

TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING – 19TH APRIL 2005

PRESENT : Councillor J.Flynn (Chairman)

Councillors T.Batson, J.Day, J.Gale, P.Graham,
A.Green, R.Grogan, A.Lawton, E.Morris, C.Rand,
J.Stevens

Also in attendance – Councillor C.Hayton (Wear Valley District Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE :

Councillor E.Gwynnette

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST :

There were no Declarations to report

3. POLICE REPORT :

There was no Police Officer in attendance

4. REPRESENTATIONS BY RESIDENTS :

There were no residents in attendance

5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT :

County Councillor Carroll was not in attendance

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS :

a) Councillor C.Hayton

Councillor Hayton referred to a number of teething troubles in connection with the introduction of the wheely bin system, but pointed out that these would be rectified as the scheme was settling down. He also referred to the number of communities in the district which were applying for parish status under the provisions of the Local Government & Rating Act 1997. These currently included Willington and Bishop Auckland, and others may well follow. He reported having been investigating the situation in Sunnyside, Stanley Crook and Billy Row.

b) Councillor R.Grogan

Councillor Grogan reported a good response to the positive action which had been taken by Home Housing with regard to anti-social behaviour. The general view was of a marked improvement in the situation. Having studied the situation in other areas, it had been suggested that a visit might be arranged with local youngsters to see examples of recreation provision, including youth shelters.

Councillor Grogan also reported that a decision was pending on the planning application for housing development at the Cattle Mart site. The situation with the Grade 11 listed auction ring was still under consideration, but initially it appeared that it would have to be retained on site, suitably landscaped.

Concern was also expressed at the condition of the surface of the games area at the recreation ground, which had caused the facility to be closed temporarily. It was also reported that funding was now available for the feasibility study for the possible revamping of the area to be carried out.

c) Councillor J.Gale

Councillor Gale expressed ongoing concern at the level of fly tipping which was occurring in the area, caused in large measure by the closure of some Durham County Council civic amenity sites. He emphasised that the District Council offered a free collection service for domestic users, and it was agreed that this be advertised in the next edition of the Tattler.

Councillor Gale also suggested that over a number of years, ALMO housing rents would be brought into line with those of Home Housing, and that there was a need for a part rent/part ownership scheme to be introduced.

7. MINUTES :

Agreed : That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 15th March 2005 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member) be Approved and Signed as a correct record.

8. HOME HOUSING – ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR – MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE :

The Clerk reported having been in touch with Home Housing to clarify the procedure to be adopted for a proposed meeting to discuss with the young people their views on the provision of recreation facilities in the town. No formal response had been received, though it was believed that the matter would be discussed at the meeting of the Community Partnership on Wednesday 20th April. The report was Noted.

9. YOUNG PEOPLES' ATTENDANCE AT TOWN COUNCIL/PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS :

The Clerk reported having consulted with the Head Teachers of the two primary schools in this connection, specifically from the standpoint of the starting times of the meetings. It had been agreed that the Partnership was the best forum for the attendance of the two representatives from each School Council, and it was noted that the arrangements would be finalised at the meeting on Wednesday 20th April.

10. DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS ANNUAL MEETING – NOTICE OF MOTION

The Clerk reported for members' information having sent an appropriate Notice of Motion for consideration at the meeting in October. The Motion, seeking a review of Audit charges for smaller local Councils receiving excessive one-off income or incurring excessive one-off expenditure, was read to the meeting and **Approved**.

11. COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATIONS :

The following applications were considered :

- a) St.Joseph's R.C.Church
The application sought assistance towards the cost of the repair and upgrading of the entrance and yard to the side and front of the Church, the estimated cost of which was £2635 plus VAT.
- b) St.Philip & St.James Parish Church
The application sought assistance for the provision of a disabled access to the Church and Church Hall. No estimate or quotation was provided in support.
- c) Blessed John Duckett R.C.Primary School
The application sought assistance towards the cost of a school visit to the Hartlepool Historic Quay at a cost of £252.
- d) Tow Law History Group
The application sought assistance towards the cost of computer equipment (£600) to enable a database to be set up to record the history of Tow Law and surrounding area. The sum of £350 was already held in the group's funds.

Discussion ensued as to the method to be adopted in allocating payments from the Fund, bearing in mind the limited resources it offered in relation to an anticipated influx of applications, and it was

Agreed : i) That the following payments be approved :

Application (c) the sum of £252

Application (d) the sum of £250

ii) That applicants (a) and (b) be requested to submit further financial information regarding costs to enable a decision to be made.

