

AGREED Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Prudhoe Town Council held on 30th January 2019

PRESENT

Cllr Tracy Gilmore (Chair) Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Andy Gill, Cllr Russell Greig, Cllr Bryan Futers, Cllr Chris Cuthbert, Cllr Duncan Couchman, Cllr Ignasious Varghese, Cllr Jennifer McGee, Cllr Brenda Grey, Cllr Glenn Simpson, Cllr Carol Stephenson.

Also in attendance: -

County Councillors Anne Dale, Gordon Stewart and Ken Stow.

Officers: - Sarah Eden (Prudhoe Town Council), Pauline Cant (Prudhoe Town Council)

OM1819/054 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Angie Scott

OM1819/055 Declarations of Interest None

OM1819/056 DRAFT Report of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee Meeting, held on 16th January 2019

IT was **AGREED** that the previously circulated minutes of the Planning Contract and Works Committee held on 16th January 2019 be received only.

It was further **AGREED** that the following report of the Clerks actions from the Planning, Contract & Works Meeting, 16th January 2019 be received: -

1819/158 Resident's Letter

An email response was sent to Mrs Mary Palmer (who requested to be named in the record of the meeting, as on the agenda) who was heartened and praised the Front Street traders we have. Mrs Palmer acknowledged that the Town Council must appreciate the importance of the 'pavement culture' and do as much as possible to maintain the Front Street to a very high standard. Mrs Palmer felt the lack of a central park was detrimental to Prudhoe.

1819/159 Funding for Detached Youth Service via Prudhoe Youth Project (previously referred to as PYI)

Following agreement at the 2019/20 Budget Meeting on 23rd January 2019, the clerk has advised Prudhoe Community Partnership Chair, Mr George Hepburn that the Town Council will make £20,000 available towards the 'Detached Youth Service' proposal that was received under this minute.

1819/160 Television Licence Refund Scheme

The clerk issued the following press release on 17th January 2019, online as well as at the Karbon Homes counter:

"Cessation of Prudhoe Town Council TV Licence Grant Refund Scheme for those aged 65 and over.

The TV Licence Scheme was launched in 1980 by Prudhoe Town Council. It was said to be the second such scheme in the country, the first having been set up by

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Sheffield City Council. The initial licence grant was for £12 per application, paid to qualifying residents in the form of TV Licence stamps. Until 2008-9, the value of the grant was £15 per licence, but it was then raised to £30.

Over the years there have been a number of changes to the administration of the scheme, the result being that the council now pays £30 cash to those eligible residents who seek the grant, following eligibility checks being carried out by the Karbon Homes customer services desk in the library.

The Scheme is not means-tested, providing you are a Prudhoe resident, in receipt of state retirement pension and have paid your TV licence, the £30 refund will be paid over.

At its meeting last night, the council considered the future of the scheme, taking into consideration the following points:

- That the council has to be able to satisfy itself that the benefit of the scheme is proportionate to the expenditure incurred.
- That further changes are required to the administration of the scheme in view that Karbon Homes is no longer able to support the council, and following questions from the council's external auditor.
- That the council should ensure that all those entitled are aware of the scheme through better advertising and should budget accordingly; we currently commit £12,000 in the budget to this scheme.
- That currently all those entitled to the £30 grant do not claim it. (Based on the last published census the cost would be £32,850 if they did; 1,095 population between age 65-74).

In June 2020 the Government will cease to fund the free TV Licence for the over 75's and the decision as to whether it continues will be taken by the BBC. It is probable that the BBC will not support this, subsequently increasing the likely number of claimants.

In considering the above points, the council agreed at its meeting last night that the TV Licence Refund Scheme should cease at the end of the financial year.

Councillors were mindful that if better publicised the scheme could result in a far greater expenditure than the council had ever committed to the scheme and therefore a bigger burden on the council tax payers of Prudhoe.

Councillors were concerned about the impact on those in real need of discontinuing the scheme, but in view that it is not means-tested were accepting that there was no way of establishing this.

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The refund will continue to be paid until 31st March 2019 to those who have not have not already claimed in the current financial year”.

There was also a report in the Hexham Courant, following which the office received one telephone call checking if the resident would be able to claim if the refund was due after March.

1819/161 Prudhoe East Centre – Community Asset Transfer (CAT)

The clerk has spoken Prudhoe Community Partnership Chair, Mr George Hepburn to clarify the position of PCP, if Prudhoe Town Council decided it did not wish to lead on a CAT; there was a supposition at the meeting but not a confirmed response.

The following information was emailed to all councillors:

“With regards the future of The East, George has informally (as he would need trustee support) offered that if PTC no longer wished to lead a sole asset transfer or long-term lease application to NCC that PCP would be interested in doing so and that they would welcome x2 Cllrs being on any group set up so that the Town Council was represented. George was clear that PCP would have to weigh up the risks and they would welcome any financial support for a business plan. There is a safety net in regards the building being put up for sale as PCP some time ago registered a ‘community right to bid’, therefore, they would be offered first refusal if a sale was ever pursued by NCC.”

