

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13th NOVEMBER, 2018

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs B E Allen (Presiding) and Councillors 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 S Forster, Ms R M Gratton, Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, K Shaw, T Shepherd, B Taylor, R Whitehead, Miss L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs 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 representative from Fishbone Allotments questioned whether there had been any progress made with the lease for Fishbone. The Town Clerk stated that she had been speaking to the Chair of the Allotments Sub-Committee and had also listened to the recording of the previous discussion she felt that there was no definitive resolution on the wording for the agreement and requested that the wording is agreed at this meeting so the agreement can be finalised and signed. After listening to the recording which wasn't clear around the cultivation and animals being brought onto the allotment site. The first item that was raised was that existing animals could stay on the allotment site but no new animals were to be brought in and then later on in the meeting allotment holders stated that if they were to pass the allotment on to their family members or children then they would be able to bring animals in also. This is what Officers are unclear about in relation to the wording in the actual agreement.

The representative from Fishbone Allotments stated that there were three changes which they wanted to be made. The cultivation was around keeping livestock as authorised by the association, any future buildings would have to be authorised by the association as from the signing of the agreement and the third part was that the association would agree to maintain the fences and to break that into two parts. The association would provide the manpower to carry out the works if the Town

Council would provide the materials. The animal part states that 'when a plot becomes empty the association will re-let this as soon as possible for the purposes of cultivation' and the association wanted this changing to 'cultivation and the keeping of livestock where authorised in writing by the association committee'.

A Member stated that the agreement was prepared more than 35 years ago and is a little confused as to the terminology which has been used by Fishbone and felt it would be helpful for the Fishbone representative to come into the office and sit down with the Officer concerned and discuss and agree some draft wording which can then be brought to the next Parks and Events Committee for Members to approve. Members agreed that this would be a sensible approach. The representative from Fishbone stated that this has dragged on for over a year now and he just wants it settled and agreed. A Member stated that he did not want to bypass the Allotment Sub-Committee but the meeting with Officers could fast track the agreement and be approved at the next Parks meeting.

It was noted that not everything is straight forward such as the fencing and this may need to go back to the Allotment Sub-Committee for further discussion.

A Member of the public questioned whether this would just be for the two allotment sites at Fishbone and Parkside regarding changes to the tenancies. A representative from Fishbone stated that he was only speaking on behalf of Fishbone and Parkside allotments. The member of the public asked if the agreements would be changed for all sites so that all agreements are the same. A Member stated that any changes which are made to the agreement would apply to all allotment associations. The member of the public questioned how the Council would then protect the cultivated growers on allotment sites as they would then be opening up the cultivated grower's sites to livestock for example Hall Street allotments are cultivation only can this then be opened up to livestock. The representative from Fishbone allotments stated that anyone wanting to bring on livestock it would state in the agreement that this can only be done by requesting in writing and being authorised by the committee to do so. The member of the public stated that he understood this but rules can be watered down if allotment holders are on the committees and before you know it the sites could be overrun with animals.

A Member questioned whether any of the sites are under the auspice of Seaham Town Council are designated as small holdings as it was his understanding that small holdings are for animals and allotments are for growing. The representative from Fishbone stated that was irrelevant the rules are between Seaham Town Council and the Associations. The Member stated that it wasn't irrelevant as small holdings by definition are multi-purpose and an allotment from his understanding is for cultivation. Also in the remit of Seaham Town Council is grazing land which is different again so if agreement is being made now that animals will be allowed on allotment sites are the Council going to redesignate these as small holdings or are they going to remain as allotments as the Member stated that he is not prepared to put his name to something that changes the basic essence of an allotment and he stated that he is also not prepared to put his name to something which allows animals to be kept in a small confined area which is not appropriate.

A Member stated that the Town Council made a decision that the management of the allotments were down to the management committees. The Council are trying to get the wording exactly right so that allotments which are dual purpose at times because chickens and other animals are kept on them and also cultivated remain the same. What the Town Council are trying to do is to stop them being overrun by animals and the management of these allotments should be down to the people who are in charge from the associations and let them decide what is happening. An allotment which is being cultivated cannot then become a grazing area for horses it should remain a cultivated area and if there are hens or pigeons and cultivation then it will probably stop like that and grazing land is grazing land.

A Member stated that the Council had a very helpful explanation given to them by the National Representative of the Allotments Association and that advice to the Council was very clear as the issue had been suggested that the Council should be moving down a route if they wanted to of ensuring that all allotments were purely cultivation and there was a whole raft of different uses historically which have developed on different sites. The advice the Council received and was accepted was that it was well within the Council's rights to have sanctioned and approved additional usages which have happened over many years. As a result of that it clarified the situation entirely. The Council have always had confidence in the Associations who have a much better opportunity to manage their sites in a much better way than the Council could do. The Council want to encourage that and to continue encouraging it. The association are now seeking clarification on the wording of their agreement and based upon the advice which came to the Council from the National Association so that existing usages are permitted. There is no suggestion of changing them to small holdings they are allotments and are constituted under the Allotment Acts. The Council are sanctioned to change the usages and the associations are purely asking for that and if someone dies or hands the allotment over to someone else if they are handed over as cultivation or with livestock these can be talked about with the Associations to put their minds at ease and hopefully this can come back to the Allotment Sub-Committee with the right kinds of wording which will satisfy everyone. The representative from Fishbone stated he would be happy to meet with Officers to discuss the wording and noted that he has been asking for the same thing for over a year now and what he asks for never happens. If the three parts can be agreed we can discuss this at the next Allotments Sub-Committee meeting. It was noted that this would apply to all Associations.

