

TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING – 19TH JULY 2005

**PRESENT : Councillors J.Day, J.Flynn, P.Graham, A.Green, R.Grogan,
E.Gwynnette, A.Lawton, E.Morris, C.Rand**

**In the absence of the Chairman of the Council Councillor Grogan
as Vice Chairman, took the Chair.**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE :

Councillor J.Stevens

County Councillor T.Carroll, Councillor C.Hayton

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST :

There were no Declarations to report

3. POLICE REPORT :

Sergeant Steve Donnelly presented the crime figures for the month of June, which indicated that 73 calls had been recorded for Tow Law. Of these, 6 had been youth related, and 9 were public order offences. There had been 9 crimes in the community during the month - 1 burglary, 2 assaults, 3 damage related, 1 theft of a motor vehicle and two others. Sergeant Donnelly felt that the figures for Tow Law were low as compared with other areas, and he reported that a community support officer was now on station to assist P.C.Geoff Moore. The ASBO situation was still relatively quiet, and in order to assist with this, Home Housing had indicated that some funds were available to help fund a youth shelter. A new link worker was now in place, and it was expected that a youth worker would be appointed in the near future. A member pointed out that traffic speeds on Wolsingham Road continued to cause concern, and that parking difficulties in Thornley Road were exacerbating the road safety situation. Sergeant Donnelly agreed that a survey would be carried out using traffic data equipment, and that a site visit would be convened.

4. QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY :

(At this point, the Chairman of the Council, Councillor T.Batson joined the meeting and assumed the Chair)

(Councillor T.Batson in the Chair)

The Chairman introduced Dr.Judith Bush of Newcastle University, the author of the survey, who had agreed to attend to answer members' queries. She reminded members that a postal questionnaire of 750 people had been undertaken, and that a commendable 50% response had been achieved. She summarised the recommendations at the end of the report, and dealt with members' questions, which covered various concerns as follows :

- a) What was the connection between the report and the long-term regeneration of Tow Law?
- b) Was the survey and its findings a “stepping stone” and how would it fit in with the future?
- c) How does the Town Council move on from the findings – should there be a spatial strategy for rural communities?
- d) What will happen to the report in the wider context?

In addressing the concerns, Dr.Bush pointed out that a larger and wider published report would be circulated, and it would be for the Town Council to determine what action it would take to further its own ambitions for the community, which she acknowledged had a strategic position on a major north/south trunk road.

The Chairman thanked Dr.Bush for her attendance, and she left the meeting

5. REPRESENTATIONS BY RESIDENTS :

There were no residents in attendance.

6. MINUTES :

Agreed : That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28th June 2005 (a copy of which had been circulated previously to each member), be Approved and Signed as a correct record.

7. REPORT OF FINANCE COMMITTEE :

Agreed : That the report of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 12th July 2005 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member) be Received, and the recommendations therein be Approved and Adopted.

8. COUNTY COUNCILLOR’S REPORT :

County Councillor Carroll was not in attendance.

9. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS’ REPORTS :

a) Councillor R.Grogan

Councillor Grogan reported that the Government had approved the formal establishment of the “Arms Length Management” (ALMO) of the Council’s Housing stock, and that 2 star status was being sought to access the necessary finance. The new management board, of which he was a member, was expected to assume responsibility in September. The ASBO situation was currently quiet, and that no response had been forthcoming via the diary reporting system.

Councillor Grogan also made reference to the meeting at County Hall in connection with the Urban & Rural Initiative, which he had attended with the Chairman and the Clerk. He felt that the meeting had been useful, and he was hopeful that progress could be made.

10. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL – URBAN & RURAL RENAISSANCE :

The Chairman reported on the meeting which he, the Vice Chairman and the Clerk had attended at County Hall with David Miller, Acting Director of Environment and David Warburton of the Urban & Rural Renaissance team. County Councillor Trevor Carroll was also in attendance. Discussion had centred on the concerns of the Tow Law community, that regeneration finance which had been promised to the town in the aftermath of the Foot & Mouth outbreak had not been fully forthcoming. Those present emphasised the need to draw up a proper programme of environmental improvements to take advantage of the town's strategic situation on the A68 trunk road, with a view to arresting the economic stagnation which it was felt was prevalent. The meeting had agreed that the Town Council should prepare and submit a list of proposals to be considered by the County and District Councils, and that County Council officers might attend a future meeting of the Town Council.

Agreed : That the Chairman's report be Noted and that all necessary follow-up action be taken to expedite this matter.

11. LAND ADJOINING MILLENNIUM GREEN :

The Clerk reported having received further correspondence in this connection from the Council's Solicitors, indicating that enquiries were ongoing with the County Council regarding the provision of public footpath access, and a reply was awaited. The report was Noted.

12. WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK :

The meeting considered as Appendix 1 the report by the Clerk relating to the pre-submission consultation on the preparation of a draft Statement of Community Involvement. The consultation exercise required an initial response by 1st July, and the Clerk reported having sent a submission to the Director of Regeneration within this timescale, a copy of which was copied to each member as part of the Appendix.

Agreed : That the report be Noted and that the action of the Clerk be Confirmed and Approved.

13. CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS & ENVIRONMENT ACT 2005 :

The Clerk reported verbally on this emerging legislation, which would allow Parish & Town Councils to issue fixed penalty notices for litter, graffiti, fly posting and dog fouling offences, and to introduce dog control orders for a range of offences. The Act would not place any new duties on Parish & Town Councils, though many other measures within the legislation would impact on them indirectly, as local authorities (districts and unitaries) are given a wide range of new powers to improve the local environment. A small number of measures under the Act came into effect on 7th June, the remainder to become effective in the Spring of 2006. In the meantime, a wide ranging consultation exercise would take place with stakeholder groups, and the relevant guidance on the regulations and implementation would be issued at the appropriate time.

Agreed : That the report of the Clerk be Noted.

14. PLANNING MATTERS :

The following new applications were Noted without comment :

- a) Proposed change of use from commercial to residential at 129 Dan's Castle
- b) Proposed (outline) planning permission for the provision of owners' accommodation the North Point Hotel.

The following outline permission was Noted without comment :

- a) Dwelling on land between 34/35 Coronation Avenue, Tow Law

15. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT & FINANCIAL REPORT :

Agreed : That Approval be given for the payment of Invoices Nos. 021 to 024 in the sum of £ 1143.47 as itemised on the meeting agenda

Financial Report :

The meeting considered as an addendum to the Agenda a Statement of Account for the period 1st April to 30th June indicating available balances of £13338.97 (Town Council) and £2121.00 (Community Fund). Additionally, the ring fenced sum of £3000 was held in reserve towards the maintenance of the play areas as Alpine Way and Pennine View. The report was Noted.

16. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT :

The Chairman had no items of report to present.

17. CLERK'S REPORT :

- a) The Clerk reported details of a forthcoming meeting of the Hedleyhope Fell Steering Group to be held on 27th July. Councillor Lawton indicated that he would attend this event.

18. MEMBERS' REPORTS :

- a) Councillor Rand reported on the difficulties which were being encountered by residents in having empty cans collected with their refuse, the irregular emptying of dog waste bins, and the general lack of litter bins in the town. The Clerk undertook to ascertain the District Council's policy in these matters.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING :

It was Noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 20th September 2005 at 7 p.m.

In view of the August meeting recess, it was

Agreed : That Approval be given for the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Clerk to deal with any urgent matters which might arise during the recess.