

**BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Arms Evertyne House, Quay Road, Blyth, NE24 2AS on Thursday 21st May 2015 at 6.30pm.

**Present:**

**Councillors:** C Bruce, B W Elliot, A Gibbs-Barton, K Nisbet, R Parker, M Parker, J R Potts, O Potts, J Reid, D Rutter and G Thompson

**Officers:**

Sue Noddings - Town Clerk (Corporate Services)

S E Rickitt - Town Clerk (Democratic Services)

L Forsyth - Committees and Communications Officer

S Robinson - Assets Officer

A McCabe - Office Manager

**Also Present:**

**Members of the Public:** 8

Councillor O Potts opened the Annual General Meeting of Blyth Town Council by thanking Councillors, Officers and Members of the Public for her time in Office. Councillor O Potts went on to comment that it had been a great honour to have served her Town and noted that during her time as Mayor she had had the opportunity to meet a lot of wonderful people and organisations.

**180/15/01: ELECTION OF THE MAYOR**

Councillor K Ellis nominated Councillor M Parker for the position of Mayor of Blyth Town Council. This was seconded by Councillor G Thompson.

This was **AGREED** by the Council.

**181/15/02: RECEIVE THE MAYOR’S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Councillor M Parker signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

**182/15/03: ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

Councillor K Ellis nominated Councillor Kath Nisbet for the position of Deputy Mayor. This was seconded by Councillor D Rutter.

This was **AGREED** by the Council.

**183/15/04: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Cartie, Councillor L Rickerby and Councillor G T Knox.

**184/15/05: DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND THE GRANT OF ANY DISPENSATIONS**

Councillor A Gibbs-Barton enquired as to whether it was a requirement of this Meeting to grant dispensation for all Blyth Town Councillors as Council Tax Payers. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that he believes that the dispensation has been granted to the 2017 Town Council Elections, however, he commented that he would investigate further. **Action: SER.**

**185/15/06: TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 19TH MARCH 2015**

The Minutes of the Blyth Town Council held on the 19th March 2015 were **AGREED** by the Committee and signed by the Mayor.

**186/15/07: TO APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The following Councillors were appointed as representatives to the bodies outlined below:

**BRIC (2)** – Councillor G T Knox and Councillor A Gibbs-Barton

**Blyth Young People Centre (1)** – Councillor A Cartie

**NALC County Committee (1)** – Councillor J R Potts

**Friends of Ridley Park** – Councillor M Parker

**LMAPs Committee** – Councillor K Ellis

**Blyth Valley Disabled Forum** – Councillor A Gibbs-Barton

**Citizens Advice Bureau** – Councillor G T Knox

**187/15/08: TO AGREE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

Councillor G Thompson enquired as to whether there is flexibility for day time meetings as he is unable to attend night time meetings due to his employment arrangements. Councillor J R Potts commented that prospective Councillors are made aware of the meeting times prior to standing for Office.

The following Committees and terms of reference and powers were **AGREED** to be established by the Council.

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| **Name of Committee (number of members)** | **Terms of reference and powers** |
| Allotments (9) | To supervise and make decisions or recommendations regarding the operation of the Council’s allotments. |
| Assets (9) | To supervise and make decisions or recommendations regarding any assets of the Council, except for assets relating to allotments. |
| Community Grants (9) | To award grants to outside bodies and to make recommendations for policies concerning the award of community grants. |
| Complaints and Grievances Panel (5 with substitutes allowed see below) | (1) To Consider and deal with complaints and/or grievances lodged by the public or staff.  (2) To make recommendation for improvements in working practices to minimise the likelihood of complaints or grievances. |
| Events (9) | To supervise and make decisions or recommendations regarding the Council’s functions in providing entertainments or encouraging visitors. |
| Finance (9) | 1. To supervise and make decisions or recommendations in respect of the Council’s overall financial affairs. 2. To exercise the power allocated to the Finance Committee by the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. 3. To supervise the audit of the Council. 4. To supervise and make decisions or recommendations in respect of the Information Technology and compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code. |
| Planning and Development (9) | 1. To exercise the role of the Council under the Planning Acts, including responding to consultations. 2. To supervise and make decisions or recommendations concerning development within Blyth or its surrounding area. |
| Staff (9) | To supervise and make decisions or recommendations regarding the Council’s role as an employer. |
| *Policy Working Group (all Councillors and Town Clerks)* | *To make recommendations regarding policies of the Council, including making an annual review of all policies.* |
| *Town Twinning Working Group (5 Members + Co-opted Members of Blyth Citizens Exchange Group.* | *To supervise and make decisions in connection with Blyth’s Twinning with Solingen.* |