A member of the public stated that if members wanted a brief history of what has happened she is prepared to give it. The member of the public stated that with all due respect to the Seaham Community Party she doesn't know who they are but knows how it was formed and felt that she had been assaulted physically and verbally because of this. The member of the public stated that she has put up with this for 2 years and has had the Police involved. She has blocked certain people from Facebook and has been called various profanities because she is a Labour supporter and member. The member of the public stated that she has done a lot for Seaham and didn't deserve that kind of language. The member of the public stated that she had previously sent an apology to a member of Seaham Community Party as previously this Councillors name had been put forward against the member of the public. A former friend of the member of the public had stated that she had

been to London with the leader of the Seaham Community Party and that they had started up the Seaham Community Party which was non-political and they were the founder members. The member of the public stated that there was a witness present who also heard this remark made. The member of the public stated that she had parted ways with her former friend over political matters as she would not be dictated to on her beliefs. The member of the public stated that she knew a couple of Labour Councillors who currently serve on the Town Council and because of this was attacked in a house because she knew and talked to a few Labour Councillors and her former friend didn't like the company she kept and she felt that it was really embarrassing the position she was in. This happened at a birthday party after her friend spoke to a young man who then tried to attack her but was stopped and a couple of months after this incident he apologised to her and stated that he couldn't remember exactly what it was that her former friend had said to him.

After this incident anything the member of the public placed on Facebook about Labour or fundraising for events members of Seaham Community Party would make unfriendly comments. The member of the public reported this to Facebook and also the next day a Police Officer visited her at her home. The member of the public stated that she is a mother and grandmother and her family shouldn't see comments like these. She stated that it was brought to her attention recently that her name is still being vilified amongst certain members of the Seaham Community Party and asked if this was because she is a Labour Member.

A Member of Seaham Community Party stated that just because you are a Labour Member doesn't make you a bad person and the Seaham Community Party has never discussed anything about this member of the public. The member of the public stated that she was not saying this Member had discussed her personally but the Members name had been brought up to her and she wasn't sure whether this was a group thing or an individual thing but the profanities need to stop and she doesn't want her children and grandchildren reading things like that. The member of the public wanted to know how she could be protected from this behaviour and that it needed to stop as she felt that it was a bit of a vendetta. This was denied by a Member of the Seaham Community Party and they assured the member of the public that nothing like that had been put on their Facebook page and also the former friend the member of the public was referring to was not a founder Member of the Seaham Community Party and was not a current Member of the Party. The member of the public stated that her former friend must have been telling lies because she did say she was forming the Seaham Community Party along with a current Councillor and this was said in front of a witness. The Member of Seaham Community Party categorically stated that the member of the public's former friend was nothing to do with Seaham Community Party.

The Town Clerk stated that a further discussion should be held outside of the meeting as it appeared that it was a complaint against a Member of the Council. A Member of Seaham Community Party also stated that they would like to hold a further discussion with the member of the public.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That a meeting is arranged between the Fishbone representative and the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to discuss the wording for the agreement.
- (ii) An Allotments Sub-Committee meeting to be arranged.

3. TO CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SEAHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 16th OCTOBER, 2018

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 the Special Establishment Committee held on 18th October, 2018, subject to page 9699 item 3 (i) an amendment to be made to the recommendation that if a Senior Officer is going to be absent from work for more than six weeks at the end of the six week period it should be reported to the Establishment Committee for them to decide whether any additional or temporary staff are required.
- b) Report of the Arts and Information Committee held on 23rd October, 2018, subject to Councillor Mrs K Brace's apologies be added to the minutes.
- c) Report of the Parks and Events Committee held on 23rd October, 2018 subject to Councillor Mrs K Brace's apologies be added to the minutes and also subject to page 9703 item 3.2 Seaham Fireworks Display a Member stated that congratulations should be passed onto all staff involved as there had been a huge amount of feedback complimenting the Council for the display. Also subject to page 9704 that the Town Clerk seeks further clarification from the Royal British Legion regarding their role for Remembrance Sunday and return this item to the Parks & Events Committee so Members are aware and clear about this for future years.
- d) Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 30th October, 2018, subject to page 9708 that an amendment be added to the minutes which will read as following. 'The Member stated that personally he would discontinue putting out the Seaham Community Party leaflet if the three line statements on Facebook on the Easington Constituency Labour Party site about Seaham Town Council and how Seaham Community Party would sabotage the Dawdon Welfare Park refurbishment are taken down along with other statements put out by the Labour Group as no one has been charged with benefit fraud from Seaham Community Party who is on the

Town Council and all of the other issues involved in this. If you want tit for tat we will give you tit for tat. The Chair stated that Members should refrain from mentioning that again and as Chair of this meeting he would not accept any more information like that on that particular item’.

- e) Report of Planning and Environmental Committee held on 30th October, 2018, subject to page 9711 item 6 (c) a Member requested that the Town Clerk liaised with Durham County Council to enquire about the possibility of new lighting being placed at George Elmy Lifeboat Way be sighted at a lower level and to have a brighter display in the interests of public safety. It was noted that some of the lights have blown over in severe weather. The Town Clerk stated that she had spoken to Durham County Council regarding who would be responsible for replacing the lights if they are blown over and it was noted that D.C.C. would still replace the lights.

5. **NAC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE 23RD – 25TH NOVEMBER, 2018**

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Town Council’s policy it was agreed that the next two Members on the rota should attend the AGM and conference.