

TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING - 15^x NOVEMBER 2005

PRESENT : Councillor R.Grogan (Chairman)

Councillors J.Day, J.Gale, A.Green, E.Morris & C.Rand

9 members of the Public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE :

Councillors T.Batson, J.Flynn, E.Gwynnette, P.Graham & J.Stevens

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST :

There were no declarations to report

3. POLICE REPORT :

Sergeant Steve Donnelly presented the report on Crime & Incident statistics for the month of October, which indicated a total of 73 calls, 13 youth related and 8 public order matters. Nine crimes had been reported, 1 case of assault, 7 damage and 1 theft of a motor vehicle. Problems were being encountered at the Auction Mart site, where youths were setting fire to waste material, and the Police were liaising with the site manager and security staff. Sergeant Donnelly reported that a successor to P.C.Geoff Moore had been appointed, and he expected that P.C.Geoff Blair would commence his duties before Christmas. He also reported that he was hopeful of establishing an Off-Licences Association to help address potential problems with the new licensing legislation which would come into force on 24th November. Only one licensed premises in Tow Law remained without a new licence, this due to a recent change of licensee.

4. REPRESENTATIONS BY RESIDENTS ;

Nine residents were in attendance, to question the planning application for a temporary change of use from an agricultural building to a domestic waste transfer station at Thornley Pit House Farm. A number of objections were made to this application from an environmental, public health and road safety aspect, and concerns were expressed that the proposed facility would be used by people beyond the Tow Law community, and as to how this would be monitored. A wide ranging discussion ensued, and it was

Agreed : That a formal objection be submitted to Durham County Council as the Waste Management Authority against this application.

5. MINUTES :

Agreed : That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18th October 2005 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member)) be Approved and Signed as a correct record, subject in Minute No.18(b) to clarification that applicants for planning permission and indeed objectors, were in fact allowed to speak at meetings of the appropriate Committee.

6. REPORT OF FINANCE COMMITTEE :

Agreed : That the report of the Finance Committee meeting held on 1 November 2005 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member) be Noted and Approved, and that the recommendations contained therein be Confirmed and Adopted.

7. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT :

County Councillor Carroll was not in attendance, and as it was noted that he had not been present at a number of previous meetings, the Clerk was instructed to make enquiries as to the reason for this absence.

8. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS :

a) Councillor R.Grogan

Councillor Grogan reported that he was to meet with the District Council's Heritage Officer and with the Civic Trust to discuss a feasibility study for the possible conversion of the former auction ring to a museum, and to seek suggestions for other suitable alternative uses. He indicated that the forthcoming Section 106 contribution in connection with the housing development, might be used for this purpose. He also referred to the damage to the Millennium Green caused by contractors working on behalf of NEDL, and reported on the reasons for the refusal of planning permission for a proposed change of use to domestic from the former commercial use in respect of 32 High Street, against which an appeal had been made. Following discussion_ it was

Agreed : a) That the information given in respect of the former auction ring be Noted, and that the sum of £2500 being part of the Section 106 payment referred to, be earmarked for the feasibility study.

b) That the Clerk be instructed to contact NEDL to seek the re-instatement of the damaged area.

c) That the Clerk be instructed to contact the Planning Inspectorate to request a copy of the Inspector's decision at the appropriate time.

b) Councillor J.Gale

Councillor Gale reported that under the terms of the proposed Regional Spatial Strategy, Wear Valley District Council would only be allowed to approve planning permission for 160 houses per annum as opposed to the current total of 4,500. Accordingly, there was concern that this would restrict development to the main areas of population such as Bishop Auckland and Crook. It was also noted with some dismay that the Strategy did not regard the A68 trunk road as an important highway, despite it being an important military route.

9. PRECEPT 2006/2007 :

Members considered as Appendix 1 the report of the Clerk in this connection, and in accordance with the recommendation of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, it was

Agreed : That a Precept in the sum of £16,500 be levied for the 2006/2007 financial year.

10. FLORAL TUBS – HIGH STREET :

The Clerk reported that the County Council had responded to a request to have the tubs removed, and had pointed out that the concerns which had been raised had been taken into account at the time of their placement. Additionally, as no finance was available to carry out the work requested, it would be necessary for the Town Council to meet the cost itself. Accordingly, further discussion ensued, and a number of possibilities were considered. Arising from the discussion, and at a suggestion by a member, it was

Agreed : That a survey be undertaken to establish residents' views in this matter.

11. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO BUS STOPS/SHELTERS :

The Clerk reported that following the introduction of wheelchair accessible buses and to meet the requirements of new Government legislation, Durham County Council is to carry out infrastructure improvements at interchanges and stops throughout the county, involving the provision of dropped kerbs and the renewal of worn and missing bus stop poles. Accordingly, at the stop outside No.91 High Street. new "bus stop" markings will be provided. and on-road car parking will be restricted over a length of 25 metres. Additionally at this stop, the existing shelter will be replaced. The report was Noted.

12. CHRISTMAS TREES – INSURANCE IMPLICATIONS :

The Clerk reported having consulted with the Council's insurers vis-a-vis Public Liability cover. As a result, it would be necessary to increase the amount of the premium payable by the sum of £36.75 which had been reported at a previous meeting.

Agreed : That the action of the Clerk in this matter be confirmed and Approved.

13. URBAN & RURAL RENAISSANCE/SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES :

The meeting considered as Appendix 2 the report by the Clerk in this connection, together with an Addendum to the meeting Agenda, setting out a suggested procedure for follow-up action to a meeting between the Chairman. Vice Chairman and Clerk with County Council officers some time ago, and to the findings of the Quality of Life survey which had been conducted in the town during 2004.

Agreed : That the report be Noted, and that further consideration be given at the next meeting of the Council.

14. PLANNING MATTERS :

There were no new applications to consider

15. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT :

Agreed : That Approval be given to the payment of Invoices Nos. 035 to 039 in the sum of £1609.20

16. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT :

In the absence of the Chairman, there was no report to consider.

17. CLERK'S REPORT :

a) The Clerk reported receipt from Durham Police Authority, of a consultation document relating to the Home Secretary's proposal to reduce the number of police forces across the country so as to create larger strategic forces within the regions. Following due consideration, it had been concluded that the best option for meeting the needs of County Durham and Darlington would be a single north-east police force achieved by the merging of the Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria forces. A questionnaire had been circulated to appropriate consultees. and it was

Agreed : That the Town Council support the merging of the three north-east forces as indicated.

b) The Clerk reported that the Annual Meeting of the Durham Association of Parish & Town Councils would be held on Saturday 26th November at County Hall, which would be attended by the Chairman, Councillor Day and himself. The report was Noted.

18. MEMBERS' REPORTS :

There were no reports by members

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING :

It was Noted that because of the usual December recess, the next meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 17th January 2006, and it was

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

In closing the meeting, the Chairman wished everyone present the Compliments of the Season.

Signed ...



..... Chairman

17th January 2006