

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19th SEPTEMBER, 2017

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs S Forster (Presiding) and Councillors Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur, E Bell, 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, D McKenna, T Shepherd, R Whitehead, Miss L Willis

Apologies: Councillors Mrs L Kennedy, K Shaw

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.

The Mayor stated that during the week Seaham had won a gold from Northumbria in Bloom for all Seaham Town Council's regeneration projects. The Council were also awarded a Green Flag award and also won Best Coastal Resort. Members gave a round of applause to the Deputy Town Clerk.

The Mayor referred to the Beat the Retreat which was held on Friday, 15th September, 2017 which she stated was marvellously done and very emotive and thanked Dave McKenna for organising this event.

A Member noted that thanks should be passed on to all staff and any external bodies who have been involved passing on Councillors best wishes and thanks for all of the awards that have been achieved and the excellent work that has been achieved.

Members noted that due to the Theatre group using the Town Hall it would be better for future meetings that coincide with theatre group bookings to move the meeting times forward to avoid the noise levels.

Derek Coe and John Cowell members of the public questioned about the allotments at Dawdon being taken over. He stated that he has been at the allotments for over 25 years as have a lot of the members and they are under the belief that there is to be a Falconry built on the allotment site and they have come to the meeting today to

find out more about this as there have been lots of rumours but nothing confirmed to them. A Member stated that a proposal was circulated at a previous Parks & Events Committee which is to be discussed at the October Parks & Events Committee. As this is now in the public domain could this be shared with all concerned. The Deputy Town Clerk could pass copies of the proposals onto Mr Coe and Mr Cowell with several more copies so they can be circulated to other allotment members. Members agreed this could be shared and that allotment members are welcome to come to the October Parks & Events Committee to hear the discussions take place and to also take part in the discussions. The Deputy Town Clerk will also place notices at Dawdon Park next to the allotments to remind allotment members of when the meeting is taking place. It was also suggested that once the allotment members have had time to peruse the proposals if they have any suggestions themselves they could put these in writing to the Deputy Town Clerk prior to the meeting taking place and to be circulated to all Councillors so they can see both sides of the proposals.

Mr David Harding who represents Seaham Coast stated that he has lived in Seaham for 8 years now and stated that he has received promise after promise about the sporting facilities in Seaham being improved and to date nothing has happened. He stated he has held conversations with various Councillors who have £20,000 per year to spend on various projects and the Council has in excess of £600,000 sitting in an account. A Councillor had informed Mr Harding that this was untrue. Mr Harding was told to raise this with the Deputy Town Clerk which he did and received an email from him today which he found to be very interesting. He questioned whether there was an election coming up as the email stated that there are 3/4G pitches in the planning and the Town Council are still looking into getting a swimming pool. There appears to be promises after promises when there is an election coming up but nothing happens. Mr Harding stated that he knows times are hard at present but Seaham needs more sporting facilities for the children and adults but nothing happens. Mr Harding stated that he knows Seaham Town Council are in the process of purchasing the land at Wembley for a fee of £45,000. Members stated that this fee was untrue. The Deputy Town Clerk wanted to confirm that he did not state that in his email to Mr Harding which Mr Harding agreed this was not discussed. He questioned once Wembley is bought are the Town Council going to improve the sporting facilities of this site. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that is what the Town Council are trying to achieve and that they have completed Seaham Town Park with some really good facilities, the Town Council are trying to do the same for Dawdon Park and then the Town Council are hoping to look at New Drive but there is only so much the Town Council can do in a short space of time.

Mr Harding stated that he has looked into things himself and the Russell Foster Youth League to see how much they are paying in rent. They pay £320 every Saturday morning for 3 hours which equates to over £6,000 over 38 weeks and also £1 for car parking which is an additional £6,000. He gave this as an example to show how the Town Council could bring money in. Mr Harding questioned whether there are plans for the future. A Member stated that every Councillor in the room is working to improve the facilities.

A Member questioned whether new Councillors could be given an up to date list of what has been proposed and what has been ratified to date for investment in the

various pitches around the area and where investment is still needed. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that some of it is just obvious. Today he held talks with Durham County Council encouraging them to look at an AstroTurf facility in Seaham because we know it is lacking one. Looking back at previous Parks minutes it is in there that the Town Council have been dealing with the Football Association for the last couple of years. A Councillor requested a short report be given especially for new Councillors so they can get a handle on what is going on. A Member stated that to help all Councillors the Town Council are approaching the budget process and the Deputy Town Clerk will be producing a report which will draw together all of the background in relation to projects at Dawdon, what options have been considered, what grant opportunities have been considered even though the Town Council have been refused many grant applications. The buildings at Dawdon Park are not fit for purpose, the Town Council are Trustees to protect the legacy for the future generations. The report will say what the history is and what has been looked at and we will look at what opportunities there are to progress things and improve those facilities. In addition that will come through the Dawdon Working Party with members from both political parties and we will need to try and find a way forward. The Town Council also recognise that they are buying Wembley which is absolutely vital to the Town Council and those facilities cannot be operated without some kind of capital investment, changing facilities etc. The Town Council will need to decide if that is a priority or whether there are other competing priorities which will need to be dealt with before that and there will be joint decision made within the Council about the capital programme and how monies can be spent. Mr Harding had referred to there being not enough opportunities for his teams not getting assistance, but the Member stated that he can assure Mr Harding that in 34 years the Town Council has assisted financially every football team with start-up grants. The Council has always offered a start-up grant to get the teams going and encourage them, teams have also been supported with further financial assistance from time to time with special projects, to buy various things including new football strips, or whatever it may be. This is not just about football it is about any kind of voluntary organisation who are doing good work within Seaham community. Officers of the Town Council also steer groups in the direction of the Community Chest Fund who provide all sorts of grants and are very easily accessible. In addition the County Councillors they have an allowance to help special projects in Seaham. There is an opportunity there for you to apply that kind of funding. The Town Council is not the only sports provider of playing facilities. There are other statutory bodies and other voluntary places where training and football fields and other things are available. The Town Council only have a limited budget and that money has been spent very wisely over many decades and it will still be spent wisely amongst the Members here in the coming months when the Town Council decide on priorities for future capital investment. It is hoped that Mr Harding bears with the Council whilst this is being done. Mr Harding can take advantage of taking funding from some of the other opportunities available to Mr Harding and every other organisation in Seaham.

