

## **MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2020**

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Miss L Willis (Presiding) and Councillors R Arthur, E Bell, Mrs J Bell, Ms K Brace, S P Colborn, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, Ms R M Gratton, Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, T Shepherd, B Taylor.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B Allen, Mrs G Bleasdale, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings, Mrs S Pratt.

Officers: Mrs D Rickaby (Town Clerk)  
Ms A Rountree (Minute Taker)

*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.*

### **FC57/20      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. Such interests must be submitted to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.

### **FC58/20      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 wished to thank Seaham Town Council for the plaque that had been placed in Seaham Town Hall in memory of his late friend Mr Bryan Mayhew who was instrumental in the building of the former Seaham Red Star Football Club which is now Seaham Town Hall. He stated that he had also given the Town Council a thank you letter on behalf of Mr Mayhew's wife, family and friends.

A member of the public representing the community group who are opposing the proposed dog ban on the beaches stated that she had written to Seaham Town Council on two occasions and she had not received a response. She had contacted Durham County Council and attended a meeting with their representative on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020. It was noted that the Town Clerk had been liaising with the member of the public but had not arranged a meeting with Seaham Town Councillors as of yet. The Town Clerk noted that the beaches are the responsibility of Durham County Council and County Councillors would be liaising direct with the community group.

A Member stated that County Councillors had offered to meet with the group but the group also needs to speak to Seaham Town Council separately.

A Member suggested that the member of the public should be invited to the next meeting of the Parks & Events Committee and this item should be placed on the agenda so that the representative has the opportunity to ask questions.

A member of Fishbone Allotments Association questioned whether Members had been made aware of the problems at Pigeon Square which related to dog cruelty and water pipe issues and noted that a viable association needs to be running Pigeon Square. He noted that Fishbone Association had been made aware of the issues and that the dog is now safe, and the water issue has been fixed. He stated that Council Officers had been made aware of this issue 3 weeks ago and noted that the only people who know what is going on at Pigeon Square is the association. A Member stated that he was concerned that when allegations have been made and there is evidence of mistreatment of animals or noise that Members are not informed in a timely manner so they are aware of the complaints if members of the public contact them about issues. Another Member stated that this incident occurred over the Christmas holiday period so there would have been no Council Officers or Councillors available to contact and that Pigeon Square is not Seaham Town Council land. The association stated that this was the reason why it was not viable for Seaham Town Council to run the allotments and that the association are available 365 days per year. A Member noted that the association did the right thing by dealing with the situation.

It was noted that Members are aware that Pigeon Square is not Town Council land and it was only the association who could have dealt with this matter urgently. There were previous complaints raised against the association about burning rubbish on Pigeon Square. This is not the associations responsibility as they do not control this piece of land, however they have helped to deal with this situation. A Member thanked the association for dealing with this matter.

The association stated that they do not know who the land at Pigeon Square belongs to. A Member requested that Council Officers investigate to find out who the landowners are.

A member of the public questioned how it would be of benefit for the Town Council to take over the running of the allotment sites from the associations and questioned why this situation was going round in circles and also requested clarity on the current situation. A Member stated that animals could stay until they died. A further Member stated on a point of order that the Town Council's policy still stands from April 2019 which includes dogs, horses etc being allowed on sites. This is still the current corporate decision that animals can stay until the owner passes away. There have been discussions taking place and some Members wish to change this decision. Another Member noted that the Town Council has made a lot of concessions with animals, but the Council are still receiving complaints of dogs barking.

A Member stated that in relation to a member of public's question "do the Council think they can run things better" her answer was "no the Council don't have the capacity or staff to do it".

A Member stated that the Town Council are working with the associations and the Council does wish to hand the running back over to the associations.

The Chair introduced Ms Susan Gallimore, Senior Public Protection Officer from Durham County Council to the meeting.

Ms Gallimore stated that she had come to speak to all interested parties. She stated that a new complaint had been received to Durham County Council regarding Fishbone Allotments. She noted that she carries out "out of hours" inspections once per month. She had visited on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and had took time to monitor the noise and did hear dogs barking and in her opinion it was coming from the Fishbone Allotment site. Ms Gallimore noted that she had been informed that this was a regular occurrence. This cannot be determined yet as this is a new complaint and the investigation will continue.

A member of Fishbone Association stated if this is proven to be on Fishbone's site then the association will deal with it. The association are aware of which plots have dogs and they will fix the problem as they have previously. A Member thanked Ms Gallimore and stated that teamwork is key to managing the problem. Ms Gallimore noted that the last complaint was made over a year ago. Fishbone Association questioned whether Members would have any problems with them working directly with Ms Gallimore. Members agreed for this to happen.

A Member stated that the association must be informed immediately in any instances of complaints received and noted that Council Officers would be in breach of the lease if they did not inform the association and give them time to investigate the complaint.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) The representative from the community group opposing the dog ban on beaches be invited to speak at the next meeting of the Parks & Events Committee.
- (ii) Council Officers to ascertain who owns the land known as Pigeon Square.

**FC59/20**

**TO CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SEAHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2019**

A Member referred to page 9982 and that an additional recommendation be added (i) for the record the minutes of the Special Parks and Events Committee held on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 be approved as amended by the recommendation contained in lines 7-11 of page 9980.

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

**FC60/20      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 Arts and Information Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2020, subject to a Member referring to page 9984 item A166/20 regarding the foodbank donations and requested that Officers look at a process for giving donations and report this back to the relevant Committee.
- b) Report of the Parks and Events Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 subject to a Member requested that the minutes are gone through on a page by page basis. This went to a vote:  
  
For – 7  
Against - 0 .
- c) Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.
- d) Report of the Planning and Environmental Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.
- e) Report of the Clerks Advisory Sub-Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.
- f) Report of the Establishment Sub-Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.

**FC61/20      TOWN CLERK'S UPDATE**

The Town Clerk stated that no Members from Seaham Town Council had been selected to attend the Royal Garden Party, however Members from Great Aycliffe and Seaton & Slingley had been selected to attend.

The Town Clerk informed Members that she had received an interim invoice from Wearside Contractors for £36,604.64 + VAT for the work at Dawdon Cricket Club Phase 3. It was noted that the works for completion are currently on schedule.

**FC62/20      KEEPING OF ANIMALS ON ALLOTMENT SITES**

A Member proposed a motion to rescind previous resolutions regarding the keeping of animals on allotment sites. Following a discussion this motion was seconded.

A Member moved that the amendment not to be approved and that the Council's corporate decision of April 2019 stands. He noted that the information provided in Appendix A regarding Durham County Council's Allotment Policy was incorrect and that D.C.C's policy was not finalised and

had been referred back to D.C.C's working party as there had been concerns raised throughout the County regarding the banning of animals on sites.

Members then requested a named vote take place. Members to vote on the banning of dogs and cattle from allotment sites:

For: Councillors Miss L Willis, R Arthur, B Taylor, S Colborn. (4)

Against: Councillors T Shepherd, Mrs J Bell, E Bell, Mrs L Kennedy, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, D McKenna. (7)

Abstained: Councillors Mrs K Brace, Ms R M Gratton. (2)

Therefore, the motion was lost and it was agreed that dogs and cattle will remain on allotment sites.

A Member stated that every effort will be made to finalise the new lease and the documentation will be submitted to the Associations in the coming months.

RESOLVED that dogs and cattle will remain on allotment sites as per the decision made in April 2019.