

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2015

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur,
Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, B Burn Snr,
B Burn Jnr, Miss S Morrison, N R Page,
I Paul, K Shaw, C Snowball, B Taylor,
K Younger

Apologies: Councillors Mrs H Cahill, S Cudlip,
Mrs S Forster

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. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Bob Latimer who was in attendance to update Members on the ongoing issue of seawater pollution. A copy of the decision notice made by the Information Commissioner in support of DEFRA to block him obtaining information had been circulated previously. In addition, his comments and observations on the notice were circulated for Members' perusal.

Mr Latimer stated that following the positive outcome at the European Court some years ago he was disappointed to learn that the evidence submitted by DEFRA had been inaccurate. In that respect the Court had made a decision on that evidence and therefore any improvement they would make would only realise a 3% improvement. Since that time he had tried on many occasions to find out what action they were intending to take to put it right, however every enquiry had been blocked. He stated that he is to appear in Court in Sunderland next week with regard to this issue, however he stated that he was only one man against a Barrister and a Government Legal Department whom DEFRA had employed to fight their case. He advised Members that all of the figures were wrong in respect of what was being pumped out.

He drew Members' attention to the article which appeared in today's Sunderland Echo which detailed new proposed developments at Seaburn and Whitburn. It was the intention to demolish the Seaburn Centre and take away the Pullman Lodge and build

400 houses; in addition near the Stadium of Light there was an 80 bed hotel being built; a housing development was also being built on the former rifle range at Whitburn and there were also other housing developments proposed for other areas. He commented that he found it unbelievable that the Environment Agency thought he was being unreasonable asking for specific information. DEFRA had e-mailed him a letter which he believed should have been provided three years ago, and this detailed what the system was designed to do, and this was not even meeting the license. He stated that after attending the Court he would update the Council accordingly.

The other issue he wished to discuss with Members was the Whitburn minewater situation. He stated that a member of the public had approached him recently stating that in 2011 he had analysed the seaweed and the fly larvae in the seaweed was found to be deformed which he had put down to heavy metals in the sea water. Mr Latimer stated that in 2001 the level of iron in the water was circa 920, and in 2011 this had increased to 9081 perhaps because of all the sea polluting activity that is present now that was absent when the initial studies were done. The processing was initiated at Horden in 2004 and those were the sites that showed significant increase. At Whitburn closer monitoring of the pumping was required. He stated that he would send through the details from a communication he had received which provided greater detail. When the seaweed was tested again in 2015 the fly larvae was alright. In 2011 they were pumping minewater, but since that time there had been no pumping.

At this point questions were invited from Members and the following was stated:

- (i) A Member queried whether Mr Latimer was still in contact Mr Stephen Hughes and suggested that he could perhaps assist him as he had been involved in the campaign over the years including the time when it went to the European Court of Justice.
- (ii) A Member stated that Mr Latimer could give Seaham Town Council's name as being in support of his ongoing enquiries as the issue was of concern to the town of Seaham.

At this point the Chair thanked Mr Latimer for the information imparted and his assurance that he would keep the Town Council informed, and he then left the meeting.

A Member commented that leading up to the Court ruling the Town Council had a delegation which used to meet with Sunderland City Council to find out what was happening, however after the ruling against Northumbria Water Sunderland Council had ceased their liaison with the Town Council. It was suggested by Members that perhaps the Town Council should make approaches to neighbouring coastal parishes such as Blackhall, Horden and Peterlee to make them aware of the situation.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Town Clerk make approaches to neighbouring coastal parishes to make them aware of the situation and the efforts being made to bring about a resolution.
- (ii) This issue be raised at a future meeting of the Durham Heritage Coast.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 23RD JUNE, 2015

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

4. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

4.1 This is Durham

The Committee considered a recent edition of the 'This is Durham' publication issued by Visit County Durham in respect of 21st to 27th September, 2015. The Town Clerk stated that the publication also provided greater detail of future events. In discussion it was suggested that the Town Council consider the potential of this magazine and an exercise be undertaken to review the last two year's editions to identify how relevant it was to Seaham.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council noted the most recent edition of the 'This is Durham' publication in respect of 21st to 27th September, 2015.
- (ii) The Town Clerk arrange for the past editions of this publication to be obtained and reviewed to ascertain how relevant it could be to Seaham.

4.2 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the Wednesday Grapevines dated 23rd September, 2015 published by Visit County Durham, be noted.

5. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee considered the items previously discussed and agreed that the support of the Town Council to Mr Latimer's efforts be notified to the press. A Member queried how such items were publicised and the Town Clerk clarified that issues were put on to the Town Council's website, Facebook page and also sent to the Sunderland Echo. It was recognised however that the Sunderland Echo make their own decision on what to publish.

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RECOMMENDED the Town Council agreed that the support of the Town Council to Mr Latimer's efforts in relation to sea water pollution be notified to the press.