

## **MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 11TH FEBRUARY, 2014**

Present: Councillor Mrs J A Bell (Chair) and Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur, Mrs M R Baird, E Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr, Mrs H Cahill, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, R Meir, Miss S Morrison, N R Page, I Paul, K Shaw, G A Shepherd, C Snowball, R Whitehead, K Younger

### **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. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Committee was advised that Mr Jason Whitfield, a Chartered Town Planner was to be in attendance to advise Members on the assistance he could provide should the Town Council wish to proceed with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Whitfield had not arrived and no message had been left to explain his absence.

RECOMMENDED the Council note that Mr Whitfield had not attended this meeting.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH JANUARY, 2013**

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

### **4. GENERAL ISSUES**

#### **a) Neighbourhood Protection Team Updates**

RECOMMENDED the Neighbourhood Protection Team Performance Report for Seaham for December, 2013, be noted.

#### **b) Petition – New School, New Pool (Like for Like)**

The Committee considered an extract of an online petition which sought support for a swimming pool to be included within the new school for Seaham. In discussion it was commented that it was unknown who had set up the petition, and whether it was on behalf of a particular body or authority. Members were advised that the possibility of a school swimming pool being open to the community was still unknown at this time.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

**c) Neighbourhood Plans and Access to Planning Evidence**

RECOMMENDED the details of the issues raised at a recent Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meeting as provided to the Town Council by CDALC, be noted.

**d) Coast to Coast Cycle Track**

The Committee considered two letters from Mr Grahame Morris, MP with regard to the Coast to Coast cycle track, copies of which had been circulated. In discussion Members stated that the Town Council's intention was to ask that Seaham be considered as an alternative finishing point. A Member commented on the tone used in Sustran's response to Mr Morris which Councillors felt was condescending.

RECOMMENDED the Town Clerk, in liaison with Councillors Arthur and Younger, ascertain the necessary information to enable the Town Council to prepare its own proposed cycle route.

**e) Seaham Underpass**

RECOMMENDED the Council note Kiers and their sub-contractors would return to site on Monday, 10th February with the aim of all work being completed by 18th February, 2014.

**5. LICENSING ISSUES**

**a) Variation Application – Seaham Bar & Bistro**

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillors E Bell and Mrs J A Bell declared an interest and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Committee considered details of a revision to an existing licence at the Seaham Bar and Bistro. In discussion Members felt that although no objection should be raised by the Town Council, the situation should be monitored for residents' views.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) A letter be sent to the Licensing Department to advise that the Town Council would not raise any issues but request that the impact upon residents in the area be monitored.
- (ii) The Town Council seek clarification as to the planning notification process for nearby homes.

6. **PLANNING ISSUES**

a) **Monthly List**

RECOMMENDED that the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5266 to 5268 as circulated be noted.

b) **Planning Application CE/14/0014 – 1/PNBNB  
Change of Use from Office to Residential at  
Unit 3 Lighthouse View, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham**

The Committee considered details of a planning application submitted for a change of use from office to residential at Spectrum Business Park which would entail conversion of a 3-floor business unit to 60 residential dwellings. The Town Clerk apologised that this information had been inadvertently sent to the incorrect Ward Members initially. The Town Clerk then read out the list of material planning considerations used by Planners when formulating their decisions. A discussion ensued in which the original designation of the land for industrial use was mentioned and concerns were expressed about the possibility of potential future residential applications at this location in other industrial units; the potential loss of employment opportunities; the potential future restrictions that may apply for industry should residential flats/bedsits be built at this location, the type of residents the development was aimed at and not least the impact this may have on the town itself.

RECOMMENDED the Town Council submit an objection to this planning application on the grounds detailed.

c) **E-Petition to Amend the National Planning Policy Framework**

The Committee considered a communication from the County Durham Association of Local Councils together with a forwarded message from a local Council in Warwickshire who sought support for their campaign to amend the National Planning Policy Framework. In discussion it was felt that because Seaham Town Council was not aware of any other local issues in that locality, it was not in a position to offer its support,.

RECOMMENDED the Town Council do not offer support on this occasion.

7. **PROPOSAL TO REPLACE PLANNING SOFTWARE SYSTEMS WITHIN  
DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Committee considered a communication from Stuart Timmiss, Head of Planning and Assets in the Regeneration and Economic Development Service at

Durham County Council, a copy of which was circulated. Members were advised that the aim was to improve accessibility of information with regard to planning applications.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

**8. SEATON LODGE TRAFFIC LIGHTS**

The Committee considered the response from Mr David Battensby of Durham County Council to the Town Council's query on the timescale of the refurbishment of the Seaton Lodge traffic lights, a copy of which was circulated. A Member commented that the situation was exacerbated by the start and close times of the primary school at that location and the presence of the school crossing warden and this should be brought to Mr Battensby's attention.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The response from Durham County Council with regard to the timescale of the refurbishment of the Seaton Lodge traffic lights be noted.
- (ii) A letter be sent to Durham County Council to convey the Town Council's comments with regard to this situation.

**9. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.