



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Quay Road, Blyth NE24 2AS on Thursday 4 September 2014 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillors: O Potts (Mayor), A Cartie (Deputy Mayor), K Ellis, G T Knox, M Parker, R Parker, J Potts, J Reid, L Rickerby, D Rutter and G Thompson

Officers:

Sue Noddings – Town Clerk (Corporate Services)
Stephen Rickitt – Town Clerk (Democratic Services)

Also Present:

Members of the Public: None

109/14/01: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Bruce, BW Elliott, A Gibbs-Barton, K Nisbet, and A Turnbull.

110/14/02: DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND GRANT OF DISPENSATIONS

None

111/14/03: APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL RETURN

The Council considered the report of the Town Clerk (Democratic Services), a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, together with the appendices listed in the report.

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) took Councillors through the report and in particular the draft return which the Council were being asked to endorse. He explained the work carried out over the past few weeks and advised councillors that the draft had now been approved by the external auditors. It was his hope that this would now avoid the need for the external auditors to make a public interest report and adversely criticise the Town Council.

The Mayor then opened the matter for debate by Councillors.

Councillor Ellis drew attention to a request he had made for consideration of a new accounting system because the current system was not fit for purpose. He had been advised that the current system was "OK". This had been proved not to be correct.

Councillor John Potts said that there is no point in moving to a worse system. The Council has to consider what was needed and not move just because there had been an error in copying data. In his view probably 90% of town and parish councils use spreadsheets and he would be interested to see the analysis of other councils' systems in due course.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) advised Councillors that written drafts had been prepared for the internal auditor but she had been told that he had not looked at those in detail.

Councillor Knox noted that errors had come to light and that is a matter that the Council has to deal with. It may be appropriate to await the appointment of a new internal auditor and take their view on whether to move from the current system.

The Mayor sought confirmation that Councillor R Parker was entitled to speak at meetings of the Town Council. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor R Parker then sought to move a motion. Councillor Knox intervened on a point of order and stated in his view that such a motion should not be moved without notice.

The Mayor expressed her agreement with Councillor Knox and declined to allow the motion to be presented.

Councillor John Potts informed Councillors that there is no money missing from the Council's accounts. This was a problem dealing with the year-end process. In some respects there were different opinions between two sets of auditors. He gave the example of the assets register where the

County Council does not list assets with a value of less than £10,000. He took the view in preparing the revised register that the cut-off value for the Town Council should be £500, below which an asset would not be recorded on the asset register.

Councillor Potts also explained the requirement to apportion interest from the investment accounts.

Councillor John Potts then moved the recommendations in the report. This was seconded by the Mayor.

Councillor Knox suggested a small addendum be incorporated to express thanks to Councillor Grant Davey, the Leader of the County Council. The amendment was accepted by the proposer.

The Council then agreed the following resolutions

1. That the amended return is agreed
2. To endorse the research into accounting systems for the Council to use from one April 2015
3. To seek a new internal auditor
4. To thank the County Council, its officers Alison Elsdon & Chris Henderson and the Leader of the County Council, Councillor Grant Davey, for their assistance in resolving this issue.

112/14/04: ANY FURTHER INFORMATION AND ITEMS FOR URGENT ATTENTION

The Mayor then confirmed that she was bringing the draft minutes of the Events Committee held on 2 September 2014 to this meeting as an urgent item to consider whether or not a fireworks display should go ahead on 2nd November 2014.

The first draft of the minutes of the Events Committees for the meeting held on 2 September 2014 were circulated and the Mayor adjourned the meeting for a period to allow councillors to read those minutes

On the resumption of the meeting, the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) advised Councillors of the restricted space that was available for the event compared with last year because of the construction of the new ARCH building. The Harbourmaster has not been able to source a barge due to

pressures of work. Following the discussion at the Events Committee, and with the assistance of the Port of Blyth, she had obtained a quotation for two pontoons to be used at the display at the total cost of £3400 plus VAT. A copy of the quotation was tabled at the meeting and is attached to the signed minutes.

The budget for the event was £30,000 and there is adequate provision in the budget for the hire of the pontoons.

The Port of Blyth had indicated that they will arrange for the manoeuvring of the pontoons into position at their expense

Councillor John Potts stated that the event had already been advertised and people would be disappointed if it did not proceed. He felt the event should proceed as there would be the whole quayside available for spectators. Whilst the ARCH building had reduced the available space, he questioned the need for carnival rides. Councillor Potts wanted officers to ask other organisations and shops to sell the wristbands on behalf of the Town Council and look forward to a report at the next meeting of the Events Committee.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) informed the Council that the Assets Officer was confident that the health and safety issues that could be met for this event.

The Mayor seconded the proposal for the event to proceed.

Councillor Rickerby expressed her concern that the reputation of the Council would suffer if the event did not go ahead. She asked that the community centres are allowed to sell the wristbands and was worried about the timescale.

Councillor R Parker expressed agreement with Councillor Potts but was concerned that nothing seemed to have been arranged at the present time.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) indicated that the community centres had helped in 2013 and hoped they would do so again. She also informed the Council that the security firm were proposing a different layout which will reduce the number of entry.

Councillor Thompson stated that at the Briardale Centre people were asking to purchase wristbands on the day of the event in 2013.

Councillor Knox expressed the need for an urgent meeting of the Events Committee to get on with resolving the detail of the event

On a show of hands councillors unanimously voted to proceed with the fireworks event on 2 November 2014.

The Council were also briefly updated on the efforts to obtain a celebrity to switch on the Christmas lights and were given details of potential costs.

The Council asked that the events committee investigate this matter as a matter of urgency.

113/14/05: DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL

It was noted that the next Meeting of Blyth Town Council is to be held on 18th September 2014 in the Council Chamber at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Adopted as a true record and signed by the Mayor

.....

Date.....