

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 16th FEBRUARY, 2021**

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

Apologies: Mrs L Kennedy, T Shepherd.

Officers: P Fletcher (Deputy Town Clerk), 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.*

**PL17/21      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.

**PL18/21      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.

**PL19/21      RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RECOMMENDED in view of the confidential nature of the following items which relate to issues of a commercially sensitive and confidential nature Members agreed to pass the formal resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act, 1960.

**PL20/21      PROPOSED SEAHAM LOCAL PLAN DISCUSSION**

Pursuant to a previous Planning and Environmental Committee meeting Members had discussed the potential for Seaham Town Council to have their own local plan with aspirations for Seaham for the future which could be passed to Durham County Council for consideration.

(a) **Car Free Sundays**

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that this was a suggestion that had been received into the Town Hall from a member of the public.

He noted that various cities have tried this, and he believed that the only location that this would work in Seaham would be on North Terrace and this could be trialled more over the summer months. The Deputy Town Clerk noted that the road could have pop-up barriers, and this would then allow more space for cafes and families using the Terrace Green on a weekend.

A Member noted that this would require discussions with the highways authority and also property owners on North Terrace.

A County Councillor stated that this item has been a discussion for a number of years within Durham County Council and there are plans to widen the path at North Terrace, however this has been put back due to the current pandemic. There are also plans to take away some of the pathways at the south side of Terrace Green to create more parking spaces. Discussions had been held previously regarding closing North Terrace on a weekend, but highways didn't agree with this as they felt that visitors and residents would use other local streets as a bypass and this would cause problems for residents of these streets. Plans have been passed to widen the paths so cafes can put tables and chair outside.

Members discussed the possibility of holding a type of referendum whereby residents can also have their say on what they would like to see happen in Seaham in the future and Members agreed that an article could be placed in the Seaham Today magazine.

RECOMMENDED that an article regarding car parking could be placed in a future edition of Seaham Today magazine.

(b) **Public Toilets**

A Member noted that Seaham previously had public toilets, but these proved expensive to run and were not affordable.

A County Councillor noted that the Town Hall opens its doors to members of the public to use its facilities and there are also toilets at the marina, Byron Place and Asda which are open to the public. Visitors can also use the local cafes to purchase a drink and use their facilities.

Members discussed the possible development at the top of the docks and stated the Town Council would be remiss if they did not put pressure on Durham County Council to request that the developers include public toilets in the development. However, it was noted that Members are unaware as to what developments will be taking place at the top of docks.

Members noted that there should be signposting in place to direct visitors to the local facilities.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the Deputy Town Clerk writes to Durham County Council requesting that signposting is placed around the seafront area to inform visitors where the local facilities are.
- (ii) The Deputy Town Clerk to also suggest to Durham County Council that public toilets are included in any future developments at the top of the docks.
- (iii) The Deputy Town Clerk to measure how far the nearest public toilets are from the cenotaph eg the Marina, Tonia's and Byron Place.

(c) **History Centre**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that a history centre had been talked about previously and if this did come to fruition then this could also be a place for public toilets. This has been a desire from the local history groups to have a history centre, but this will not happen overnight.

A Member noted that this has been discussed frequently over the last few years, but Members were not formally informed that this was not going ahead.

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that Durham County Council's Regeneration Team were interested at the time but stated that they did not have the resources at that time. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he could approach the Regeneration Team to discuss this matter further.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk will approach the Regeneration Team regarding a potential History Centre and bring this back to a future meeting.

(d) **Land at the top of the Docks**

Members noted that the land had been sold and was no longer in the possession of Byron Place Shopping Centre, however they were unaware of any proposals that had been put forward for the land.

A County Councillor noted that he was unaware of any proposals currently for the development of the land.

(e) **4G Pitches**

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that other ideas such as a splash park, 4G pitches and other leisure facilities could be incorporated with the new leisure centre depending on the location. It was noted that a public consultation had taken place over the location of the new leisure centre but to date no further information had been made available.

A County Councillor stated that the information was embargoed until next month.

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that the Town Council could still look at 4G pitches and could work with the Red Star Football Club to see if they would convert to a 4G pitch.

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that a splash park would be a good addition to the town, but the Town Council should wait to see where the location of the new leisure centre will be. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that a potential good location for a splash park would be next to Tonia's Café at the Hall Car Park area.

(f) **Vintage Shuttle Bus**

Members discussed a vintage shuttle bus which could operate as a park and ride system over the summer months and this would also alleviate the problems with car parking.

