

Minutes of the **MEETING** of **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wesley Room at the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 29TH JULY 2014** at 6.00 p.m.

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

Also Present: Ron Hogg (Police and Crime Commissioner), Insp M. Peace, PCSO T. Moore, (Durham Police), Clive Auld (Bishop Auckland Town Team), David Anderson (Town Clerk)

TC.51/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Members were present.

TC.52/14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised under this item.

TC.53/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

TC.54/14 RON HOGG, DURHAM POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Ron Hogg, Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, was in attendance to discuss his role, priorities and local issues. Inspector Martin Peace and PCSO Tess Moore were also in attendance for this item.

It was note that the Police and Crime Commissioner's role was to:-

1. Hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of high quality police services
2. Engage with communities who live and work in the force area, including victims of crime
3. Publish a Police and Crime Plan, setting out his proposals for the force area
4. Publish an Annual Report
5. Appoint the Chief Constable
6. Have the power to call for the Chief Constable to retire or resign
7. Responsible for securing an efficient and effective police force for the area
8. Set the police precept and budget
9. Commission services through crime and disorder reduction grants
10. Maintain a custody and visitor scheme

Mr Hogg explained that his manifesto commitments were to

1. Reduce the impact of domestic abuse particularly violence against women and girls
2. Reduce the impact of hate crime
3. Improve engagement with local communities across the Constabulary area

In addition the following priorities had been determined by a public consultation process:-

1. To tackle anti-social behaviour
2. To tackle the harm caused to individuals and communities by alcohol and drugs
3. To improve road safety by tackling careless and dangerous driving, speeding and other related road safety issues
4. To make our policing services visible and accessible at all times

Signed:
Town Mayor

In respect of police funding, Mr Hogg explained that the force had to make savings of £4.2m in the current year and £4.9m saving in 2015/16. Despite budgetary pressures he would be seeking to maintain front line services. The force was currently recruiting police officers and PCSO's.

Following Mr Hogg's presentation a number of questions were raised by Members

On the subject of budget pressures, Members queried how front line services could be maintained when overall budgets were being cut?

Mr Hogg explained that he would protect front line service as much as he could. This would be done by making savings in other areas. He had saved £200,000 from his own budget by reducing and replacing police support officers with civilian staff, modern apprentices and graduate interns to undertake back office and admin tasks. This had released police officers to work on front line services. Savings had also been made by not appointing a Deputy PCC.

The new Police Headquarters would result in a reduction in maintenance and running costs. A capital receipt would result from selling the old premises and land.

The police were now sharing facilities where appropriate to do so. For example the police had maintained a presence in Newton Aycliffe town centre by sharing facilities with the Fire Service. This had reduced overheads and achieved a capital receipt from the sale of the police offices.

There was however only a limited amount of efficiencies that could be made before budgetary cuts had an impact on front line policing services.

Members queried the long term future of Bishop Auckland police station.

Mr Hogg assured members that there were no plans to close the current police station. Bishop Auckland had one of the main custody suites and therefore would be retained. The offices may be refurbished to get more out of the premises.

With regard to drug and alcohol abuse, Members queried Mr Hogg's opinion on alcohol free zones in areas such as parks.

Mr Hogg felt that public areas should be safe and alcohol free where appropriate. He felt that licensing regulations which resulted in easier access to alcohol, particularly in some seemingly inappropriate outlets, should be challenged. In terms of underage drinking his officers were working to tackle the supply and resulting antisocial behaviour.

A number of photos taken in the Town Rec were circulated showing smashed alcohol bottles and discarded needles.

Insp Peace informed members that there was continuing police activity in the Town Rec and Cockton Hill Park. There had been 15 seizures of alcohol and 5 antisocial behaviour orders issued in relation to incidents in those areas. A meeting of the APP Community Safety Group would be held on 30th July where the issues would be discussed in detail. Members were invited to attend.

Mr Hogg added that there needed to be a whole community solution with the agencies, licensees and parents working together to resolve the problem.

Signed:
Town Mayor

Members queried whether restorative justice was being used in the area and if it was being successful.

