

**PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING, held virtually, via Zoom at 7:00pm on**  
**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

*The agenda and associated papers for the meeting were published on-line on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 and the meeting was open for members of the public to attend.*

**PRESENT**

Cllr Chris Cuthbert, (chair), Cllr Jennifer McGee, Cllr Duncan Couchman, Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Glenn Simpson, Cllr Chris Barrett, Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Russ Greig

Also, in attendance County Cllr Anne Dale, County Cllr Gordon Stewart

**OM2021/026            Welcome by the Chair**

Cllr Chris Cuthbert welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**OM2021/027            Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Ignasious Varghese, Cllr Andy Gill, Cllr Carol Stephenson, Cllr Bryan Futers, Cllr Tracy Gilmore

**OM2021/028            Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Russ Greig declared a pecuniary interest in matters relating to Grant Aid, as a trustee of Friends of Eastwood Park.

Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Chris Barrett and Cllr Gerry Price declared a pecuniary interest in matters relating to Prudhoe Youth Project as trustees of the charity.

A discussion took place on whether members who were members of a committee by virtue of them being the Town Council representative should be required to declare a pecuniary interest and leave the meeting for any discussion and subsequent vote. Also, when Town Council representatives become trustees.

Following invitation by the Chair, the Clerk confirmed that it was at a members discretion whether they wished to declare an interest, whereby they could remain in the meeting, but the minutes would reflect the nature of the interest, or whether they wished to declare a pecuniary interest, which would require that they leave the meeting. The Clerk also confirmed that where a pecuniary interest was declared, the member in question could seek a dispensation allowing them to remain in the meeting for the matter under discussion. In all such matter, members were encouraged to seek advice from the Northumberland County Council Monitoring Officer.

**OM2021/029            Dispensations                    None taken**

**OM2021/030            Public Participation**

The Clerk confirmed that no matters had been brought by members of the public, on matters placed on the agenda.

**OM2021/031            West Northumberland Foodbank**

Cllr Chris Cuthbert welcomed Project Manager Sam Gilchrist to the meeting and thanked her for the comprehensive report.

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- a) It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the West Northumberland Foodbank, year 6 project report.

Following a question from Cllr Gerry Price, Sam Gilchrist confirmed that supplies had improved following an issue at the beginning of lockdown and that donations were being received in addition to financial support. It was confirmed that members of the public were reminded of how to donate and that the information was available on the website.

Cllr Cuthbert thanked the volunteers of West Northumberland Foodbank and commended the work carried out.

- b) It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the update on local support during the coronavirus pandemic.

Sam Gilchrist noted an error in the report provided and that 102 adults have been supported.

Following a question from Cllr Chris Cuthbert regarding transportation of food bank parcels and the issues logistically, Sam Gilchrist confirmed that the team was able to cope presently and they were managing well, but that they were bracing themselves for the end of furlough which will inevitably bring large scale job losses.

Sam Gilchrist confirmed that as well as those effected by Covid-19, there were a number of long-term beneficiaries who will not get back into the workplace due to age or sickness.

Following a further question from Cllr Chris Cuthbert about links with other organisations, Sam Gilchrist confirmed that they were a front-line service and whilst they maintain their own database, this is data protected, subject to safeguarding.

Before leaving the meeting, Sam Gilchrist thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to attend the meeting and gave reassurance that whilst not in The Spetchells Centre, they were still available to support the people of Prudhoe.

**OM2021/032 Prudhoe Youth Project (PYP)**

*Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Chris Barrett and Cllr Gerry Price left the meeting for the discussion of the following item.*

Cllr Chris Cuthbert welcome Mr George Hepburn (Chair – Prudhoe Community Partnership) and Mrs Dorothy Dickinson (Trustee of Prudhoe Youth Project) to the meeting.

- a) It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the Children North East Report on first year of work in Prudhoe, May 2019 – March 2020, alongside updated report from Chair of PYP.
- b) It was **AGREED** that the grant underspend of £2,600 from 2019/20 to be carried forward to support a residential in 2020/21.

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Following a question from Cllr Russ Greig regarding the carrying over of funds, the Clerk advised that we would have usually been in dialogue prior to the end of the tax year, and that this was not money for next year but for the present.

Mr George Hepburn confirmed that it was hoped the residential would be possible before the end of this tax year, but that this was a difficult situation with residential centres currently closed.

c) **It was AGREED** to approve that £10,000 committed towards the cost of a development worker, can be released, following confirmation of a 12-month contract being offered and replacement funding for detached/sessional work secured.

Mr George Hepburn advised that PYP would like to revert to the original request that the funding be used towards detached/sessional work, as opposed to the Development Worker as full funding for the Development Worker has been sourced from elsewhere.

The Chair asked the Clerk to confirm what Town Council had previously agreed and confirmed that any amendment could be agreed, and that the request was in line with the Council's original motion.

