

Minutes of the **MEETING of BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wesley Room at the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 25th JULY 2017** at 6.00 p.m.

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

Also Present: Clive Auld and David Anderson (Town Clerk)

Public in Attendance: Alan Anderson, Greta Longstaff and Ann Pearson

TC.65/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Blackburn, Wilson and L. Zair

TC.66/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

TC.67/17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Greta Longstaff and Ann Pearson were present regarding the town centre. With the agreement of the ladies the Mayor deferred their participation until after Chris Myers' presentation.

PRESENTATIONS

TC.68/17 REGENERATION IN BISHOP AUCKLAND

Chris Myers, Regeneration Projects Manager, Durham County Council (DCC), updated members in relation to DCC's projects which were directly contributing to the regeneration of the town centre. A report was circulated for information. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The following details were noted:-

An order had been placed for the second phase of wayfinding signs. The signs would hopefully be installed in the autumn.

A planning application had been submitted for phase II of North Bondgate car park. This would provide 84 additional spaces and a coach drop-off point. Work would commence on site later in the year. When complete the car park would be managed by Auckland Castle Trust.

With regard to the Targeted Business Improvements scheme, members noted that funding was available over the next two financial years (2017/18 and 2018/19). Eighteen expressions of interest had been received which were at preliminary discussion stage. Two applications had been approved with the work being completed. A further 3 offers of grant had been made. Two applications were being considered.

A number of potential venues for shop wraps were being considered to improve the externals of vacant properties and advertise potential opportunities.

The Business Booklet had been updated for 2017 and would be distributed in the next 2 weeks.

Discussions were ongoing with various groups to explore the establishment of community wi-fi in the town centre. This would provide free wi-fi access within the

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Town Mayor

town centre as well as potential for local businesses to advertise. The system would also provide a range of data which could be used to promote the town to potential retailers.

In addition, DCC had recently commissioned Ryder Architecture to prepare a master plan for the town centre. They had undertaken baseline analysis and would be holding a public consultation to obtain opinions from people on Monday 31st July. The survey would also be available online. A press release would be issued by the end of the week. Town Councillors and County Councillors covering Bishop Auckland would receive an invitation to the session.

DCC had also helped establish the Brighter Bishop Auckland partnership, which was independently chaired by the Bishop of Durham. It was noted that the Town Clerk represented the Town Council on the Board.

Members queried the area associated with the shop wrap scheme and whether funding would be available after 2018/19. Mr Myers explained that the scheme covered the town centre. DCC was working with willing owners and agents to improve vacant shop fronts by installing shop wraps where appropriate. Owners and agents could not be compelled to install a shop wrap. Various enforcement action could be taken where the condition of shops was very poor, however this was a long process and did not always have the desired outcome. The budget for the shop wrap scheme was secure until March 2019. A bid to continue the scheme would be made during the budget setting process within DCC if that was felt necessary.

Members queried how much influence DCC had in attracting new businesses, particularly nationals to the town. It was noted that it was difficult to influence bigger retailers as they had their own business plans which targeted particular demographics and available amenities. DCC were advising agents of the development of Bishop Auckland and potential opportunities, but in the final analysis bigger retailers would only show interest in the town if it fit with their individual business plans.

Members raised concerns regarding a planning application that had been received for permission to reduce the size of a retail unit and create residential accommodation in the remainder of the building.

Members queried whether DCC were aware of the fault line that ran through the land where phase II of North Bondgate car park would be created. It was noted that a ground condition survey had been undertaken which would be taken into account during design and construction.

Referring to an ongoing issue in the town centre relating to youths parking cars adjacent to the O2 shop late on an evening to access their free wi-fi, it was queried whether the community wi-fi would exacerbate the problem. It was noted that the issue would be explored with the potential service provider to avoid such problems by using their experience from other installations and possibly addressing via the technology.

Public Participation

Greta Longstaff and Ann Pearson raised concerns about the condition of some of the empty shops in the town centre. They queried what the Council could do to force the owners to improve the condition of the shops and whether those who did not comply could be fined.

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Town Mayor

Mr Myers explained that the County Council was working with owners and agents to improve the condition of retail units where that was necessary. DCC had a number of initiatives, such as shop wraps and targeted business improvements, which were making inroads. Enforcement action could be considered in extreme cases. However it was noted that not all properties were registered with the Land Registry and therefore in some cases it was difficult to trace the owners. It was understood that some of these properties were owned by investment companies with large property portfolios whose priorities were not aligned with those of the Town or County Councils and local people.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC.69/17 TOWN (CORE) TEAM

Councillor Brownson updated members with regard to the meeting of the Core Team held on 12th July 2017.

The Mining Art Gallery was to open in October. Construction of the Welcome Building had started. Building work was scheduled to be complete early in 2018 with the building open to the public in April 2018.

Work was continuing in Auckland Castle, which was expected to reopen in May 2018. The Walled Garden and Restaurant would open shortly after. It was projected that the Castle would attract over 100,000 visitors per annum.

The Postchaise and Queens Head hotels would be renovated and open in 2019. It was confirmed that Auckland Castle Trust would be working with hotel specialist to renovate and manage the hotel.

Eleven Arches Trust had reported that ticket sales for season II were going well. Egress from the car parks had been improved with all car parks being cleared within 50 minutes.

The Full Moon Street Food Markets had been a great success. The organisers, Durham Markets Company, were considering increasing the number of Full Moon markets held.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC.70/17 TOWN (EVENTS) TEAM

Clive Auld updated member in relation to the activities of the Events Team.

