



## BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL held at 6.20 pm on Thursday 11 May 2023 in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Blyth, NE24 2AS.**

### **Present:**

**Councillors:** W Taylor (Mayor), K Nisbet (Deputy Mayor), A Barrass, D Carr, A Cartie, G Davey, S Davey, B Erskine, C Jones, J R Potts, J Reid, M Richardson, M Robson, S Stanger, A Watson

### **Officers:**

Joseph Hughes            Town Clerk  
Malcolm Wilkinson      Deputy Town Clerk  
Maureen Hawthorne     Committee Clerk

### **Members of the Public: 2**

**The meeting was suspended at 6.29 pm due to disruption from a member of the public and resumed at 6.38 pm**

<b>Min No</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Election of Mayor</b>  Councillor Taylor, the current Mayor, spoke about completing his third year as Mayor and how he has used this as an opportunity to promote Blyth, whether it be a function or the opening of a shop, working with a foodbank or raising funds. Whilst some people don't like the idea of a Mayor, many do, and the main aim is to do the best for Blyth. Croftway Academy have the Mayor in their curriculum "People who inspire you in the Community". Recapping over the past 12 months the Mayor spoke of his first engagement, a visit to the Blyth Family Hub on Wright Street, and his last engagement was on a wet Bank Holiday Monday doing a litter pick at Crofton field. There are many highlights to recall including the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Coronation of King Charles.

	<p>Blyth Town Council also renewed their Charter with Solingen, celebrating the 60-year anniversary in 2022. A group are visiting Solingen in the next week as part of the town twinning team.</p> <p>2022 saw the Council present the first Freedom of Blyth awards to Les and Margaret Welsh, Empire School of boxing and also had someone from the School of Boxing competing in the Commonwealth Games. The Mayor said he was delighted to present Councillor Aileen Barrass with the John Muir Award for some of the work she has carried out at Isabella.</p> <p>Looking forward to the next 12 months the Mayor talked about the Energising Blyth initiatives - hopefully work will be starting on the culture hub in June, the Council are continuing to develop the Neighbourhood Plan, there are two new play areas to be constructed and work around a new skate park is ongoing. Blyth Spartans celebrate their 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024.</p> <p>The Tall Ships project are awaiting a decision on their application for £5million from the heritage lottery fund and if successful will use the money to refurbish the Harbour Commissions Building as a Maritime museum. The Mayor reflected on his work in the foodbanks; people are really struggling and the cost of living crisis has hit people hard. Many people have recently visited the foodbanks, often for the first time, in an extremely distressed state, simply unable to cope.</p> <p>Councillor Potts nominated Councillor Taylor for the position of Mayor of Blyth Town Council. This was seconded by Councillor Reid.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Receive the Mayor’s Declaration of Acceptance of Office</b></p> <p>Councillor Taylor signed the declaration of acceptance office.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Election of Deputy Mayor</b></p> <p>Councillor Nisbet nominated Councillor Barrass as Deputy Mayor.</p> <p>Councillor Jones made an amendment to the motion and nominated Councillor Carr as Deputy Mayor. Councillor Erskine seconded the motion.</p> <p>Members voted on the amendment with the following result:</p> <p>For Councillor Carr as Deputy Mayor 5 = for and 10 =against.</p>

	Members voted for Councillor Barrass as Deputy Mayor with the following result: 10 = for 5 = against. Therefore the motion was carried.														
<b>4</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>  Councillors: C Humphrey														
<b>5</b>	<b>Disclosure of Interests and the Grant of any Dispensations</b>  None.														
<b>6 a</b>	<b>To appoint representatives of Outside Bodies</b>  Councillor Potts said the following organisations need to be contacted to see if they want BTC to have an input.  <table border="0"> <tr> <td>NALC</td> <td>Councillor J R Potts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disabled Forum</td> <td>Councillor A Watson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Friends of Ridley Park</td> <td>Councillor S Davey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Young People</td> <td>Councillor A Cartie</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BRIC</td> <td>Councillor K Nisbet</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cultural Strategy</td> <td>Councillors K Nisbet/W Taylor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Heart of Blyth</td> <td>Councillor A Watson</td> </tr> </table>	NALC	Councillor J R Potts	Disabled Forum	Councillor A Watson	Friends of Ridley Park	Councillor S Davey	Young People	Councillor A Cartie	BRIC	Councillor K Nisbet	Cultural Strategy	Councillors K Nisbet/W Taylor	Heart of Blyth	Councillor A Watson
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<b>6 b</b>	<b>To appoint 4 Blyth Town Councillors to the Blyth Town Forum</b>  Councillor Potts proposed no changes to the representation.  Councillor Jones reiterated her earlier comments that BTC is a community council and asked the Council to consider including reps from Lib Dems and Conservatives on the Town Forum representation.  It was pointed out that the current arrangement is not proportionate to the parties.  Members voted on the amended with the result being 5 = for 7= against and 3 abstentions.  Members voted on the original motion with the result being 10 = for and 5 = against therefore the motion was carried.														

