

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 12TH DECEMBER, 2017

Present: The Mayor, Councillor
Mrs S Forster (Presiding) and Councillors
Mrs B E Allen, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell,
Mrs G Bleasdale, S P Colborn, S Cudlip,
G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy,
D McKenna, Mrs S Pratt, T Shepherd,
B Taylor Miss L Willis

Apologies: Councillors R Arthur, Mrs K Brace,
D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings,
Ms R M Gratton.

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 but no members of the public were present, and therefore proceeded with their normal business and at the end of that business no member of the public had attended and as a result of that it was the end of that particular item.

3. TO CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SEAHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 14TH NOVEMBER, 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 subject to page 9411 a Member stated "subject to the derogatory comments that a Councillor made to a member of the public on the night of the meeting should be minuted." A Member stated that he had no objection to that whatsoever, but would ask to append to these minutes his full name as a Councillor as he considers this issue to be blown out of all proportion as there was no derogatory comment as the Council well knows. The Member stated that he shook hands with the member of the public after the meeting and assured him it wasn't a derogatory comment and this has been brought up again. The Councillor stated that he would like his name to be minuted although it is not the Councils' policy to name Councillors in the body of the minutes but asked if his name could be included on this occasion because of the nature of this.

A Member stated that it was a derogatory comment, it was awful and wouldn't want to repeat it and even though the Councillor shook the man's hand that doesn't make it right on what was said.

A Member stated that if the Councillor would like for exceptional reasons to have his name included it was suggested that the Council agree to that.

Also subject to page 9413 the Foodbanks in Seaham a Member stated that there was no acceptance of putting this out as a press release at the meeting. The Member questioned whether the press release was put out from the Town Council, if not who put the press release out and under whose guidance and authority. The Member stated that he read the press release and there are a couple of items within the body of the press release that he isn't happy with such as "it will be rolled out into Murton." Murton doesn't have anything to do with Seaham Town Council. Another point is that Graeme Morris the MP for Easington was mentioned, what has Graeme Morris got to do with Seaham Town Council's proposal, why was it in the press release it shouldn't have been there and there is no mention in the minutes of a photoshoot. Where did the photoshoot come from, who released the press release as he assumed it didn't come from Seaham Town Council or any of its Officers.

A Member stated that this was an initiative done by himself and there was no press release because it was done over the telephone using his own initiative. There was no time between Councillors saying they would bring their own food in. The reason Graeme Morris was mentioned is because they asked the Councillor where he worked and he told them. Listening to what the Councillor has said it feels like he has taken the shine off what was a good joint effort by everybody to support the community. The reasons that Murton and Peterlee were mentioned was because they have difficulties also. The Councillor thought the whole idea of the foodbank hub was for all Councillors to do something jointly for a good community worthy cause.

A Member stated that he found this to be totally out of order a Member cannot come along unilaterally, make a decision on behalf of Seaham Town Council. The item had not been discussed in Council Chambers and no-one knew about it until a few days before the photoshoot and no-one knew about the press release and it is a press release because it mentions Seaham Town Council and Seaham Town Hall so the Member should be censured for what he has done and told not to do it again without the prior knowledge and consent of this Council.

A Member stated that people who are hungry concern her a great deal and her opinion is that the Town Council altogether were trying to help to get food to those people who don't have any. This wasn't about politics the Council were just thinking about residents and that is why lots of Councillors brought food in. The photographer was here and no-one objected to it.

The Member questioning the press release stated that he was talking about the democratic process and this was out of order. It's not democratic and if Members want to talk about the people of Seaham who are going hungry the Member stated that his second allowance from Seaham Town Council was given in full to the foodbank at St Hild's and St Helens in June 2017. This has been turned into an issue which should have brought all Councillors together and it has turned out to be party political due to the press release.