Buskers Days – Arrangements had been made for a number of buskers to perform in the town centre on 15th July 2017. Buskers had played in various parts of the town and had changed pitches regularly to provide a variety of music at all locations. The event had been well received despite the rain.

Another Buskers day would be held on 12th August.

New Car Show – arrangements were being made for the Town Team's sixth car show to be held on 25th August 2017. This year's show would also include a number of vintage cars.

It was noted that a program of events was already being planned for 2018.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

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Town Mayor

TC.71/17 MINUTES

Town Council	27 th June 2017
Planning Committee	27 th June 2017
Finance Committee	18 th July 2017

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

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

TC.72/17 REPORT OF THE MAYOR

Members noted a report of the Mayor detailing the events attended since 4th June 2017. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC.73/17 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND TRAINING COURSES

Good Councillors Training, 25th July 2017

Councillor Fleming reported that he had attended the above training session which had been very informative and interesting. Papers would be forwarded by the Town Clerk in due course.

Brighter Bishop Auckland, 30th June 2017

The Town Clerk advised that he had represented the Town Council at the above meeting. The main item related to the development of a master plan for the town. It was noted that Ryder Architecture had been appointed by Durham County Council to undertake this work. Progress on the initial work programme had been reported.

Following a presentation by English Heritage the Group agreed to apply for Bishop Auckland to become a Heritage Action Zone. Whilst this did not provide funding itself, if the application was successful it would assist in future grant funding related to heritage issues. Durham County Council was to lead on the application.

Society of Local Council Clerks, Regional Training Day, 19th July 2017

Councillor Brownson, together with the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk had attended the above training day.

Sessions included best practice use of social media for local councils, an update on important legal changes, particular emphasis on the new data protection regulations, discipline and grievance with a social media focus. The event concluded with the Town Clerk giving an overview of Bishop Auckland Town Council.

NALC Larger Councils Best Practice Visit.

Councillor Fleming had attended the NALC Best Practice Visit to Great Aycliffe Town Council and Shildon Town Council. Each year NALC organise a visit to a local council or region so that best practices and innovation can be shared.

Visiting councillors from other regions were very impressed with the range of services offered by Great Aycliffe and Shildon and left with a great impression of County Durham.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

Signed:
Town Mayor

REPORT OF TOWN CLERK

TC.74/17 POLLARDS ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION, REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR A COMPOSTING TOILET

Consideration was given to a request from Pollards Allotment Association for financial support to assist with the installation of toilet facilities on the allotment site. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The installation of a toilet would help to facilitate school visits and also be of particular use for disabled gardeners. The total cost of the project would be £9,620 (excluding VAT). The Allotment Association had raised £4,000 through various fund raising activities, which left a shortfall of £5,620. It was noted that the Association was also seeking funding from various other sources.

RECOMMENDED: That a contribution of £2,810 be agreed towards the project.

TC.75/17 DRAFT LOCAL CHARTER BETWEEN DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL AND LOCAL COUNCILS IN COUNTY DURHAM

Consideration was given to a draft Local Charter prepared by County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) and Durham County Council. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The Charter aimed to set out the basis of the relationship with the County Council and Local Councils within the county and how all parties could work together for mutual benefit.

CDALC had requested comments from member councils to be fed into the meeting of larger Local Councils to be held on Thursday 27th July 2017.

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 better services and outcomes for local people.

RESOLVED: That the Council's comments be fed into the CDALC meeting to be held on 27th July 2017.

TC.76/17 COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – SECRETARIAL PROPOSAL

Consideration was given to proposals made by CDALC's Executive Committee to revise arrangements to continue to provide member councils with support via the Association's Secretariat from 1st April 2018. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED: That the proposals be supported

TC.77/17 CITIZENS ADVICE COUNTY DURHAM, REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Consideration was given to a letter from Citizens Advice County Durham requesting funding to support the service. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED: That a representative of Citizens Advice Durham be to attend a future meeting.

TC.78/17 TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

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

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- Chris Myers, Regeneration Projects Manager, Durham County Council
- John Brannan and Paul Watson, Wannasee
- Barbara Slasor, Gaunless Gateway Partnership
- John Wiseman, Auckland Youth and Community Centre
- Mick Irwin, Drug and Alcohol Reduction Unit
- Citizens Advice Durham

TC.79/17 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

TC.80/17 CHRISTMAS EVENT – APPOINTMENT OF EVENT MANAGEMENT PARTNER

Consideration was given to a report regarding the appointment of an event management partner in relation to the Town Council's Christmas event. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED: That Stanley Events Ltd be appointed event management partner to deliver the Town Council's Christmas event.

TC.81/17 SOUTH CHURCH ALLOTMENT SITE – RETAINING WALL

Consideration was given to a report updating members with regard to action taken since the previous meeting in relation to the retaining wall at South Church Road Allotment site. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED: 1. That the information be noted and actions taken endorsed.

TC.82/17 DETERMINATION OF TENANCY

Consideration was given to a report updated Members with respect of a determination of an allotment tenancy at Mill Race, Bishop Auckland. (For copy see file of Minutes).

A request from the tenant for a further 10 week extension to the Notice to Quit was considered. Members were strongly of the opinion that no further time should be given and that the Council's solicitor should be instructed to seek to regain possession of the plots via court action.

RESOLVED:

1. That the information be noted.
2. That the request for a further 10 week extension to the Notice to Quit be refused.
3. That the Council's solicitor be instructed to seek to regain possession of the plots via court action.

TC.83/17 OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Consideration was given to a report detailing action taken since the previous meeting relating to the Council obtaining office accommodation. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED: That the information be noted and action taken be endorsed.

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Town Mayor