Cllr Russ Greig commented that whilst he was supportive of the funding being used for detached or sessional work, that 6 months had now passed, and sessions had not taken place.

Mr George Hepburn advised that the report covered this, and they would not be drawing down all of the funding. It was confirmed that they expected that sessions would commence on 1<sup>st</sup> October and they also hoped to have premises on Front Street. Mr Hepburn reported that they were confident that terms had been agreed with the Co-op and they would be applying for Planning Permission as soon as possible.

**It was further AGREED** that funding would be paid on receipt of reports from Prudhoe Youth Project (PYP), in December and again in March. Mr George Hepburn suggested that if the Town Council wanted particular information this could be requested.

d) **It was AGREED** that the remaining £10,000 committed to Prudhoe Youth Project, not drawn upon in 2020/21, being carried forward into 2021/22.

Mrs Dorothy Dickinson suggested that there was extenuating circumstance in regards Covid-19, relating to why the funding has not been spent.

Cllr Jennifer McGee and Cllr Glenn Simpson considered that there were special circumstances to justify that on this occasion the money is carried forward but that usually this would not be the case.

Cllr Russ Greig asked why PYP could not apply for funding in advance of the tax year, rather than agreeing now to carry forward funding from one tax year to the other.

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Following a question from the Chair, the Clerk confirmed that from a financial administration point of view, there was no issue with carrying forward funds for projects committed to in one financial year that would be delivered in another.

*Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Chris Barrett and Cllr Gerry Price returned to the meeting for the discussion of the following item.*

**OM2021/033          DRAFT Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting, held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020**  
**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the minutes as a true record.

**OM2021/034          Clerk's Report**  
**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the Clerk's Report, given as follows:

**Edgewell Allotments**

A technical manager from Barratt Homes has been in touch and is looking into the ownership of the failing fence, bordering the Edgewell Allotments and Edgewell Grange. Contact was made on 10th July and an update was sought on 21st July. Barratt Homes have advised that will repair any fence for which they have responsibility. A quotation has been sought for the tree work that is required.

**Road Ends Toilets**

Professional closed signage has been delivered and will be installed on each of the entry doors this week (25/07/2020). The joinery required to hook the doors open will also be carried out this week. The plumber has ordered the parts needed for the automatic flushing system and taps and is in regular contact with updates on the work being scheduled.

**Play Areas**

Professional closed signage has been delivered installed on the gates of all Town Council play areas. The bicycle locks have ensured the gates remain closed, but the parks are still being used. The designs for the safety signage, as agreed, should be agreed by the end of this week (25/07/2020) and production is approximately 2 weeks.

**Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)**

All audit paperwork was sent to PKF Littlejohn, as required, and posted on the Town Council's website. To date, we have received no questions.

**Returning to the Town Council office/End of Covid-19 related Community Support**

The Clerk will return to the Town Council office on Monday 3rd August. The Spetchells Centre has been made Covid-19 safe, with additional health and safety measures in place and Government Advice has changed to encourage workers back to work. This date also marks the end of shielding and the expected end of Covid-19 related support in the community. It is expected that the Clerk, and other volunteers, will no longer be supporting with shopping and prescriptions. There is an obvious transition period running up to this point and the Clerk is in regular contact with Adult and Social Care (West Northumberland), helping people get back to some semblance of normal. Information has been communicated to volunteers, many of whom have not been called upon, but a couple

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are still supporting people. Where we know that support has continued, we have passed on contact details for Adult and Social Care.

### **Summer Holidays**

The Clerk will be on holiday from Monday 17th August, until Tuesday 1st September, taking advantage of the fact there is no Ordinary Meeting scheduled in August. The Clerk is liaising with the HR Committee regarding necessary cover, most specifically in relation to Edgewell Cemetery.

### **OM2021/035 County Cllr Reports**

The Clerk gave the following report sent on behalf on County Cllr Ken Stow:

South Rd crossing ~ Gordon & I are still chasing this, waiting now for costings for electrical connection.

Low Prudhoe ~ We have money in the LTP for remedial works to prevent the flooding and resurface the road (hopefully including the access road to the industrial estate).

Ferndene ~ Gordon has asked for the application to be brought before Tynedale Local Council.

Retail park ~ on track, should have information that we can pass on concerning signed up tenants shortly.

I have asked for repairs to several footpaths/guardrails etc and will also be funding the installation of extra lighting on 1 footpath (subject to survey) in the Castle Rd/Western Ave area.

