

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13th JUNE, 2017

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs S Forster (Presiding) and Councillors Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, Mrs K Brace, S P Colborn, S Cudlip, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings, Mrs R M Gratton, G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, K Shaw, T Shepherd, B Taylor, R Whitehead, Miss L Willis

Apologies: Councillors R Arthur, E Bell, Ms 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. OPEN SESSION

In accordance with established policy the Council provided the opportunity at the beginning of the meeting for a 15 minute session. A member of the public Mr Des Consitt asked about an article published on "Seaham Community Party's" Facebook page in February 2017 alleging that he had taken money from Councillors for running the "Seaham Have Your Say" Facebook page. Mr Consitt wanted to know where this had come from because it was posted by their administration team. The Mayor explained that Mr Consitt would have to chase that up with those concerned outside of this meeting.

The Mayor then explained that if any other members of the public come in and ask questions then she would give them time but unless that happens where the Councillors are all in agreement to go forward with the items on the agenda and this was generally agreed with no objections and as a result that was the end of that particular item.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF SEAHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 19TH MAY, 2017

A Member pointed out that there were 19 Seaham Town Councillors present and one apology making a total of 20 names and asked that this be recorded now as he needed to make a point referring to this on the next page.

Another member pointed out that in the minutes it mentioned that the meeting was held on the 19th May and yet on the agenda it says the 12th May. Members agreed that this should be corrected.

A Member pointed out that on page 9283 in relation to the election of Mayor it refers to a vote being taken and that the minutes needed amending in order to get the totals of votes correct.

A Member stated that with regards to the election of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all committee meetings were agreed between both parties to be given to the Labour Group and that he was disappointed that the agreement was not respected. Another Member stated that this agreement was in place but there was no agreement not to have a vote.

A Member stated that the Mayor had graciously accepted to stand down on the Dawdon Working Party so that Councillor Kevin Shaw could stand in and also that Councillor Leanne Kennedy be nominated onto the working party along with one additional Member from Seaham Community Party. It was agreed Seaham Community Party would get back to the Council with their chosen representative. All members accepted the changes put forward.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Administration Team amend the minutes to correctly state who was present.
Post meeting note: there was only one Councillor who did not attend or offer apologies so that in effect the original minutes were in fact correct. The Mayor was no longer a Town Councillor so would not be included in the numbers for votes.
- (ii) the Administration Team amend the minutes to correctly state the dates of meetings.
- (iii) the Administration Team correct the minutes to provide accurate voting figures.
- (iv) the Administration Team make note that the Council have accepted the Mayor Mrs Sonia Forster stepping down from the Dawdon Working Party and Councillor Kevin Shaw to stand in her place and also that Councillor Mrs Leanne Kennedy is appointed onto the working party along with one other member from Seaham Community Party who will be named by them shortly.

4. REPORTS OF SERVICE COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the reports of the following Committees, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved:

- a) Report of Arts and Information Committee held on 23rd May, 2017 subject to a Member asking whether a copy of the letter sent to Asda would be sent to Members when the next meeting of Arts and Information would be held. Another Member stated that with half the staff on leave and the other half left to run the business we cannot expect this. The Deputy Town Clerk explained

an email had already been sent. Another Member stated that this is just another administrative function and would not normally be requested and it was not for Members to ask for this.

- b) Report of Parks and Events Committee held on 23rd May, 2017 subject to a Member questioning if a moratorium could be passed to prevent the giving of live animal prizes such as gold fish. A Member drew Councillors attention to standing orders number 7 which explained that resolutions moved without notice that unless the item has been given prior notice to the Town Clerk then an item of that nature has to be referred onto the appropriate committee. The Mayor reiterated that if anyone wants something to be brought up they must write in a letter in plenty of time and it would then be decided which committee it should go to. The Administration Team will add the item to the next Parks and Events Agenda.

Another Member raised the issue of the Events Application Form and that it needs feedback to be requested on it. Other Members explained that the Council could not legally ask how much money had been raised but general feedback on how well the event went could be and will be asked by the Deputy Town Clerk. The Administration Team will ask for generalised feedback from events on the Event application form.

- c) Report of the Clerks Advisory Sub Committee held on the 23rd May, 2017 subject to a Member asking about the Dawdon Bungalow and the plans for the Park and said she thought no-one from her party had seen the plans. A Member stated that Seaham Town Council had previously agreed to follow the Solicitors recommendations with regards to the Bungalow and that Seaham Community Party now had members sitting on the Dawdon Park Working Party and would see plans for the park although nothing had been agreed to move forward with the renovation of the park at present.
- d) Report of the Establishment Committee held on the 23rd May, 2017 subject to a Member asking about the sickness absence of a member of staff. Another Member drew the Councillors attention to standing order item 18 and that it should not be discussed unless the rest of the Council wanted to take a vote and exclude the press and public. The Member with the original question accepted it should not be answered at this meeting and said he was happy to approach the Deputy Town Clerk at a later date. Councillors need to abide by item 18 of the standing orders and not ask private and confidential questions about employees during meetings fully open to the public.
- e) Report of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 23rd May, 2017 subject to a Member stated that she remembered that tea and coffee were offered for free to the lady running the job training course at the Town Hall but couldn't see it agreed in the minutes. The Member was pointed to the part of the minutes that agreed to provide teas and coffees for free.