12. SEC. 137 PAYMENT – GREAT NORTH AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE :

A letter of appreciation from the Air Ambulance Service in response to the payment of £50 towards its funds was **Received**.

13. FLY TIPPING – HIGH STOOP AREA :

The Clerk reported having written to Wear Valley District Council expressing concern at this activity, and requesting the provision of a skip to assist in dealing with the problem. No formal response had been forthcoming, but it was felt that the action suggested in Minute No.6(c) above might provide a partial solution.

14. DOG FOULING :

The Clerk reported having advised the District Council of the growing concern over this problem, and it was Noted that the officer involved with the "Pride in Wear Valley" campaign had arranged to meet with two Town Council members in the near future to consider ways of dealing with the situation.

15. TOW LAW RECREATION GROUND – NON-DOMESTIC RATES :

The Clerk reported that in accordance with the provisions of the Government's scheme for Small Business Rate Relief, a discount of 50% had been obtained on the gross amount of rates chargeable on the Recreation Ground. The revised charge for the 2005/6 financial year would be £300.87. The report was Noted.

16. PUBLIC NOTICE BOARD :

The Chairman reported that she had been in receipt of the sum of £158 in respect of unused SRB funding which it was necessary to utilise before the end of the 2004/5 financial year. Accordingly, she had approved the purchase of a wall mounted public notice board for the Town Council's use, to be sited at the entrance of the Community Centre. The nett cost of the board, after recovery of VAT was £613.93 the final cost to the Council being £455.93

Agreed : That the action of the Chairman in this matter be Endorsed and Approved.

Arising from this discussion, Councillor Grogan undertook to utilise his share of the SRB funding towards the replacement of the public seat formerly sited near the southern boundary of the parish, and it was

Agreed : That the Town Council finance the balance of the cost, and that the Community Task Force be requested to site the seat at the appropriate location.

17. EAST HEDLEYHOPE FELL :

The meeting considered as Appendix 1 (a copy of which had been sent to each member), the report by the Clerk on an informal meeting with the newly appointed Warden, Craig Best, which had also been attended by the Chairman, Councillor Rand and Diane Pearson (Community Worker). The get together had been convened as an exploratory first meeting with Mr.Best to learn about his remit for the Fell from the Durham Wildlife Trust, and to hear his views on his plans for its implementation. The Chairman reported that the meeting had been very useful and informative, and in response to his undertaking, and to allow him time to get to grips with his task, it was

Agreed : That Mr.Best be invited to attend the September meeting of the Town Council to address members on progress in his first few months.

18. TRAFFIC SPEEDS – HIGH STREET/BRIDGE STREET/DAN'S CASTLE :

The Clerk reported receipt of correspondence from Durham Constabulary on the findings which their ongoing traffic survey had revealed. The inference was that the situation in High Street and Bridge Street did not justify a further period of high visibility police activity, although the Dan's Castle area would continue to receive attention until 15th May. The report was noted, but it was felt that a presence between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. on weekdays would be essential in order to ascertain the true nature of the problem.

19. AUDIT CHARGES :

The Chairman and the Clerk reported jointly on the lengthy discussions which had been ongoing with the Council's external auditors regarding the level of fees imposed for the financial years 2001/2 and 2002/3. The charges had accrued as a result of extra correspondence and telephone calls relating to the former year, the standard charge for which was £120 + VAT, which had escalated to £401 + VAT by virtue of the Auditors charging for 3.75 additional hours' work at their standard charge of £75 per hour.

The fee for the 2002/3 financial year was £650 +VAT, the standard charge for Parish/Town Councils whose annual income and/or expenditure had exceeded £100,000 and this had been similarly increased to £800 + VAT by virtue of 2 hours' additional investigative work at £75 per hour.

The Chairman explained that attempts had been made to have the charges reduced because of the excessive one-off nature of the income involved, but these had so far proved futile, although a further avenue was being explored. Following discussion, it was

Agreed : That Approval be given to the payment of the standard fees for each year (£120 and £650 respectively plus VAT) and that the additional fees charged be with-held pending the outcome of the ongoing negotiations.

20. LITTER BIN – HELME PARK SERVICE STATION :

The Clerk reported having asked the District Council to provide a litter bin at this location, following a request by the owners for such a facility to encourage customers to dispose of their rubbish other than on the forecourt. The report was Noted.