Old drill hall ~ unfortunately no further progress on this other than the planning application to install 2.4m fencing around the site. This is far from ideal and I have made mine, and the residents' feelings on it, well known. I have discussed this with the Director of Planning, Head of Public Safety & cabinet member responsible, so it has been taken up at the highest levels within NCC. Daljit Lally is also aware of the situation. Rob Murfin has a plan that may achieve a better outcome but at this stage I am not able to discuss it, it is dependent upon several things coming together. The waters have been muddied further now by the 'landowner' who, as you know, is currently in prison. I will keep pressing for an improved solution and will report back as information becomes available.

General ~ several estate roads included in LTP for repairs and resurfacing.

County Cllr Anne Dale advised that she could send a fuller report via email. Additionally, Cllr Dale took the opportunity to commend the work of County Cllrs officers who were working under difficult times and much pressure. In regards Riding Dene Playground, which remained closed, Cllr Dale advised that she had contacted NCC about the lack of signage.

County Cllr Gordon Stewart commended the huge team effort working throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and advised that himself Cllr Barrett, Cllr Gilmore and Cllr Greig had

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regular communications throughout and he took the opportunity to thank the Town Council for allowing the Clerk to lead on the administration of the response.

County Cllr Gordon Stewart especially thanked the hundreds of volunteers and the response of the Miners Lamp Café and Community Hub. Additionally, Cllr Stewart advised that he had been active on Front Street during the first 2 weeks of reopening retail, bringing a press presence also.

In regards the Low Prudhoe Development Cllr Stewart advised that retail would be signed over in October so shops would be open for business prior to Christmas. Cllr Stewart espoused a huge investment in the town and great efforts to ensure local employment opportunities with over a hundred job opportunities.

Cllr Stewart advised that an officer had been tasked with looking into the feasibility of a 20mph speed limit through Castlefields and extending the 30mph to include the entrance of Cottier Grange, with the expectation that they are presented in the next couple of weeks.

The following points were added:

- Ferndene development is expected at the beginning of 2021 with more job opportunities.
- The former allotment site of Front Street is progressing.
- Waterworld Play Area has an update, including a new timescale which is disappointing; this will be passed on to the Clerk tomorrow.
- Riverside Playground should be opened as soon as NCC reopen playgrounds.
- Pocket park idea being discussed with traders.
- Fuse Media Centre will be used by Collingwood 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

**OM2021/036 Proud of Prudhoe**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the report from County Cllr Gordon Stewart advising of the intention that local people will be congratulated 'on screen' at the entrance to The Spetchells Centre for their contribution to the response to Covid-19.

Additionally, Cllr Stewart advised that there would also be an awards ceremony, at a time that was permissible, to specially award those who had gone above and beyond.

In response to Cllr Chris Cuthbert, Cllr Stewart advised that there was not a closing date as we were still in a pandemic situation and the ceremony could be held.

**OM2021/037 Accounts**

- a) **It was AGREED to RECEIVE** Bank Reconciliation Statements 10th June – 9th July 2020
- b) **It was AGREED to RECEIVE** Statement of Budget and Expenditure from 1st April 2020 – 21st July 2020
- c) **It was AGREED to endorse** those accounts paid via delegated authority, and **AGREE** those to be paid, since 16th June 2020

Cllr Chris Cuthbert commended the work on the planters and hanging basket columns so thanks to Scorpion Joinery.

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In regards reimbursement to the Clerk for items paid via paypal, the Chair asked the Clerk to clarify. The Clerk advised that goods were ordered via the Town Council and the invoice in the Town Council name. It was agreed to look into the possibility of a credit/debit card, but the Clerk advised that it was not a priority as it was not frequent.

Additionally, Cllr Chris Cuthbert questioned a one-off cost for a memorial seat having been re-stained. The Clerk advised that the seat had faded following install in February 2017.

**OM2021/038 Casual Vacancy Prudhoe West and Halfway Ward**

**It was AGREED** to formally declare a Casual Vacancy in the Prudhoe West and Halfway Ward following the resignation of Cllr Brenda Grey, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020.

**OM2021/039 Prudhoe in Bloom 2020**

**It was AGREED** competition and event would not be held in 2020, with a bigger and better event in 2021.

**OM2021/040 Grant Aid 2020**

- a) **It was AGREED** to write out to all 2020 applicants requesting any update/amendment to their application.
- b) **It was AGREED** to invite further applications from groups who did not apply prior to the previous closing date, in view that that the community environment is vastly different because of covid-19
- c) **It was AGREED** that any applications should be received before 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Cllrs Gerry Price and Jennifer McGee clarified that some funding has been agreed from the budget already, thus reducing the amount, but also that some may not wish to pursue grant aid in this financial year.

Cllr Angie Scott **AGREED** to be part of the Grant Aid group, alongside Cllr Chris Cuthbert, Cllr Jennifer McGee, Cllr Tracy Gilmore, Cllr Andy Gill, and Cllr Bryan Futers, to meet week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> September.