**THE FOLLOWING PROVISION SHALL ONLY APPLY TO THE COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE PANEL**

*"Where any member of the Committee is unable to attend a scheduled meeting of that body, for a reasonable reason, then a representative of that political group (if any), to which that member belongs, may, by written notice to the proper officer at any time before the day of the meeting in question, authorise the proper officer to make a change to the standing appointments of the committee to substitute an alternative member for the duration of that meeting."*

**188/15/09: TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO THE COMMITTEES FOR THE NEXT MUNICIPAL YEAR.**

**The Council then stood adjourned for a short period to enable the Committees to elect their respective Chairs and Vice-Chairs.**

a. Allotments Committee Meeting to be held after Agenda Item 9. to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair:

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor K Ellis is to be the Chair of the Allotments Committee with Councillor J R Potts as the Vice-Chair.

b. Assets Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Allotments Committee Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair:

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor J R Potts is to be the Chair of the Assets Committee with Councillor O Potts as the Vice-Chair.

c. Community Grants Committee Meeting to be held at the rising of the Assets Committee to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair:

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor J R Potts is to be the Chair of the Community Grants Committee with Councillor O Potts as the Vice-Chair.

d. Complaints and Grievance Panel Meeting to be held at the rising of the Community Grants Committee to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Council **AGREED** that the Councillor K Ellis is to be the Chair of the Complaints and Grievance Committee with Councillor C Bruce as the Vice- Chair.

e. Events Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Complaints and Grievance Panel Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair:

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor K Nisbet is to be the Chair of the Events Committee with Councillor A Cartie as the Vice-Chair.

f. Finance Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Events Committee Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor K Ellis is to be the Chair of the Finance Committee with Councillor A Gibbs-Barton as the Vice-Chair.

g. Planning & Development Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Finance Committee Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor J R Potts is to be the Chair of the Planning and Development Committee with Councillor G T Knox as the Vice-Chair.

h. Staff Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Planning & Development Committee Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Council **AGREED** that Councillor K Ellis is to be the Chair of the Staff Committee with Councillor C Bruce as the Vice-Chair.

i. Policy Working Group Meeting to be held at rising of the Staff Committee Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Council **AGREED** that, as Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Councillors M Parker and K Nisbet are to be the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Policy Working Group.

**189/15/10: MINUTES OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE**

The Mayor commented that no meeting of the Allotments Committee had taken place since the last meeting of the Council.

**190/15/11: MINUTES OF THE ASSETS COMMITTEE**

11.1 To adopt the Minutes of the Assets Committee held on the 7th April 2015

The Minutes of the Assets Committee held on the 7th April 2015 were **ADOPTED** by the Council.

11.2 To note the minutes of the Meeting of the Partnership Board held on 23rd April 2015 and to receive a verbal report on the Meeting held in the afternoon of 21st May

Councillor K Ellis opened up discussion of the Item commenting that in the period since the last meeting of the Council there had been a number of positive announcements for the town including the Tall Ships North Sea Regatta and Tour of Britain announcements. It was also noted that planning is underway within the Partnership for the associated planting displays for the events.

Discussion was then held as to the earlier Partnership Meeting.

Councillor K Nisbet drew attention to the new Scarab dual road cleaner which is now in operation within the Town.

**191/15/12: MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY GRANTS COMMITTEE**

The Mayor noted that there had been no meetings of the Community Grants Committee since the last meeting of the Town Council.

Councillor J R Potts wished to comment that he would like to see members of the Council and the public encourage organisations to forward applications for this Committee. It was noted that the deadline for the first round of applications is Tuesday 30th June 2015 at 5.00 pm with the Meeting to be held on the 7th July at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber.

**192/15/13: MINUTES OF THE EVENTS COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the Events Committee held on the 31st March 2015 were **ADOPTED** by the Council.

The Minutes of the Events Committee held on the 28th April 2015 were **ADOPTED** by the Council.

**193/15/14: MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

14.1 To adopt the Minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 12th May 2015.

Councillor R Parker wished to comment on the payments provided to the Events Co-ordinator.

The Council **AGREED** to move this item to the end of the Agenda in order to deal with the matter in Part II as the discussion concerned a contractual arrangement.

14.2 Consideration of the Internal Auditors Report

The Internal Auditor, Malcolm Wilkinson provided an outline of his report (see attached).

Attention was drawn to each individual heading and a brief explanation was provided.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) wished to thank Malcolm for his in‑depth report and noted that his detailed audit had also investigated our procedures and policies.

