. Finance Committee, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014
- d. Council, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014

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

There were no matters arising

#### **TC.157/14 REPORT OF TOWN MAYOR**

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

7 <sup>th</sup> March 2014	Annual Civic Ball, Sedgefield Town Council
25 <sup>th</sup> March 2014	Mayor's Charity Night Seaham Town Council
1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014	Concert Evening, Breathe Easy Durham Dales
4 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Presentation of certificates Prince's Trust
5 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Mayors Brass Band Concert, Ferryhill Town Council
10 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Mayor's Farewell Charity Quiz, Shildon Town Council
11 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Mayors Civic Dinner - Ferryhill Town Council
12 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Official opening of new Home Bargains
12 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Opening of refurbished Scope store
14 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Allotment Watch publicity

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

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

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

### **TC.158/14 TOWN TEAM**

Clive Auld (Town Team) reported that the banners project was progressing. Curious 12 a design company operating from Auckland Castle had designed an overall scheme which projected a single theme for banners in the Market Place and Newgate Street. It was also hoped to include the scheme along Fore Bondgate utilising existing catenary wires, however consideration needed to be taken to certain restrictions, e.g. adequate clearance below the wire and wind forces exerted on banners.

Arrangements had been made for the Town Team to have a stall at the Food Festival to raise funds for future events.

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

### **TC.159/14 THE BIG LOCAL**

It was noted that arrangements were being made to consider various projects prior to a bid being made to the Big Local.

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

### **TC.160/14 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, CONSULTATION ON FIXED PLAY**

The Town Clerk reported that he had attended a consultation evening in relation to the County Council's fixed play provision.

It was noted that the County Council had adopted 7 individual policies from former district councils when the unity authority for formed in 2009. They were now seeking to develop a single policy to ensure fair distribution of fixed play across the County. The new policy would set minimum standards, which could be supplemented by parish councils where they wished. There was no intention of removing serviceable play equipment, however provision against the criteria would be measured to identify whether play equipment should be replaced when it was no longer serviceable, or to identify where additional equipment was needed.

The development of a policy presented a opportunity to work in partnership with the County Council to ensure adequate fixed play equipment in the towns parks. It was suggested that a meeting be arranged with the County Council to discuss provision in Bishop Auckland.

**RESOLVED:** That a meeting be arranged with the Strategic Manager, outdoor sports and Leisure to discuss fixed play provision in Bishop Auckland. Councillors Golightly and Race were represent the Town Council.

## **REPORT OF TOWN CLERK**

### **TC.161/14 Fieldon Bridge, St Helens Auckland – Planning Decision**

N.B. Councillors A Zair, L Zair and S. Zair had declared an interest in respect of this item and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon.

Members noted that Durham County Council's, County Planning Committee had considered the outline planning application relating to Fieldon Bridge at its meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. Although the Planning Officer's recommendation was to refuse the application, following a lengthy debate it was approved by the Committee. It was

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

understood that a condition has been applied which stipulated that no more than 25% of retail development should be allowed without development of the cinema element.

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

Councillors L Zair and S Zair returned to the meeting. Councillor A Zair did not return to the meeting.

**TC.162/14 RIVER GAUNLESS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE PROJECT**

Members considered a letter from Elizabeth Willows, Education and Community Engagement Officer, Wear Rivers Trust, seeking support for a project to improve the River Gaunless for the benefit of people and wildlife.

The Wear Rivers Trust worked to improve the health and quality of the rivers in the Wear catchment, involving and engaging local people as much as possible. The River Gaunless was failing to meet official ecological objectives as it faces the pressure of pollution from agricultural land, old mine workings and deposits, urban run-off etc. It also had great potential to become a better managed and protected community asset and to provide better wildlife habitat, both within the river and on the banks.

The Rivers Trust wanted to focus on the lower reaches of the Gaunless as a whole, from Spring Gardens down, but were thinking particularly of working in the Tindale Crescent, Fylands Bridge and Henknowle areas as these had been flagged up as areas for concern. The land was owned by Durham County Council and they had agreed in principle to the Rivers Trust / the local community taking on management activity.

The Trust was seeking a letter of support for the project and had also queried whether the Town Council would like to offer any match funding to support the application.