<p><b>6c</b></p>	<p>Some discussion took place around whether it would be possible to have additional Councillors included in the Town Forum meetings and this will be explored further with NCC.</p> <p><b>Town Deal</b></p> <p>Councillor Taylor and Councillor Nisbet are the BTC representatives.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>To appoint members to the Committees for the next Municipal Year</b></p>

<b>Standing Committee</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Lab.</b>	<b>Con.</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	
Environment (includes Allotments/Partnership etc)	13				
Community Development (includes Planning/Community Grants/Community Events etc)	13				
Governance (includes Strategic Priorities/Budgets/Staff/Complaints etc)	13				
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	
Proportion %	100 %	62.5 %	25 %	12.5 %	
Labour need to allocate to Committees – 24 members Conservatives need to allocate to Committees - 10 Lib/Dem need to allocate to Committees – 5					
<b>Sub Committees</b>					
Complaints & Grievance (Governance)	10				
Planning (Community Development)	10				
Staff (Governance)	10				
Community Funding (Community Development)	10				
Total	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	
Proportion %	100	62.5	25	12.5	
Labour needs to allocate – 25 members. Conservative needs to allocate – 10 members. Lib/Dem needs to allocate – 5 members.					
<b>Partnership Board</b> -Chairs Environment, Community Development and Governance, The Mayor, 1 Labour, 1 Conservative and 1 Lib/Dem. Total 7 <b>Working Groups e.g., Events</b> -All members can attend working groups (any recommendations of a working group need appropriate Standing Committee Approval). <b>Neighbourhood Planning</b> - All members can attend. Chaired by the Mayor.					

**Please see attached for Terms of Reference for Committees**

<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>The following provision shall only apply to the Complaints and Grievance Panel</b></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><i>NB Councillors appointed to Committees shall so act until the next Annual Meeting of the Council or until they cease to be a Town Councillor or they are removed by a resolution of the Council.</i></p> <p>The Council then stood adjourned for a short period to enable the Committees to elect their respective Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Councillor Potts moved.</p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Community Development Committee Meeting to be held after Agenda Item 9 to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>Councillor Potts nominated Councillor Taylor as Chair of the Community Development Committee and Councillor Cartie as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by numerous other Councillors.</p>
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>Environment Committee Meeting to be held at the rising of the Community Development Committee to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>Councillor Potts nominated Councillor Nisbet as Chair of the Environment Committee and Councillor Barrass as the Vice-Chair. This was seconded by numerous other Councillors.</p>
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>Governance Committee Meeting to be held at the rising of the Environment Committee to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>Councillor Watson moved Councillor Potts as Chair of Governance Committee and Councillor Potts nominated Councillor Watson as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by numerous other Councillors.</p>

<b>13</b>	<p><b>Community Funding Sub Committee to be held at rising of the Governance Committee to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee (Community Development) will be the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Funding Sub Committee.</p>
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Complaints and Grievance Sub Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Community Funding Sub Committee Meeting to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee (Governance) will be the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Complaints and Grievance Sub-Committee.</p>
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Planning &amp; Development Sub Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Complaints and Grievance Sub Committee to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>Councillor Watson nominated Councillor Potts of Planning &amp; Development Sub Committee and Councillor Cartie as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by numerous other Councillors.</p>
<b>16</b>	<p><b>Staff Sub Committee Meeting to be held at rising of the Planning &amp; Development Sub Committee to elect the Chair and Vice- Chair</b></p> <p>The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee (Governance) will be the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Staff Sub Committee.</p>
<b>17</b>	<p><b>Working Groups</b> – the following Working Groups need to allocate a Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair of any other working groups (once they are determined) will be decided by the Standing Committee.</p> <p><b>Events Working Group</b></p> <p>Councillor W Taylor (Chair), Councillor A Cartie (Vice Chair.</p> <p>All members are invited to participate in working groups.</p>