Councillor J R Potts also wished to thank Malcolm for his work. Malcolm Wilkinson wished to thank all of the Officers for their support in helping to deliver the report.

The Council **AGREED** to accept the Internal Auditor’s Report.

14.3 Approval of the 2014/2015 Accounts and Governance Statement

The Town Clerk commented that the work was now ready for signature and to be provided to the BDO.

The Council **APPROVED** the 2014/2015 Accounts and Governance Statement.

14.4 To receive the annual Assets Report prior to submission to the External Auditors

The Council received and **APPROVED** the Annual Assets Report.

14.5 Reappointment of the Internal Auditor

The Council **AGREED** to reappoint Malcolm Wilkinson as the Internal Auditor.

**194/15/15: MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning and Development Committee held on the 23rd April 2015 were **ADOPTED** by the Council.

**195/15/16: MINUTES OF THE STAFF COMMITTEE**

The Mayor commented that there had been no meeting of the Staff Committee nor the Complaints and Grievance Sub-Committee since the last meeting of the Town Council.

**196/15/17: MINUTES OF THE POLICY WORKING GROUP**

The Mayor noted that there has been no meeting of the Policy Working Group, however, she wished to comment that the next meeting of the Policy Working Group is to take place on the 18th June 2015 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber.

**197/15/18: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION REGARDING PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Committees and Communications Officer and the Town Clerk (Democratic Services) provided an outline for the item. It was noted that due to the expanding role of the Committees and Communications Officer in the sphere of Community Engagement the recommendation for the current arrangements be extended for the forthcoming year.

**198/15/19: GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**

The Town Council **CONFIRMED** that it continues to satisfy the eligibility criteria set out for the General Power of Competence. (GPOC SI 2012/965).

**199/15/20: REGISTER OF INTERESTS**

The Council **AGREED** that this is to be deferred to the Policy Working Group which is to be held on the 18th June 2015.

**200/15/21: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION REGARDING CONSULTATION RE OMBUDSMAN**

The Council **AGREED** to the report and recommendations from the Consultation regarding the Ombudsman from the Town Clerk (Democratic Services). **Action: SER**

**201/15/22: REPORT ON PROGRESS AGAINST ACTUAL TARGETS 2014-15**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) provided an outline for his report (see attached).

The Council **AGREED** to note the progress on this item.

**202/15/23: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION REGARDING MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME**

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) provided an outline for this item, detailing the timeline process for the provision of a Pension Scheme at Blyth Town Council.

Councillor J R Potts also sought to provide an outline for this item, noting the difficulties experienced along the way. One issue raised was the lack of information available until a firm commitment had been made to join such a scheme. It was further noted that any commitment to join the Local Government Pension Scheme was very difficult to reverse.

The Council **AGREED** that it would join the Local Government Pension Scheme and make it available to all current Officers. A decision regarding back-dating is to be deferred until further information is received however it was to be noted that the Council is minded to support such a decision subject to implications.

**203/15/24: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND/OR URGENT MATTERS**

None.

**204/15/25: DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Full Council is to take place on Thursday 16th July 2015 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber.

Councillors **RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the basis that the issues involve the discussions of contractual matters.

**193/15/14: MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

14.1 To adopt the Minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 12th May 2015.

Councillor R Parker wished to comment on the payments provided to the Events Co-ordinator.

Councillor R Parker commented that from the Policy Working Group a number of options were put forward regarding the Events Co-ordinator and expressed concern that he believes the proposed budget for 2015/2016 involves an increase of 14%.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) commented that the figure that has been budgeted for the year 2015/2016 is £21,000 as compared to £20,000 per annum for the previous financial year.

Councillor B W Elliott commented that he believed that the contract with Community Works represents excellent value for money and his work should be commended.

Councillor R Parker noted that it was his belief that Full Council was the only place he could raise such queries as he was no longer a member any Committees.

Subsequent to this discussion, the Council **ADOPTED** the Minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 12th May 2015.

**MEMBERS OF BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL:**

Councillor C Bruce

Councillor A Cartie

Councillor B W Elliott

Councillor K Ellis

Councillor A Gibbs-Barton

Councillor G T Knox

Councillor K Nisbet (Deputy Mayor)

Councillor M Parker (Mayor)

Councillor R Parker

Councillor J R Potts

Councillor O Potts

Councillor J Reid

Councillor L Rickerby

Councillor D Rutter

Councillor G Thompson

Councillor A Turnbull