21. DURHAM PROBATION SERVICE :

The meeting considered as Appendix 2 the report by the Clerk on the informal meeting which the Chairman and he had held with two representatives of the Probation Service to consider ways in which persons serving Community Service Orders imposed by the courts could assist in performing appropriate duties in the town, under supervision. The report set out the mechanics of the scheme, and a number of suitable tasks were identified.

Agreed : That the report be noted, and that the representatives be invited to attend a future meeting of the Community Partnership to discuss further possibilities.

22. RECREATION GROUND :

The meeting considered as Appendix 3 a petition by two young residents of the parish concerning the temporary closure of the recreation ground due to the dangerous condition of the games area surface. It was reported that remedial work was to be carried out in the near future, and that the facility would reopen soon. It was also reported that funding was now available to undertake a feasibility study into the future of the area. The report was Noted.

23. FLORAL TUBS – 2005 :

The Clerk submitted two written quotations from Mr.Roy Hillery of RGH Services for the planting and maintenance of the tubs for the 2005 season :

- a) Supply compost, plants and fertiliser, set out and plant tubs and maintain until June and store at end of season £700
- b) As above but maintain until the end of the season £1400

Agreed : That Quotation (b) in the sum of £1400 be accepted and Mr.Hillery be advised accordingly.

24. D.C.C. – URBAN & RURAL RENAISSANCE INITIATIVE :

The Clerk reported receipt of a response from the County Council to a letter which had been sent in February requesting a meeting to consider further environmental improvements in the High Street area. The response indicated that Tow Law had benefited from significant investment in recent years, which had facilitated improvements along the A68 corridor, and implied that no further work was pending. Following discussion, it was

Agreed : That the County Council be informed of the promises and undertakings which had been given during the Foot & Mouth outbreak.

25. PLANNING MATTERS :

The following new applications were noted without comment :

- a) Proposed new dwelling at British Legion Hall, Campbell Street
- b) Proposed detached stone 2 storey/5 bedroomed house with garage at 3 Naismith Mews

It was Noted that consideration of the planning application for residential development at the Cattle Market site was pending, and that the recommendation of the planning officer was for approval.

26. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT :

Agreed : That Approval be given for the payment of Invoices Nos. 001 – 006 in the sum of £618.70 as listed on the meeting Agenda

Further Agreed :

- a) **That in accordance with the decisions in Agenda Items 11(c) and 11(d) above, Approval be given for payment of the sums of £252 and £250 respectively.**
- b) **That Approval be given for the payment of the sum of £ 721.36 in respect of the purchase of a public notice board (for details of which, see Minute No.27)**

27. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT :

- a) The Chairman reported that she would be attending a meeting in the near future at which the subject of Family Learning would be discussed, and at which it was hoped that further support for the two Tow Law primary schools could be achieved.
- b) The Chairman further reported that she had recently learned that she was in receipt of the sum of £158 in respect of surplus SRB money, which needed to be used before the end of the financial year on 31st March. Consequently, she felt that the purchase of a wall mounted notice board for the exclusive use of the Town Council was a suitable acquisition. Accordingly, in consultation with the Clerk a suitable board had been obtained from Glasdon UK, to be sited next to the entrance to the Community Centre. The additional cost to the Council would be £455.93.

**Agreed : That the action of the Chairman and Clerk in this matter be
Confirmed and Endorsed.**

28. CLERK'S REPORTS :

The Clerk reported as follows :

- a) Having sent to each member a personal internal memorandum expressing concern at the additional work which he was carrying out in support of the Community Partnership, which was reducing the hours which he was able to devote to Town Council duties. After discussion with the Chairman, it had been agreed that the Partnership duties be transferred to the Community Development Worker. The report was Noted.
- b) Having received notification from the Head of Service Contracts at the District Council that he wished to carry out his Annual Visit to discuss all aspects of his duties relating to environmental services.

**Agreed : That the officer be invited to attend the Town Council meeting to
be held on Tuesday 21st June.**

- c) A summary of the Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2005 was circulated at the meeting as an addendum. A full copy would be presented to the Annual Meeting for formal adoption.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING :

It was Noted that the next meetings of the Council would be as follows :

Thursday 17th May 2005 Annual Meeting of Electors 6.30 p.m.

Annual Meeting of the Council 7.00 p.m.