<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>Partnership Board</b></p> <p>Members approved the change to the board structure to named Councillors: Councillors A Cartie, G Davey, K Nisbet, J R Potts, W Taylor.</p> <p><b>Partnership Negotiating Team</b> - members approved the change to team structure to named Councillors to avoid any future dual roles, these are; Councillors K Nisbet, J R Potts and W Taylor.</p>
<p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>The Council Resumed</b></p> <p><b>Council agreed the minutes of the following Council Meetings as a true record:</b></p> <p>a) Full Council held on Thursday 12 January 2023  b) Special Full Council held on Thursday 13 April 2023</p>
<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>The following minutes of the Community Development Committee were noted as a true record:</b></p> <p>a) Special Community Development Committee held on Tuesday 17 January 2023  b) Special Community Development Committee held on Tuesday 7 February 2023</p> <p>The following Minutes of the Community Funding Sub Committee were noted as a true record:</p> <p>c) Community Funding Sub Committee held on Tuesday 7 February 2023 (Part I &amp; II)  d) Special Community Funding Sub Committee held on Thursday 23 February 2023</p> <p><b>Minutes of the Planning &amp; Development Sub Committee</b></p> <p>There are no minutes to consider.</p>
<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>The following minutes of the Environment Committee were noted as a true record.</b></p> <p>a) Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Thursday 23 February 2023 (Part I &amp; II)  b) Minutes of the Special Environment Committee held on Thursday 13 April 2023.  c) Minutes of the Special Environment Committee held on Thursday 27 April 2023.</p>



	<p><b>The following minutes of the Partnership Board were noted as a true record,</b></p> <p>d) Partnership Board held on 31 January 2023 e) Partnership Board held on 18 April 2023</p>
<b>22</b>	<p><b>The following minutes of the Governance Committee were noted as a true record:</b></p> <p>a) Special Governance Committee held on Thursday 13 April 2023 Governance Committee held on 27 April 2023</p>
<b>23</b>	<p><b>Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/2023</b></p> <p>Council <b>RESOLVED</b> to agree the recommendation from Governance Committee to approve the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council’s Internal Audit Report</li> <li>2. Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/2023</li> <li>3. Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023</li> <li>4. Accounting Statements for 2022/2023</li> </ol> <p>Council agreed to appoint Mike Slaughter as Internal Auditor for a further period of 12 months.</p>
<b>24</b>	<p><b>Decision Report</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recording of Council and Committee Meetings</li> </ol> <p>Discussion took place around the recent purchase of an “owl” system for use when holding hybrid meetings and whether this could be extended to recording Council and Committee meetings. Councillor Potts moved to accept the recommendation that the equipment is used to record meetings for a trial period in order to assess the quality of recordings etc. This was seconded by Councillor Nisbet. The Council voted on the motion with the result being 11 = for and 3 = against. There was one abstention.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Blyth Town Council Policy and Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of BTC Policies (Appendix 1)</li> <li>• Risk Management Policy (Appendix 2)</li> <li>• Civility and Respect on Social Media Guide (Appendix 3)</li> <li>• Investment Policy (Appendix 4)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<p>Members noted the list of policies. Discussion took place around the amendments to the Risk Management Policy and the DTC answered queries. The Council <b>RESOLVED</b> to accept the amended policy.</p> <p>With regard to the Civility and Respect Policy there was some debate about whether the Council should sign the pledge, however, on reflection it was agreed that this should be done on an individual basis.</p> <p>Councillor Potts moved that the Council agree the policy and that individuals can sign up to the pledge should they so wish. A vote was taken with the results being 10 = for, 3 = against, 2 = abstentions.</p> <p>Investment Policy – the DTC explained the policy will enable BTC to be more flexible around any changes suggested to investments, giving it a more prudent approach. Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to accept the policy.</p>
<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>Register of Interests</b></p> <p>To remind Councillors of the need to regularly review and revise their personal Declarations of Interest. A request was made that members are reminded on a three-monthly basis to review their Declarations of Interest.</p>
<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Members were asked to inform the Town Clerk which school they wished to be involved with in the presentation of medals.</p> <p><b>Energy Central</b></p> <p>The Mayor advised he has received a response to a letter written some time ago to the Chair of the Town Deal Board. The letter indicates that engagement with the partnership would provide the best means of ensuring BTC is engaged with the work of Energy Centre with a suggestion that representatives from BTC meet with Rob Strettle and Sarah McMillian, Assistant Service Director to look at how both groups can work together on the wider Energy Central agenda. It was proposed that the meeting should include the three Chairs of Committees, the Mayor and the Town Clerk. Members agreed with this proposal plus one Councillor from each of the political parties.</p>

<b>27</b>	<p><b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting of the Council on Thursday 20 July 2023. Public Question Time commences 6.00 pm at Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House with Full Council starting immediately following.</p>
<b>28</b>	<p><b>PART II</b></p> <p>Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960; that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.</p>

**MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL:**

W Taylor (Mayor)  
A Barrass (Deputy Mayor)  
A Cartie  
D Carr  
G Davey  
S Davey  
B Erskine  
C Humphrey  
C Jones  
K Nisbet  
J R Potts  
J Reid  
M Richardson  
M Robson  
S Stanger  
A Watson