**RESOLVED:** That the Council forward a letter of support to the Wear Rivers Trust.

**TC.163/14 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

Consideration was given to a Members' Allowances Scheme which had been recommended for adoption by the Policy and Strategy Committee.

It was noted that the Members Allowances Scheme provided a framework for allowances but did not alter the rate of allowances themselves. Mileage and subsistence rates were in accordance with guidance issued by the Government.

**RESOLVED:** That the Members Allowance Scheme be adopted.

**TC.164/14 EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT/ PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS**

Consideration was given to an Employee Code of Conduct, together with a Protocol for Member/Officer Relations which had been recommended for adoption by the Policy and Strategy Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the Employee Code of Conduct and Protocol for Member/Officer Relations be adopted.

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

## **TC.165/14 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Consideration was given to updated Financial Regulations which had been recommended for adoption by the Finance Committee.

The Financial Regulations had been based on a model issued by NALC following the repeal of s 150 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Changes in the regulations meant that local councils could devise their own arrangements for making payments which did not necessarily involve two members signing every cheque. It was however proposed that the two signature rule be retained to ensure robust and effective controls over expenditure and payment systems.

In addition the changes to the regulations allowed local councils to formalise payments by electronic means. Again robust and effective controls had been included in the proposed Regulations.

The following arrangements needed to be agreed to be able to operate within the new Regulations:

### **5.5 (b) Payment of continuing contracts and obligations**

Authorisation was sought to allow the Town Clerk to make the following payments

\*Salaries

\*Members Allowances

\*Durham County Council - pension scheme

\*HMRC – NI and Tax

Bishop Auckland Partnership - Office rent and room hire

BT – broadband

Northumbrian Water – metered water supply at allotments

Mr J. Lumsden – rent of Edge Hill Allotments

Wright's Office Supplies – stationery items

A schedule would be drawn up of all payments made under this arrangement, which will be reported to the following meeting of Finance Committee.

### **6.4 Dispensation to allow Members Allowances payments to be countersigned**

Items marked with as asterisk (\*) above would be paid by electronic transfer in accordance with Financial Regulation 6.10. Two members were required to authorise electronic payments. However, a dispensation was sought in respect to the payment of Members Allowances to allow the Mayor and Chairman of Finance to countersign the payment. The dispensation was necessary as otherwise no member would be able to countersign the payment schedule due to their pecuniary interests.

### **6.18 Town Council Debit Card**

Paragraph 6.18 gives authorisation for the Town Clerk to use a debit card for the Town Council's bank account for transactions up to £500, unless authorised otherwise by the Finance Committee. It had become custom and practice for the Town Clerk to use his personal debit/credit where this was necessary and seek reimbursement from the Council.

Given that Regulation 6.20 restricted this to exceptional circumstance only, authority was sought to obtain a debit card related to the Lloyds current

Signed: .....  
Town Mayor

account for the Town Clerk's use. The Council had previously agreed this in May 2012 (Minute Number FIN.146/12 referred).

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Financial Regulations be adopted.
  2. That the list of continuing contracts and obligations be approved.
  3. That a dispensation be given to the Mayor and Chairman of Finance Committee to countersign the payments schedule relating to the electronic payment of Members Allowances.
  4. That a debit card be obtained in relation to the Council's Lloyds current account for use by the Town Clerk on Council business.

**TC.166/13 TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

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

- Ron Hogg, Police and Crime Commissioner (June/July 2014)
- Councillor Neil Foster, Portfolio Holder: Economic Regeneration, together with appropriate senior officers in respect of the economic regeneration of Bishop Auckland Town Centre.

**TC.167/13 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.

**TC.167/13 NEWTON AYCLIFFE MARKET**

Consideration was given to a request from Great Aycliffe Town Council for comments on proposals to develop its market provision.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council offer no objection to the proposals.

**TC.168/13 MONITORING OFFICER'S DECISION NOTICES**

Members noted the outcome of decision notices received from the County Council's Monitoring Officer.

It was suggested that 2-3 training sessions be requested from the Monitoring Officer, via Durham County Association of Local Authorities which could be offered to all Parish and town councils in the County. It was thought that by offering alternative days/times it would maximise the number of councillors that could benefit from the training.

**RESOLVED:** That 2-3 training sessions be requested from the Monitoring Officer, via Durham County Association of Local Authorities.

Signed: .....  
Town Mayor