Mr Hogg advised that the force operated at 'level 1' and were at the forefront of restorative justice. Police officers or PCSO's used restorative skills to resolve conflict in the course of their duties, which meant that minor crimes and incidents were dealt with quickly and proportionately.

Members queried how the Town Council could help

Mr Hogg advised that the Town Council should continue to work with Insp Peace and have a presence at PACT meetings.

In relation to the likelihood of continuing budget reductions how does the Police Commissioner see the provision of policing services developing in the next 5 years

Mr Hogg stated that provision would be massively different to what it is now. Financial pressures affecting all public services would mean that there needed to be greater flexibility in public expenditure. Agencies would need to work together to achieve greater efficiency with perhaps back office, (financial, legal and HR services), being shared across services. There needed to be greater engagement with the voluntary sector.

One of the greatest challenges for the justice system was to break the reoffending cycle.

Members raised an issue with the telephone system and the length of time it took for someone to answer.

Mr Hogg responded that the performance figure for the whole of Durham was that 95% of calls were answered within 30 seconds. He would however look at the specific figures for Bishop Auckland to identify if there was a particular problem.

Members queried what was being done in terms of early reporting and intervention to reduce incidence of crime and prevent people becoming caught in the reoffending cycle.

Mr Hogg explained that Durham Constabulary was working closely with the voluntary sector to develop systems to intercede at an early stage.

Soft intelligence was useful to the police to help intervene at an early stage and he would encourage communities to support this.

Insp Peace explained that there seemed to be an increase in people stealing to live. In relevant cases the police had referred people in need to support services, e.g. food banks, to prevent repeat offending.

Members sought information about an informal traveller site which had appeared adjacent to South Church Industrial Estate

Following the arrival of travellers the site had been assigned by Durham County Council as a stopover site on a temporary basis. It was understood that the travellers were planning to move from the site in the near future. In the longer term the area had been identified by the Gaunless Riverside project for the creation of an oxbow lake to help improve the local ecology.

It was understood that the County Council was looking at various options for travellers.

Signed:
Town Mayor

Mr Hogg was asked whether in his opinion punishment fit crime

Mr Hogg replied that in his opinion punishment didn't always fit crime. The two aspects of the justice system were punishment and rehabilitation. There should be harsh sentences for violent, sexual and organised crimes. The challenge with lower level crime was to tackle root issues and causes to ensure that offenders were rehabilitated and were less likely to reoffend.

It was queried whether it was better to give harsher sentences for habitual criminals to take them off the streets as a means of reduced crime

Mr Hogg replied that the justice system needed to use every tool in its arsenal to reduce crime and reoffending, including custodial sentencing, restorative justice, tackling offenders root problems, through for example drug rehabilitation. There was a fine balance. There was no hard and fast rule.

Members queried what the biggest problems were in Bishop Auckland

The biggest problems were entry into premises and vehicles. Surprisingly in approximately 40% of incidents cars and houses were unlocked with valuables in plain sight.

Shop lifting was also a particular problem. Campaigns were being planned for the Christmas period for the town centre and retail parks when there was a historical increase in crime.

Members thanked Mr Hogg, Insp Peace and PCSO Moore for their attendance.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC.55/14 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24TH JUNE 2014

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

There were no matters arising

TC.56/14 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

- a. Planning, 24th June 2014
- b. Events Committee, 3rd July 2014
- c. Finance Committee, 22nd July 2014.
- d. Appeals Panel, 22nd July 2014, 5.00 p.m.
- e. Appeals Panel, 22nd July 2014, 5.30 p.m.
- f. Allotments & Environment Committee, 24th July 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved and adopted.