A Member stated that like everyone else he was notified of the photoshoot. The Member stated that in his 50 years of experience in Seaham that when there is a photoshoot and Councillors have come along to a large extent it doesn't matter who organised the photoshoot in his opinion, it was essential in order to bring it to the attention of the community the fact that this new initiative had been launched in Seaham and that is to be commendable. The photoshoot was arranged and a lot of the Councillors were in the picture. This is an entirely non-political issue and in his experience when photographs are taken such as this the press then do their own thing. The press could have spoken to the Mayor, the Deputy Town Clerk or anyone who was present, members of the public could have been asked their views or even a recipient of the foodbank could have been asked to comment. It shouldn't be seen as anyone should be reprimanded for this and instead of this Councillor being condemned they should be commended by what they have done in having the initiative to getting it launched and the maximum publicity. This is non-political and shouldn't be turned into a political issue. Councillors should be proud that they have launched this new initiative that helps residents who are in desperate straits.

A Member stated that the sentiment is well taken the problem is that it was done the wrong way. The press release should have gone to the Deputy Town Clerk and he should have released the press release on behalf of Seaham Town Council. The Member stated that he wasn't trying to turn this into party political but he believes the press release is party political as Graeme Morris is mentioned, Murton is mentioned and why would Seaham Town Council consider rolling this scheme out to Murton. There are two articles about this on Easington Labour Party's website. The Member stated that he isn't happy and it should never happen again. He stated that if Seaham Community Party had done a press release on behalf of Seaham Town Council Members wouldn't be happy about it.

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he was on leave when the photoshoot was arranged but if he had been available he would have given assistance and advice like he has with other initiatives.

The Member stated that in future wait until the Deputy Town Clerk comes back to work and to take his advice on putting out a press release. He stated he is not happy with this or the explanations that have been put forward, it's ridiculous and undemocratic.

RESOLVED that the Councillors name will be included in the Parks and Events Committee minutes of the 24th October, 2017 with regards to the derogatory comment made to a member of the public.

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 the Town Promotion and Development Committee held on 21st November, 2017

- b) Report of the Arts and Information Committee held on 21st November, 2017 subject to a Member stating they were upset that only 3 Members attended the Equality and Diversity training. Members should try and attend any future training.
- c) Report of Parks and Events Committee held on 21st November, 2017.
- d) Report of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28th November, 2017.
- e) Report of Planning and Environmental Committee held on 28th November, 2017 subject to page 9426 a Member questioned whether a further meeting was being arranged with Kier and Durham County Council to discuss the junction upgrade. It was noted that a Special Planning meeting is being arranged for early January.
- f) Report of Special Parks and Events Committee held on 28th November, 2017.
- g) Report of the Twinning Committee held on 28th November, 2017.
- h) Report of the Establishment Sub-Committee held on 28th November, 2017.
- i) Report of the Special Establishment Sub-Committee held on 5th December, 2017.

5. REMOVAL OF STREET LIGHTS AT GEORGE ELMY LIFEBOAT WAY

A Member stated that it would be a retrograde step if Seaham Town Council took on the burden of the SLA from Durham County Council. Seaham tax payers are already paying rates which includes street lighting. Seaham Town Council would have to find the money for this and residents would in effect be paying twice. This could also set a precedence for other services from Durham County Council. The Councillor suggested that the SLA shouldn't be taken up by Seaham Town Council. He also suggested that Seaham Town Council requests Durham County Council to maintain records of accidents or incidents due to the darkness so Seaham Town Council can monitor and revisit this in the future.

RESOLVED that Seaham Town Council do not move forward with the SLA for the street lighting and Durham County Council is requested to maintain records of accidents or incidents due to the darkness which Seaham Town Council can monitor and revisit in the future.

6. DAWDON WELFARE PARK PROJECT

RESOLVED that recommendations made by the Dawdon Park Working party be approved.

7. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK – BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE

A Member of the Budget Sub-Committee wished to thank the Finance Officer and the Chair of the Committee for the guidance they have given to new Members of Seaham Town Council. It was noted that there are a number of new Members and they are grateful for the thoughtful and sensible way the budget has been dealt with. There were no disagreements and discussions were held in an exemplary way. Members were requested to agree a 2% increase in the precept.

RESOLVED that the budget and the precept as outlined be approved.