**OM2021/041 Northumberland Local Plan Examination - Consultation on additional evidence**

- a) **It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the details of the consultation being carried out on additional evidence requested by the Independent Examination; Consultation begins on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and runs for 8 weeks until 5pm on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- b) **It was AGREED** to add the submission of new comments on additional evidence to the meeting of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee, being held on 12<sup>th</sup> August

**OM2021/042 Prudhoe Community Partnership Town Centre Working Party – Joint Working Group with Prudhoe Town Council**

- a) **It was AGREED** to receive the report of the last meeting, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020.
- b) **It was AGREED** to receive note on the cessation of the Town Centre Working Party.

Cllr Glenn Simpson questioned how the town moves forward with the Front Street, acknowledging that Low Prudhoe has been the focus and for many years Town Centres in other areas have received greater attention.

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Cllr Simpson concluded that all main partners, including Prudhoe Town Council, Northumberland County Council and Prudhoe Community Partnership, had failed to develop any real strategy for the Town Centre and there was a lack of leadership on this.

Cllr Chris Cuthbert commented that she believed Prudhoe Front Street was coping very well and being supported by the community and received a lot of support from the local community.

Cllr Chris Cuthbert invited Mr George Hepburn to comment. Mr Hepburn commented that the trend was that it was clear that retail would diminish on the High Street and they wanted to develop a strategy to buck the trend and ensure the Front Street was vibrant and accept the change that it will become more about residential and retail.

Mr Hepburn concluded that attendance at meetings was poor and therefore they took the decision to cease meeting.

Cllr Jennifer McGee thanked Mr Hepburn for the work carried out and agreed that it was important the Town Centre remained vibrant with retail, leisure, and community but she was concerned about the change of use to residential.

County Cllr Gordon Stewart advised that parliament had passed legislation allowing retail to change use to residential outside of the planning process.

Cllr Duncan Couchman left the meeting at 8:45pm.

**OM2021/043            Correspondence**

Cllr Chris Cuthbert read each of the five letters received from members of the public, included in the meeting agenda papers and the Clerk read an additional letter included, which was received after the agenda went out.

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the six letters from members of the public in regards the Town Council's decision not to reopen Play Areas and to ask that this decision be reconsidered, and Play Areas are reopened prior to September and the end of the summer holidays.

The Clerk advised, as items of correspondence, all the Council was procedurally entitled to do is to add the matter to a future agenda, the matter could not be debated. This advice was previously given on receipt of the letters. Additionally, in order to reverse a decision of the Council, as well as placing it on the agenda, it would require a special motion to suspend standing orders to allow an alternative motion.

Cllr Cuthbert suggested that the matter should be brought to a future agenda. Cllr Russ Greig agreed and advised that Eastwood Park, whilst not open yet, was receiving a lot of traffic from parents and children.

Cllr Gerry Price considered that if members were not in agreement to suspending standing orders to allow the decision to be altered, then it would remain as it stands, to be reviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> September, by which point the summer holidays would be over.

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The Clerk repeated the legal advice that in addition to agreeing to place the item on a future agenda, which members could do this evening, 6 Cllrs would also need to write to the Clerk expressing that they wished to suspend standing orders and bring an alternative proposal to that already agreed, which would then be voted on.

The Clerk made clear that whilst the matter could be placed on a future agenda, without standing orders being suspended, the existing motion could not be changed. The Clerk fully appreciated what Cllr Price suggested that it would seem nonsensical to bring back an item for discussion if there was no support to change the decision.

Cllr Russ Greig advised that whilst he would be happy to suspend standing orders at the next Planning, Contract and Works Committee meeting, being held on 12<sup>th</sup> August, he was mindful that this would be part way through the summer holidays and almost at the point of the agreed review anyway.

The Clerk reminded members that previous advice given made clear to members that the Chair of the Council could call an extraordinary meeting of the Council to bring this matter sooner, or any two Cllrs could make this request of the Chair. That could still be done and if carried through an agenda could be put out the next day, with the meeting being able to be held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August, but there would still need to be agreement to suspend standing orders, with an alternative motion.

Cllr Russ Greig advised that he was hearing a lot of criticism about the Council not reopening the play areas.

The Chair was reminded that the only motion available to members was to add the item to a future agenda.

Cllr Chris Barrett proposed and Cllr Russ Greig seconded that the matter be added to the next Planning, Contract and Works agenda.

Cllr Glenn Simpson commented that it may not make a significant difference as reopening was scheduled to be discussed on 9<sup>th</sup> September, also, there still needed to be agreement to suspend standing orders to change the decision.

Cllr Chris Cuthbert concluded that the agreement to place on the next Planning, Contract and Works agenda related to the public toilets also, and that the Clerk had given clear advice as to what was necessary in order to change the decision, also given previously via email, therefore it was entirely up to members.

END OF MEETING