There were no matters arising

TC.57/14 REPORT OF TOWN MAYOR

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

Signed:
Town Mayor

30 May 2014 Store Opening, Vodafone
 30 May 2014 Concert by the Amsterdam Staff Band of the Salvation Army, Durham County Council
 04 June 2014 Youth Awards Presentation Evening, Bishop Auckland Town Council
 27 June 2014 Mayoress 'At Home', Darlington Borough Council
 27 June 2014 Mayor's Charity Night, Chilton Town Council
 28 June 2014 Mayoress 'At Home', Spennymoor Town Council
 11 July 2014 Dance Show - Winner of Youth Awards 2014, King James I Academy
 18 July 2014 Launch of the Four Clocks Club, Bishop Auckland Community Partnership
 23 July 2014 At Home with the Mayor, Bishop Auckland Town Council
 24 July 2014 Store Opening Store Twenty One
 25 July 2014 Presentation of Certificates, Princes Trust
 25 July 2014 Charity Evening, Shildon Town Council
 28 July 2014 Promo Activity with a local bike team, Velo-29
 29 July 2014 VIP Pizza Kitchen Launch, Marston's - March Hare

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND TRAINING EVENTS

TC.58/14 TOWN TEAM

Clive Auld (BATT) updated Members on recent activities of the Town Team.

The next meeting of the Town Team Events Group would be held on Wednesday 30th July to make progress on the programme of forthcoming events.

It was explained that one of the banners had disappeared. Arrangements were being made for it to be replaced.

Details were given of the New Car Show which would be taking place on 22nd August 2014.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC.59/14 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 outcomes.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

REPORT OF TOWN CLERK

TC.60/14 ANNUAL RETURN – YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2014

EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

Members note that the External Auditor's signed Report on the Annual Return had been received. They were no matters that had come to their attention which required an additional 'Issues Arising' report.

RESOLVED: That the audited Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2013 be noted.

Signed:
 Town Mayor

TC.61/14 ELEVEN ARCHES PROJECT

A number of Members had attended a presentation on the Eleven Arches project held at Auckland Castle on 9th July 2014.

The Eleven Arches project sought to recreate the Puy du Fou visitor attraction in Bishop Auckland.

The Puy du Fou was a historical theme park in Les Epesses in the heart of the Vendée region of Western France. The park attracted 1.5 million visitors every year, making it the fourth most popular attraction in France after Disneyland Paris.

The Eleven Arches Night Show would celebrate the rich history of Britain and the North East. It was fundamentally a community production, the cast and crew would comprise 100% local volunteers drawn from Bishop Auckland and the surrounding area. A Special "Eleven Arches Academy" would be established to train young volunteers aged 8-25 in the essential skills required for the production. Academy students would make up 50% of the cast and crew.

The Eleven Arches Trust is seeking a letter of support from the Town Council.

Members noted that Auckland Castle Trust Eleven Arches Project had invited a representative of the Town Council to join a delegation visiting the Puy du Fou on 11th – 13th September 2014. The Trust would fund transport and accommodation costs.

Consideration was given to representation. It was noted that the Mayor could not attend and therefore it was suggested that the deputy Mayor attend. Councillor Blackburn requested to attend at his own expense. It was also suggested that Councillor A. Zair attend, however Councillor Zair advised that he was unavailable due to work commitments.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1 That the Town Council welcome the Eleven Arches and wish the project every success.
 2. That a letter of support be forwarded to Auckland Trust.
 3. That Councillor Brownson represent the Town Council on the visit to Puy du Fou.
 4. That a request be made for Councillor Blackburn to be included at his own expense.

TC.62/14 TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

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

- Peter Nailon, Wear Rivers Trust – to give an update on the proposed River Gaunless project (28th October 2014)
- Jean Clark, Woodhouse Food Bank
- Councillor Neil Foster, Portfolio Holder: Economic Regeneration, together with appropriate senior officers in respect of the economic regeneration of Bishop Auckland Town Centre.

Signed:
Town Mayor

TC.63/14 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 do now exclude the press and public for the remaining item 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.64/14 PARISH PLAN

Consideration was given to a proposal developed by Durham Community Action to produce a Parish Plan for Bishop Auckland.

Members noted that Durham Community Action (formerly Durham Rural Community Council) was a well-established charity that had provided specialist support to many parish and town councils in County Durham to develop parish plans. As a specialist supplier of this kind of service it was noted that Financial Regulation 11.1.a.(ii) would apply and therefore three quotations did not need to be obtained.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That Durham Community Action's proposal to produce a Parish Plan be agreed.
 2. That an application be made to suitable grant funders help finance the project.

Signed:
Town Mayor