A Member questioned whether the Town Council would be amenable to subsidise this. Visitors could park at Spectrum and the bus could travel along the front between Spectrum Business Park and the Hall Car Park. It was also noted that the shuttle bus could also go via the top of Church Street so visitors can also take in the local shops.

A Member noted that Durham County Council would be more likely to listen if the shuttle bus was just used at certain times rather than every weekend.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk puts forward a proposal to Durham County Council regarding a vintage shuttle bus park and ride system.

(g) **Extending Christmas Lights at North Road**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that there had been suggestions from both members of the public and staff to extend the Christmas lights from Asda to the Crows Nest area and if this was an aspiration from Members then it is something that he could investigate.

A Member stated that it had previously been discussed to put Victorian Lights right around the Terrace Green which in his opinion would enhance the look of the Terrace Green area.

It was noted that the Deputy Town Clerk could speak to local businesses such as Asda and the Dock Company to see if they would be prepared to contribute towards the extension to the Christmas Lights as well as the local businesses on North Terrace who would benefit from the extra footfall.

A Member noted that it would be expensive to purchase the extra lights and also to hire the platforms to allow the installation of the lights and this would have to be done on a capital programme and factored into the budget.

A Member noted that it may not be the right time to ask local businesses to contribute due to the current pandemic, however a further Member noted that the idea of this meeting is to discuss future projects and to look to what can/could happen in future years.

A Member stated that there maybe still some merit in investigating this for the future to see whether this project would be financially viable and whether residents would be happy with this.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk investigates the costings of extending the lights.

(h) **End of Car Boot Fayre**

It was noted that the Car Boot Fayre is a Durham County Council and highways issue. Councillors noted that they are not happy with the car boot fayre and it causes untold problems with traffic on a Sunday especially to residents in the North Ward area.

The car boot has been granted a license by Durham County Council and a Member noted that if enough pressure is applied to Durham County Council the license can be reviewed.

RECOMMENDED that an article is placed in the Seaham Today Magazine for a view from local residents.

(i) **New Drive Playing Field Development**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that it would be a preferred option to wait until the location of the new leisure centre is known before further talks take place regarding the development of the New Drive playing fields. He also noted that the Town Council could try to integrate the cricket club into any future plans/discussions.

(j) **New Leisure Centre**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that once the County Council release the location of the new leisure centre, discussions can be opened regarding play areas, 4G pitches and a splash park.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council await the location of the new leisure centre.

(k) **Future Arts Projects**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that the Brothers Statue could be possibly moved to the Clock Garden and also a memorial bench for Covid could also be placed in the Clock Garden in the future. The Deputy Town Clerk also noted that he had been given permissions to put something in Church Street.

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that the schools could take part in some origami work which could be hung across Church Street.

Dave McKenna noted that he has been running the 'Remember Them Fund' charity for the past 10 years but this will be the final year and he will then be volunteering as part of the East Durham Veterans. He noted that there are still some funds left in the Remember Them Fund and he was thinking of purchasing three large boulders to commemorate the three former collieries in the town and was looking to place granite plaques on them. A Member suggested that these could be painted black to look like coal to which Mr McKenna stated that this was an option. He noted that he would like to use the remainder of the funds to enhance the Clock Garden.

**PL21/21      UPDATES FROM THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK**

**(a) Seaham Seaside Market**

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he had been approached from the organisers of the market who were requesting permission for essential food stalls to reopen on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2021. He has contacted Durham County Council to ensure this is allowed within the restrictions to which they noted it is allowed if the market operates in a Covid safe manner.

RECOMMENDED that the market re-opens on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 for essential food stalls only.

**(b) Coast to Coast – Whitehaven to Seaham**

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that Members have supported this idea in the past and stated it would be good for Seaham to be the final destination in the Coast to Coast cycle.

Members agreed that this was something they would be interested in and requested that this item be discussed further.

RECOMMENDED that this item be discussed in further detail at a future meeting.

**(c) PCVC Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2021**

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that only four Councillors were available to take part in the meeting with the PCVC and requested Members instructions as to whether this meeting should be cancelled.

Members noted that due to the meeting taking place at 9.00am on a weekday some Members would be at work and therefore would be unavailable to attend. Members suggested that the Deputy Town Clerk should try and rearrange the meeting to take place as an evening meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk rearranges the meeting to take place on an evening.