

9. REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE – 1ST FEBRUARY

The meeting considered the report of the Finance Committee (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member). The report contained recommendations relating to future projects proposed in the light of the increased level of Precept for the 2005/6 financial year, and the administration of the Community Fund previously operated by n-power.

Agreed : a) That recommendations (a) (b) and (c) in Item No. 3 of the report be Accepted and Adopted.

b) That recommendations (a) (b) and (c) in Item No. 4 of the report be Accepted and Adopted subject to the following amendments :

i) In (a) the addition of the words “in limited circumstances” after the word “individuals”

ii) In (c) the wording be amended to read “ All applications shall be dealt with on their merits.

10. PARISH/TOWN CLERKS’ REVISED CONDITIONS OF SERVICE :

(The Clerk left the meeting while this item was under discussion)

The meeting considered as Appendix 1 the report by the Clerk setting out details of the joint recommendations of the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks on the revised Conditions of Service and revised Salary Scales, to take effect from 1st April 2005. The recommendations had been made in the light of the wide variety of circumstances relating to individual parish/town councils’ activities, and amended the current method of determining part-time clerks’ salary levels purely by reference to population, to reflect the increased work load, number of meetings etc.

Agreed : That Approval be given to the enhancement of the Clerk’s salary grading to Point 21 (the penultimate point) of Grade LC1 applicable to part-time clerks, to take effect from 1st April 2005.

11. PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT – FORMER CATTLE MART SITE :

The meeting considered as Appendix 2 the report by the Clerk setting out details of the proposal by Alexander Homes to develop this site to provide mixed housing. The report included proposals for dealing with the auction ring, which as a Grade 11 listed building could not be demolished, and which would be enclosed on three sides, the fourth side, facing the High Street to be landscaped and public seating provided.

Agreed : That the proposed development be Noted with approval as encouraging the environmental and economic regeneration of the town, and that a suitable response be sent to the District Council, with the request that every effort be made to effect the demolition of the auction ring.

12. PLANNING MATTERS :

The following new planning applications were Noted :

- a) Proposed single storey dwelling with attached garage on land rear of 1a Brick Flats
- b) Proposed new roof structure with dormers, new shop front, new windows all round, new double pitch roof to existing garage at 9 Dan's Castle

- c) Proposed 3 no. three storey dwelling town houses on plots 4/4a/5 Naismith Mews

13. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT :

Agreed : That Approval be given to the payment of Invoices Nos. 057 to 061 in the sum of £ 1081.30 subject to the with-holding of payment of Invoice No. 058 pending discussions on the frequency of publication of the Tattler.

14. GYPSY & TRAVELLER CONFERENCE :

The Clerk reported receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council in connection with a forthcoming event at the County Cricket ground to highlight the issues relating to the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Travelling Community. The correspondence was Received.

15. TATTLER :

The Chairman reported on the background of the delay in the publication of the newsletter, and discussion ensued as to the frequency of publication and the method of payment. The Clerk advised that the publication of a community newsletter on at least a quarterly basis was an essential criterion to the attaining of Quality Status.

Agreed : a) That the next edition of the Tattler be published in March, with a deadline date for the submission of material for inclusion being set at 7th. Future publications would be distributed on a bi-monthly basis.

b) That payment be made per edition rather than the existing monthly basis.

16. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT :

- a) The Chairman referred to the current series of public exhibitions being held by H.J.Banks in connection with their revised planning application for the West Durham Windfarm, and felt that in the light of a reduction of the scale of the proposal from 22 to 13 turbines, the Company's offer to attend a future meeting of the Council was not necessary. This was Agreed.

- b) The Chairman referred to her attendance at a recent meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership at which the proposed Regional Spatial Strategy had been considered. Both Durham County Council and Wear Valley District Council had expressed concern that future development would be primarily in the conurbation areas, to the detriment of the more rural communities in the County.

17. CLERK'S REPORT :

- a) The Clerk reported a late item of correspondence from the Durham County Association seeking nominations from Chairmen/members of Town and Parish Councils interested in attending Royal Garden Parties in July. The Association received a limited number of invitations each year, and the successful applicants were drawn by lots. Applications were requested by late February. The report was Noted.

18. MEMBERS' REPORTS :

- a) Councillor Graham suggested that in order to involve young people in the town in community affairs, it might be appropriate to arrange an open meeting of the Council or Community Partnership to which they might be invited as observers. The Clerk advised that the practicalities of arranging daytime meetings of the Council would be a problem, and it was felt that the Partnership would perhaps be a preferable forum, where the constraints of having an input in the discussions would be less onerous. It was Agreed that this suggestion be followed up, and that the Head Teachers of the two schools in the town be approached for their views.
- b) In order to bring the activities and proceedings of the Town Council to a wider audience, which was one of the criteria for the attaining of Quality Status, it was felt that better use be made of the local press in publicising meetings and reporting Minutes, and the Clerk was authorised to contact the Northern Echo in order to further this aim.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING :

It was Noted that the next meeting of the Town Council would be held in the Community Centre on Tuesday 15th March 2005 commencing at 7 p.m.