Mr Harding stated that they are holding a fundraiser this week but have had to go outside of Seaham to do it as the Town Hall was too expensive due to the fact that they would have to use Oldfields catering facilities. They also use the facilities at Raich Carter as it is a lot cheaper than using Parkside.

A Member suggested that Mr Harding and the Deputy Town Clerk hold a meeting where the Deputy Town Clerk can steer Mr Harding in the direction of where to go for grants etc. The Member stated that he has been on the Town Council for 5 months and is yet to see an overarching plan for sporting facilities and venues in Seaham. He questioned whether if there was such a plan and if not can one be developed. There are 5 venues in Seaham which if they were all brought under an umbrella the Town Council can give a specific plan for sport facilities within the Seaham boundaries then that would allay a lot of the concerns of people involved in voluntary work within the sphere of the sports community. The Member questioned whether there was an overarching plan of future developments of the playing fields/parks which Seaham Town Council own and what plans are in place to develop these over future years whereby our children and their children can benefit from the opportunities which sport gives. If we don't have one can we have one.

A Member stated that the Deputy Town Clerk will be writing a report for the budget. Another Member wanted to know what facilities are owned by the Town Council and what facilities are in the pipeline. These need to be compared so Councillors can decide what the priorities are and then Councillors can plan for future years. New Councillors need a plan of where we are with those projects.

A Member stated that detailed discussions have taken place with the Football Association about a 4G pitch in Seaham and the Deputy Town Clerk is still chasing Durham County Council and the Football Association for them to deliver something.

Mr Harding stated that the Russell Foster Youth League are crying out for venues. When the winter months come they will have to play somewhere different every week.

The Mayor thanked everyone who came to the meeting to ask questions.

3. TO CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SEAHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 11TH JULY, 2017

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

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 29th August, 2017, subject to Councillor Mrs K Brace's apologies.
- b) Report of Parks and Events Committee held on 29th August, 2017 subject to apologies from Councillor Mrs K Brace and a Councillor raised the issue of a letter being received from the Seaham Park Cricket Club which had not been included. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that they have been invited to the next meeting of the Parks & Events Committee. It was agreed that an

amendment should be added to the minutes stating that Members were supplied with a letter from Seaham Park Cricket Club and Members agreed to invite representatives from the Cricket Club to a future meeting so they can explain in more depth their proposals. Also subject to item 3.1 Church Street improvements there was a meeting at the Spectrum Business Park which was raised at the time but was not flagged up well enough because Members of Seaham Community party were contacted by the office on 15th September, 2017 advising us of the meeting taking place on Monday 18th September, 2017 and that if we had not already applied then we would not be able to attend. It is imperative as representatives of Seaham that seats are made available for Town Councillors unless Councillors specifically say they are unable to attend as Church Street is the town's main thoroughfare. It was requested that from now on if an event such as this takes place that seats are kept open for Town Councillors and that it is red flagged up at the meeting so dates can be noted in diaries. It was stated that Councillors had to register themselves to attend as it was Durham County Council who were running the event. The proposal was agreed that for future events such as this then Officers would flag this up to all Town Councillors.

- c) Report of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 5th September, 2017, subject to Councillor Mrs B Allen's apologies.
- d) Report of Planning and Environmental Committee held on 5th September, 2017, subject to Councillor Mrs B Allen's apologies.
- e) Report of the Clerk's Advisory Sub-Committee held on the 5th September, 2017, subject to Councillor Mrs B Allen's apologies.

5. **EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S NOTIFICATION OF COMPLETION OF AUDIT OF THE ANNUAL RETURN 2016/2017**

RESOLVED that Councillors approve and accept the annual return including the external auditor's certificate.

6. **DELEGATION FROM CHINA**

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Councillors that a delegation from China would like to come and visit the Town Hall and requested if any Councillors would be available to meet with them on 16th November, 2017. The visitors are linked to Newcastle University and the Office of Foreign Affairs from a certain region in China. A Member suggested that we should also be linking in with our own ambassadorial links to ensure that we are not contravening any protocols and this would also offer support from government representatives.

RESOLVED that the Deputy Town Clerk would look into support from government representatives.