- f) Report of Planning and Environmental Committee held on 23rd May, 2017.
- g) Report of Twinning Committee held on 23rd May, 2017.

5. **PROPOSALS TO CHANGE MEETINGS, MINUTES AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

a) **Proposed Extension of Public Participation at Full Council**

A member stated that he proposed to extend the public participation from 15 minutes at the beginning to an additional hour time slot at the end of the meeting. Another Member said that it should not be a debate and questions should be taken back to Officers to provide more detailed answers with another Member stating that the public already ask questions at Councillor Surgeries. A Member raised a point of order that the proposal had been raised and seconded, however the Chair explained that a Member had his hand raised for some time and that he should be allowed to speak before the vote.

A Member explained that the Council have had 7 approaches in 3 years and it is within the Chairs discretion to extend the time period if there was more time needed and Members would automatically approve that. He went on to state that where a large group of people attended the Mayor would need to set some rules so people had 3, 4 or 5 minutes to speak and/or appoint speakers where there were groups of say 20. The Member proposed an amendment that the proposal is rejected and the Council should continue with its existing policy. A Member stated that was not an amendment but a totally different motion. It was proposed that the vote is taken. The Proposer said he had heard it mentioned at least three times about a debate and said he had never mentioned a debate and also that if he was told there was a 15 minute slot for public participation he might not be here either and that's why you don't get a lot of attendees and that it needs to be publicised and opened out to our electorate.

RESOLVED that a vote was held and there was 7 in favour and 9 against and so the motion was lost.

b) **Proposals for Various changes to the format of meetings and minutes**

The first proposal was that an agenda item submitted by a Councillor should state the name of the Councillor proposing it. This was agreed by all councillors.

The second proposal was that a proposer and seconder of an item are to be named in the minutes.

As there was not agreement from all it was put to a vote with 7 agreeing the proposal and 9 against so the motion was lost.

All agenda items to be named votes which show the initials of those voting. A Member stated that voting procedures were already in the standing orders and

set out in law through the Local Government Act with the norm being a show of hands to vote and only under special and rare circumstances should a ballot be held. A Member stated that at another meeting a Councillor asked for a named vote but the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the councillor was not allowed to have the names recorded as the vote had already been taken and the request would have needed to be stated prior to the vote. A Member stated that he and his party would like to take ownership of their votes and tell the public about it. Another Member stated that she thought that now they were at the council meeting that everyone should work as one team and not two different parties but work as one for the for the best of our town, it should not be seen as two separate parties, us and them.

As it was not agreed by all the proposal went to a vote with 7 for and 9 against so the proposal was lost.

It was proposed to provide additional information to each agenda item to include actions agreed, who will action and time scale involved. A Councillor explained that due to the short staffing that's currently being experienced deadlines could not be stated. Councillors do not know operationally what the Officers priorities are from day to day. A Councillor suggested that the item was not properly worded and should be rejected but not meaning to be obstructive and so should debate the item and ask management for their views. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that Councillors do not have the information to make operational decisions and it was really not for Councillors to get involved in the operational side of the Council. He explained that they had been doing extremely well over the last 4 or 5 years with major changes in the Council with the same number of staff in place.

As it was not agreed by all the proposal went to a vote with 6 in favour and 10 against and so the proposal was lost.

The final proposal was that if a Councillor requests an agenda item to be carried forward, they must give a valid reason for this and their initials and those of the seconder recorded and then a vote taken for the reason for carrying forward any item be clearly recorded in the minutes. A member stated that it was not the role of Councillors to put time frames on actions and that if they did complaints could be levelled at the Councillors. The proposer stated that she wasn't trying to impose anything on the staff. A Member stated that the annual review has time frames already worked into it.

As it was not agreed by all the proposal went to a vote with 7 in favour and 9 against and therefore the proposal was lost.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Administration Team state the name of a Councillor proposing an item on an agenda.
- (ii) The Administration Team not to name a proposer or seconder in agendas or minutes.

- (iii) The Administration Team not to record names of votes unless on the rare occasion they are specifically asked to.
- (iv) Councillors not to specify who will action items and their deadlines
- (v) The Administration Team does not record in the minutes who requests an agenda item to be carried forward, the reason for doing this and the seconder. Councillors are not to request this.