The clerk also issued procedural advice regarding revisiting any decisions taken on this item as it was clear members were concerned about the processes followed. Such matters will be brought to the agenda of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee, Wednesday 13th February 2019.

1819/162 Town Council Website

A request for ‘Expressions of Interest’ has been published and shared; the closing date is 6th February 2019 to allow this item to be brought to the Planning, Contract and Works Committee, Wednesday 13th February 2019.

1819/163 Castle Dene Allotments

A written response was sent to Northumberland Estates that included the following:

“Following your letter of 13th December and our conversation on 17th December, I am writing to confirm that Prudhoe Town Council received your letter at a meeting on 16th January 2019, therefore I am in a position to respond formally, as per the council’s instructions.

Members of Prudhoe Town Council and members of Prudhoe Gardener’s Association, who manage the allotments on behalf of the council, would like to request that any increase in rent is in line with inflation, rather than the 100% increase proposed”.

Other Update Reports

1. Work on the trees at the rear of the Road Ends toilets has been completed. We need to look at possibly removing some concrete fence post within the boundary as Prudhoe Methodist Church are erecting a new wooden boarded fence.
2. Site meetings have taken place at Edgewell Old Cemetery regarding essential and improvement works; costs will be brought to the next PCW's meeting.
3. Costs have been sort for a replacement Space Net at Highfield park, costs will be brought to the next PCW's meeting.
4. Following the agreement of the Town Council's budget and precept demand, which was given to Northumberland County Council on 25th January 2019, the clerk has produced charts that help explain the budget and compare previous years.
5. Following emails regarding dog fouling, the clerk issued a poster encouraging residents to report to NCC rather than post on-line. There is however a feeling among those reporting that reports are not acted upon or counted.
6. The New Local Plan consultation has been publicised.

OM1819/057 County Councillor Reports

County Councillor Ken Stow outlined that the go ahead had been given for the crossing on South Road and that preparatory design work had begun, he also confirmed that this was in the County Council's Local Transport plan for 2019/20 and he advised that this would definitely be going ahead as he and County Councillor Gordon Stewart had each contributed £4000 from their Members Small Scheme Allowance.

County Councillor Ken Stow went on to advise that he was pleased that the result that the Community wanted had been achieved in relation to the proposed parking charges and that no parking charges would be imposed within Prudhoe, he also advised that the works to the Front Street would commence soon in two phases, phase 1 being from Station Road to the traffic lights and phase 2 being from the traffic lights to Redwell Road. Furthermore, the 20mph limit outside schools was being rolled out and the Prudhoe West Academy would be the next school. He reiterated that he was in regular contact with the police to discuss issues of local concern and keen to keep in touch with the public on local matters via his ward surgeries.

County Councillor Gordon Stewart updated the meeting on work he had been undertaking with other County Councillors on the County wide issue of dog fouling he advised that Prudhoe was in fact a very clean town and that it was not such an issue in terms of incidence reporting here as opposed to Blyth and Ashington where it was a significant problem. He also thanked the Town Clerk for the recent work that she had undertaken on social media to ensure that the problem of dog fouling was properly reported. He advised that he had also been undertaking work with private landlords to increase occupancy levels within the town and advised that the first properties on the Cottier Grange site that were available for affordable rent were to be released at midnight on 30th January 2019. On the issue of s106 monies in the low Prudhoe area

he advised that contrary to what had previously been believed there was not a lot of money available.

County Councillor Dale advised that on the issue of dog fouling, it was felt that additional bins were required along the route to Mickley. She further advised that new bus shelters were soon to be dropped into position and requested that she be involved in any decision regarding the re siting of the seat at the Miners bungalows in order to help alleviate any further problems. County Councillor Dale then went on to say that the issue of the 20mph limit at the school was in hand and she confirmed that the issue of Japanese Knot weed was being controlled and treated, she furthermore advised that she was aware that some of the salt bins were looking a bit tired and worn but that there was no budget to replace them if they were fit for purpose even if they were not aesthetically pleasing. A further update was given on the 20mph limit outside Mickley School which would soon be implemented.

Councillors McGee and Simpson sought reassurances from the County Councillors that the Town Centre retail development would be given equal priority and promotion as that at Low Prudhoe. County Councillor Dale advised that there had always been a really good relationship with Northumberland Estates and that she hoped that the issue of the Town Centre site could be flagged up again.

OM1819/058 Accounts

a) Statement of Expenditure

It was AGREED to receive and note the circulated statement of expenditure.

b) Bank Reconciliation

It was AGREED to receive and note the circulated Bank Reconciliation.

c) Accounts Payable

it was AGREED to endorse the payment of those accounts paid since the last meeting and authorise those accounts to be paid that were tabled.

