

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 26th JUNE, 2018

Present: Councillor D McKenna (Chair),
Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur E Bell,
Mrs J A Bell, Mrs K Brace,
S P Colborn, Mrs S Forster,
G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy,
T Shepherd, B Taylor, R Whitehead,
Miss L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors S Cudlip, D Cummings,
Mrs V Cummings, Ms R M Gratton,
Mrs S Pratt.

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29th MAY, 2018

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of these meetings, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

3. PLANNING ISSUES

a) Monthly List

RECOMMENDED the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5538 to 5541 as circulated be noted.

4. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

a) Neighbourhood Services – Highways

A Member raised an issue regarding dropped kerbs around the Harbour area and Seaham in general. The Member requested that the Town Council requests a survey to be carried out by Durham County Council as some of the dropped kerbs do not reach the roadway and at the other side of the road the kerb is not dropped which is difficult for wheelchair users.

A County Councillor stated that he had been out with a Highways Department member of staff around the Deneside area and they identified

where 27 dropped kerbs are needed. Each dropped kerb costs around £1k and the allocation from the County towards dropped kerbs is £50k which equates to 50 dropped kerbs across the whole of the County. The County Councillor will request a full survey.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

5. DANGEROUS PROPERTIES IN SEAHAM

It was noted that there are five derelict public houses. Two of those the Lord Byron (The Cuddy) and the Noah's Ark are in a dangerous state of disrepair. A Member has had discussions with members of the public regarding this two buildings in particular and just recently in the high winds tiles had been blown off the Noahs Ark. The buildings are not safe and in considerable amount of disrepair. There are three public houses to the rear of Church Street which have been empty for some years and also the old Post Office on Adelaide Row which is also an issue. The Town Council are trying to portray Seaham as a place to visit and all of these derelict buildings do not enhance the Town and bring the regeneration down. The Member questioned whether there is some law that the County Council can use to make owners take responsibility for these premises by either upgrading them or disposing of them.

A Member stated that this has been a constant problem which has not been neglected for many years. It has been raised numerous times. The problem is that the owners of the properties are speculating to try and get the best deal and price for the properties that they can. The problem is getting down to compulsory purchase. A developer was interested in The Cuddy and changing this into housing. Bar Avenue in Deneside is also a problem and all of these areas are constantly being looked at. A Member stated that there must be some kind of planning law that the County Council can use to stop this. The Noah's Ark and the Cuddy which are directly adjacent to residential properties which are the main problems and if children in the Hawthorn Square area enter these premises and something happens to them he wouldn't want this on his conscience. It's a disgrace that the owners can get away with this.

A Member from the Harbour Ward stated that they have tried and tried to get something done but there is no law that the County Council can call on and Durham County Council are trying in different ways.

It was noted that the owners of the properties apart from the Cuddy are local people and they live in the area. They have been made offers on their properties but have refused to sell. The Noah's Ark has got planning permission in place for a sports bar with bed and breakfast above. The Cuddy has applied for planning permission for housing. There is a problem with the land between the Duke and the Golden Lion whereby the owners of the public houses were saying it was their land when in fact it is Durham County Council land. The Inbetween has planning permission to become a Chinese restaurant. It was noted that there are no timescales for these businesses to come into fruition.

Members all agreed that these buildings were eyesores and the onus should be put on the landlords/owners to make the buildings safe and secure.

A Member stated that there are regular meetings with Durham County Council's Regeneration Team regarding these issues and County Councillors in Seaham are pushing this at every opportunity.

A Member suggested that a letter is sent to Julie Anson at Durham County Council expressing the displeasure from Seaham Town Council. It was also suggested that articles are placed on the Council's website to show residents that Seaham Town Council are pushing for these buildings to be either renovated or demolished and giving residents regular updates on any progress.

A Member stated that some residents from Hawthorn Square had made complaints about the continued vandalism on the playpark and wondered what Seaham Town Council could do to stop this. A Member stated that the Town Council can inform the PCSO's who can make certain areas priorities and a Member who attends the PACT meetings with the Police will inform them of this.

RECOMMENDED that a letter is sent to Julie Anson at Durham County Council expressing the displeasure of Seaham Town Council with regards to the derelict buildings.

6. RON HOGG SITE VISIT – SEAHAM LODGE JUNCTION

In the absence of the Acting Town Clerk a Member updated the meeting on the site visit which was held with Ron Hogg on the 5th June, 2018.

During the site visit at the junction an ambulance was almost run off the road by a lorry which was coming round the corner of the junction. Mr Hogg is going to speak to a lot of businesses to see if big lorries can take an alternative route into Seaham.

A Member stated that this isn't going to be the answer. A full traffic survey needs to be carried out in Seaham to alleviate this problem. There will be a lot of traffic coming from Sunderland in the near future and this should be the top campaign for the area.

It was noted that no planning permissions have been granted as yet.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

7. PLANNING PERMISSION FOR POPPY PROJECT

A Member requested an update on this item regarding planning permission to place the poppy's on the fencing at Terrace Green. A Member stated that nothing has been agreed yet but this usually takes 4-6 weeks and couldn't see any problems as to why it wouldn't go ahead.

A Member stated that she attended a meeting with Field of Remembrance on Monday and Mr Richardson had received a letter of intent and the project is aware that they can go ahead with this. Planning permission to place the poppies on the fence was not required it was down to assets and the liability and of the group taking on the liability. It has taken a while to go through because the group didn't have a constitution which they needed in place before the County Council could put

the wheels in motion. The group were made aware of this and the legalities with Durham County Council are being carried out following the correct procedures.

The group have been offered support from the AAP in completing funding applications and Ms Anson from Durham County Council has stated that the fencing will be painted prior to the poppies being placed on the fences.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

8. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED that there were no press opportunities following this meeting.