

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH NOVEMBER, 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs J A Bell (Chair) and Councillors Mrs M R Baird, E Bell, B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, I Paul, C Snowball, B Taylor, R Whitehead, K Younger

Observer: Councillor Mrs G Bleasdale
Ms W Berry (public)

Apologies: Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen, Mrs H Cahill, R Meir, Miss S Morrison, K Shaw

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 7TH OCTOBER, 2014

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. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

a) Temporary Road Closure Jasper Avenue/Kingston Avenue, Seaham

RECOMMENDED the Council note the Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 to temporarily close the above road for a period of two days from 14th October, 2014 by means of a Notice under Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Act, 1984, to enable sewer lining works to be carried out. This temporary road closure was advised by Durham County Council on 10th October, 2014 and an alternative route was made available during the closure.

b) Temporary Road Closure – Ropery Walk/Cottages Road

RECOMMENDED the Council note the Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 to temporarily close A 66 metre length of the above road for a period of one day on 20th October, 2014 by means of a Notice under Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Act, 1984 to enable railway bridge repair works to be undertaken. This temporary road closure was advised by Durham County Council on 20th October, 2014 and an alternative route was made available during the closure.

c) **Temporary Road Closure B1287 North Road**

RECOMMENDED the Council note the Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 to temporarily close to vehicular traffic the above road for a period of approximately four days by means of a Notice under Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Act, 1984. This temporary road closure was advised by Durham County Council on 20th October, 2014 and an alternative route will be made available during the closure.

4. **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

a) **Pollution of Coastal Waters**

The Committee welcomed to the meeting Mr Bob Latimer in relation to this issue, specifically Whitburn Mine Water Disposal. Mr Latimer was in attendance to provide Members with an update on this issue.

Mr Latimer thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to speak on this important environmental issue. He stated that he would initially comment on the sewerage system at Whitburn which is the subject of discussion in Europe. He stated that the Environment Agency had cut all contact with him and would not accept phone calls or e-mails from him. He advised Members of a rumour that there was a proposal to build 80 houses near Downhill in Sunderland and that tanks were going to be put into the ground with the sewerage being siphoned away to the treatment works. This, in his opinion, indicated that the treatment works had insufficient capacity. This, as he stated, was just a rumour and he had found it impossible to elicit any factual information. He commented on another rumour that a hotel is to be built next to the Stadium of Light and tanks would have to be put into the ground for that as they did for the new Tesco store. He advised that Northumbrian Water are now screening the overflow in an attempt to prevent solids going out and added that whatever comes out at Whitburn does affect the waters at Seaham. At one point it was estimated that it would cost in the region of £150m to put the system right. He felt this was the Environment Agency's fault as it should have been done right in the first place. Europe say they have had discussions with DEFRA and everyone is waiting to hear what their proposal is - this is due in the next couple of months.

In respect of minewater – one of the good things was that the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) submitted a letter which was quite detailed in respect of how much iron was going into the sea which could affect the marine life, and as a result it had stopped for about 3 months while more surveys were undertaken. Whitburn Colliery closed in 1968 whereas the others closed in 1990. He advised the Committee that a gentleman whose brother was an industrial chemist at the time Whitburn Colliery had closed, had travelled from South Shields to see him to advise that all the nasty stuff from the other pits went down the Whitburn mineshaft.

The Environment Agency and Coal Authority claim, however, that there was no evidence of this. When they did the trial, however, they were only able to pump at a rate of 10 litres per second and they had to stop because iron load was too great. Mr Latimer went on to say that he had been advised by the Environment Agency that there is to be another consultation and the Coal Authority had been asked to provide more figures. One thing of concern was that because the Marine Management Organisation did not think an environmental impact assessment was necessary, as did South Tyneside Council, it appears that no assessment would be carried out. In Mr Latimer's opinion this was wrong – he again reiterated that what Whitburn has in its water would come to Seaham and in his opinion there should be more assessments.

A Member stated that the Council had been involved in this issue for some considerable time and they had tried to work with South Tyneside Council and indeed had taken members of their environmental committee up to Horden to show them the reed beds. Although they were quite surprised nothing had since been done about it. He advised Mr Latimer that Durham County Council had submitted his report under their name which was a good thing. Seaham Town Council had also objected to it as well as IFCA.

At this point Mr Latimer was thanked on behalf of the Town Council for his continued involvement in this fight to resolve the pollution of coastal waters, and was advised that if the Town Council were more than happy to provide support as appropriate. He then left the meeting.

b) Dog Control Consultation

RECOMMENDED the correspondence from Durham County Council which advised of the outcome of the dog control order consultation, be noted.

c) Access Newsletter Issue 65

RECOMMENDED the Defra Access Newsletter dated October, 2014, be noted by the Council.

5. PLANNING ISSUES

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

a) Monthly List

RECOMMENDED that the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5315 to 5321 as circulated be noted.

b) **Notification of Planning Appeal – Spectrum 3 Spectrum Business Park - change of use from offices to residential (resubmitted) – Appeal start date 16th October, 2014**

The Committee considered a communication from the Head of Planning at Durham County Council which advised that the applicant had appealed to the Planning Inspectorate against the Local Planning Authority's decision to refuse prior notification. In this respect if there were any additional representations the Town Council wished to submit these should be put forward to the Inspector within 28 day of the Appeal start date.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

6. **REVISED BUDGET FOR 2014/15 AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2015/16**

The Committee considered the estimates for planning and environmental services, a copy of which had been previously circulated. These outlined revised budgets for the current financial year and the proposed estimates for the next financial year covering all income and expenditure issues. Members were advised of the intention to convene a meeting of the Budget Sub-Committee in the near future to enable discussion on where savings could be made after which their proposals would be submitted for further consideration to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, with the intention of the Council setting their precept at the meeting of the full Council in December.

RECOMMENDED the Council await the submission of proposals from the Budget Sub-Committee at the next meeting of this Committee.

7. **SEAHAM WAY FINDERS**

The Committee considered a document received from Durham County Council in relation to Seaham Way Finders and finger posts proposed for Seaham. Details of preferred locations together with drawing and design options were also included. In discussion a Member commented that one of the suggested locations was on North Terrace and he felt this would be unsuitable due to its close proximity to the pedestrian crossing. The Town Clerk stated that although the County Council was asking the Town Council for approval in principal, he advised Members that they had also requested the Town Council to adopt these and be responsible for their maintenance in the future.

RECOMMENDED the Town Clerk ascertain relevant information with regard to potential annual maintenance costs with a report being brought back to a future meeting.

8. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee considered the items previously discussed and agreed that the information provided in item number 4 (a) by Mr Latimer should be notified to the press.