

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2020**

Present: Councillors Miss L Willis (Chair) and R Arthur, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs K Brace, S P Colborn, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, Ms R M Gratton, G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, K Shaw, T Shepherd, B Taylor.

Officers: P Fletcher (Deputy Town Clerk), Mrs J Knight (Finance Officer), Miss 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.*

**PL90/20      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.

**PL91/20      ACCEPTANCE OF AMENDMENT**

RECOMMENDED that Members accept the amendment to the standing orders to incorporate the new regulations from the Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, to conduct virtual Council meetings.

**PL92/20      APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING YEAR**

There were two nominations for the Chair of the Planning and Environmental Committee, Councillors Miss L Willis and S Cudlip. This then went to a vote:

Councillor Miss L Willis – 7 votes  
Councillor S Cudlip – 8 votes

RECOMMENDED that Councillor S Cudlip be appointed as the Chair of the Planning and Environmental Committee for the ensuing year.

(Councillor S Cudlip in the Chair)

**PL93/20      APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING YEAR**

There were two nominations for the Vice-Chair of the Planning and Environmental Committee, Councillors B Taylor and D McKenna. This then went to a vote:

Councillor B Taylor – 7 votes  
Councillor D McKenna – 8 votes

RECOMMENDED that Councillor D McKenna be appointed as the Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

**PL94/20**      **PLANNING ISSUES**

**a)      Monthly List**

Councillors E Bell and Mrs J Bell declared an interest with regards to application 5680.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information provided.

**b)      Land to the North of 28 North Terrace, Seaham**

A Member questioned why it was allowed for the landowner to apply for retrospective planning permission to use the site as a compound.

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he had previously wrote to Durham County Council regarding Councillors concerns and objections over the proposed building which highlighted car parking facilities, general traffic concerns, and for the new building to be in-keeping with the other buildings on North Terrace. It was also highlighted to Durham County Council the lack of public toilets in the area.

A Member noted that the area has increased footfall with both visitors and residents and felt that there were inadequate public toilet facilities. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he could speak to Ms Anson at Durham County Council regarding this matter as part of the regeneration works. He also stated that he could speak to local businesses to ascertain whether they are willing to let visitors use their facilities.

A Member noted that the previous public convenience that is now the Art Block cost in excess of £33k per year to maintain. It was noted that Tonia's café, the Marina and Byron Place all have public toilets.

Members noted that as a Town Council they have never given their ideas for what they want in Seaham to Durham County Council and felt that they should formulate a business plan for Durham County Council to consider.

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RECOMMENDED that a Special Planning and Environmental Committee is arranged to discuss a business plan for Seaham which can be given to Durham County Council to consider.

c) **Bypass on the Incline**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that the lights at the bypass had not worked for some time and due to health and safety purposes requested approval to replace the bulbs at a cost of £400. He has continued to contact both Network Rail and Durham County Council regarding this matter to get one of these organisations to take responsibility for the bypass.

A Member noted that a Service Level Agreement should be put in place or the Town Council will end up having to keep paying to replace the lights when it is not their responsibility. A further Member stated that if Network Rail are not prepared to carry out the works then the Town Council should bring this to the attention of the media. Network Rail are saving money by no longer having the signal box in place.

A Member questioned who actually paid the electricity bill for these lights. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he had a new contact at Durham County Council, and he would seek clarification on this matter and bring it back to the next available meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk seeks further clarification and brings this back to the next available meeting.

d) **Tree Planting – Strangford Road**

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that Durham County Council were seeking permission to plant trees on Town Council land between the roundabout and Deneside Park. Members agreed to the tree planting.

RECOMMENDED that Members approve the tree planting on Town Council land between the roundabout and Deneside Park.

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**TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

a) **Temporary Road Closure – Lord Byrons Walk**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

b) **Temporary Road and Footpath Closure – Wynard Street, Longnewton Street, Seaham Street, Seaham Street, Theresa Street and Embleton Mews**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

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c) **Temporary Road Closure – Stavordale Street, Strangways Street, Fox Street, Aged Miners Homes, Margaret Street, Dawdon Crescent (footpaths)**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

**PL96/20**      **DOGS ON BEACHES**

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members of a complaint received by a member of the public and that the issue of dogs on beaches had previously been passed to Durham County Council.

A County Councillor noted that the process had been put on hold during the current pandemic. A local consultation needs to be carried out with both businesses and residents. Safety issues have been raised and the County Council needs to discuss how to deal with this. Durham County Council will raise this again and will put forward proposals once these are received.

The Chair stated that the Town Council should note the information provided by the County Councillor and await the outcome from Durham County Council.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information provided and await the outcome from Durham County Council.

**PL97/20**      **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

**a) Water Quality Issues**

Correspondence from Mr Bob Latimer was shared with Councillors and it was noted that Mr Latimer has corresponded with the Town Council for over 20 years regarding water quality issues.

A Member noted that the current situation will continue if Local Authorities do not continue to put pressure on the water/sewerage company. Seaham's beaches are suffering from the tidal drift.

It was noted that Mr Latimer has been a champion against the water company for a lot of years and the problems mostly come from the building of new houses and estates. A Member noted that he was happy to support Mr Latimer to try and bring the water company to deal with the problem.

A Member requested Mr Latimer's contact details as he felt he could offer a lot of advice as he had previously worked within this field.

Members felt that Durham County Council should be contacted regarding this matter as they have statutory powers which the Town Council do not have. They need to be informed that the problem is getting worse and ask them to apply pressure to the water company.

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Members agreed that the Town Council should write to Mr Latimer to say that they support his views and also write to other Local Authorities on the coastline requesting their support.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) The Deputy Town Clerk writes to Mr Latimer offering the Town

Councils support.

- (ii) The Deputy Town Clerk writes to Durham County Council requesting them to put pressure on the water company.
- (iii) The Deputy Town Clerk writes to the other Local Authorities on the coastline requesting their support in this matter.
- (iv) The Deputy Town Clerk to pass Mr Latimers details to the Councillor who requested this at the meeting.

**PL98/20**      **PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

A Member requested if the issue with Network Rail and the bypass lighting could be raised as a press opportunity. A further Member stated the Deputy Town Clerk should bring back his findings to a future meeting and if Network Rail refuse then this could be used as a press opportunity going forward.

RECOMMENDED that there were no press opportunities from this meeting.

The meeting was then closed by the Chair.