OM1819/059 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

- a) Members gave consideration to the previously circulated letter from the Council's external auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP dated 23rd November 2018 and received verbal assurances from the clerk that all actions listed in the correspondence were completed on November 2018

It was AGREED to receive and note the letter from the Council's external auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP dated 23rd November and endorse the actions of the Clerk in relation to the actions taken as required of the Council at the Conclusion of the review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

- b) Members gave consideration to the previously circulated External Auditor certificate 2017/18 from PKF Littlejohn LLP dated 23rd November 2018 and the verbal report of the Clerk explaining the two matters referred to in relation to the completion of the AGAR.

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It was AGREED to receive and note the External Auditor's certificate for the period 2017/18

OM1819/060 Northumberland Town Investment Programme and Future High Streets Fund

Members gave consideration to the previously circulated briefing note from Tony Kirsopp, Community Regeneration Manager, Economy and Regeneration Service, Place Directorate, Northumberland County Council together with the previously circulated partners Briefing Note dated 22nd January 2019 entitled "*Northumberland Town Investment Programme Future High Streets Fund*" and its associated annexes and the Northumberland County Council Town Investment Proposal Programme "Expression of Interest" form.

In connection with this item, Members also gave consideration to a related tabled item this being the draft minutes of the Prudhoe Community Partnership preliminary meeting to establish a joint working party with Prudhoe Town Council on the Future of the Town Centre.

Following discussion **It was AGREED**

- a) To receive and note the briefing note from Tony Kirsopp.
- b) To receive and note the Partners briefing note – "Northumberland Town Investment Programme Future High Streets Fund.
- c) Not to submit an expression of interest at this stage as Prudhoe is currently unlikely to meet the eligibility criteria, but to work with the newly formed Prudhoe Community Partnership Town Centre Working party to enhance future preparedness for any future application.
- d) To formally receive and consider the minutes of the Prudhoe Community Partnership Preliminary Meeting to establish a Joint Working Party on the Future of the Town Centre at the next meeting of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee.

PROPOSED Cllr. Tracy Gilmore SECONDED Cllr Brenda Grey

OM1819/061 Reports from Outside Bodies

a) Prudhoe Community Partnership

Members gave consideration to the previously circulated report of the Prudhoe Town Survey "*You Said, We Did*" document and the quarterly report from the Chair.

It was AGREED to receive and note the "*You Said we We Did*" document and the quarterly report of the Prudhoe Community Partnership.

PROPOSED Cllr Brenda Gray SECONDED Cllr Tracy Gilmore

b) Prudhoe Pathforce

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Members gave consideration to the previously circulated minutes of the Prudhoe Pathforce meeting held on the 19th November 2018 and 21st January 2019 and received a verbal update from Councillor Duncan Couchman on the work undertaken to the Kepwell by Northumbrian Water.

It was AGREED to receive and note the previously circulated minutes of Prudhoe Pathforce and the associated verbal update report from Councillor Duncan Couchman.

OM1819/062 Correspondence and Publications

a) Correspondence

Members AGREED to receive and note the following items of correspondence and approve and endorse the Town Clerks actions in relation to each.

1. Northumberland County Council – Roadside Litter Campaign posters.

Posters displayed in library.

2. Sarah Darling, Environment Agency – Tyne Valley Flood Model, update on draft flood outlines and flood defence improvements. Reference to community wide events during March/April 2019 with suggestions for where these should be held requested.

Clerk has requested draft flood outlines when these are available. Any suggestions for a community event on flooding should be offered by way of response.

3. Northumberland County Council, New Local Plan Consultation taking place from 30th January – 30th March 2019. An event is being held at Prudhoe Waterworld Bowls Pavilion on Saturday 16th February, from 10am until 3pm.

Posters displayed in library and details have been shared on Town Council website and Social Media.

4. Northumberland County Council – Road Closure Order for Front Street for essential works.

The Order is to be effective from the 11th March 2019 until the 11th June 2019. It is expected that the road will be closed from the 11th March 2019 until the 15th March 2019 between 18:00 hours and 02:00 hours during this period.

Works will be split into two phases: -

Phase 1 - from its junction with South Road to its junction with Station Road.

Phase 2 – from its junction with Station Road to its junction with Redwell Road

Notice is displayed in library and details have been shared on Town Council website and Social Media.

5. Invitation to the West Northumberland Food Bank Annual General Meeting, 28th February, 6:30 – 8pm at Hexham Abbey.

All councillors are invited and must respond by 22nd February 2019

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6. Two emails have been from residents who regularly walk from Front Street (Dr Syntax) towards Mickley raising concern about the growing issue of dog fouling. Subsequently, a request has been received from County Cllr Anne Dale for a bin on the A695 between Prudhoe and Mickley – the Town Clerk advises that this is placed on the March Planning Contract and Works Agenda.

7. Northumberland Local Plan, Publication Draft (Regulation 19) – the Town Clerk advised that there was a consultation event scheduled on xxxxx at Waterworld and that she had a version on CD Members to view, she further advised that she would place the item on the agenda of the next Planning, Contract and Works Committee.

b) Publications

The Wylam Globe – Winter 2018 was received by the Council.

AGREED