



Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Quay Road, Blyth NE24 2AS on Thursday 24 May 2018 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Members of the Public: 11

Town Councillors:

Cllr A Cartie (Mayor), Cllr J Potts, Cllr O Potts, Cllr M Richardson, Cllr R Parker, Cllr E Anderson-Smith, Cllr D Walls

Apologies:

Cllr K Nisbet (Deputy Mayor), Cllr K Ellis, Cllr J Reid, Cllr L Rickerby, Cllr S Stanger, Cllr W Taylor, Cllr G Webb

Officers in Attendance:

Town Clerk – Joe Hughes
Deputy Town Clerk - Malcolm Wilkinson
Office Manager - Alison McCabe

Meeting

Cllr Adrian Cartie welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself as the new Mayor. He told members of the public about some of the engagements he'd already been to as Mayor. He also informed them of the invitation to visit Solingen in September and said he was looking forward to it as he'd never been and it would be an new experience for him.

The Mayor invited approval of the minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday 1 June 2017.

The minutes of last year's Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 1 June 2017 were **AGREED** by those in attendance.

Neighbourhood Plan Presentation

It was explained that the presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan would not be taking place as John Boardman has now left the employment of Northumberland County Council. Officers had only found this out late in the afternoon when they'd contacted NCC. No other member of the Planning Department was available to attend the meeting but they did offer to deliver a presentation at another time.

Cllr D Walls questioned why they hadn't at least sent a copy of the presentation when this had been arranged so far in advance. He was assured by the Town Clerk that nothing had been received prior to the meeting. Cllr Walls suggested that a complaint be made to NCC.

Summary of 2017/18

Cllr John Potts delivered a presentation highlighting achievements and events over the past year.

Following the presentation Cllr Potts invited questions or comments from members of the public on the presentation. Although not specifically on the presentation questions were taken from members of the public.

The first question concerned the housing development that is planned on the Quayside. Cllr Potts explained the Town Council's role in the planning process and that Arch had been given permission to build houses then applied for changes to the plans. These changes had turned out to be major and raised concerns with residents and the Town Council. The Town Council had, at this point, made comments on the plans but the decision would ultimately lie with Northumberland County Council. There are concerns that building there would not be good for the area as the Quayside is becoming the heart of Blyth. Cllr Potts again pointed out that they had already been given permission. He agreed that the Quayside area was growing and there had been many changes over the years. He was aware that there were concerns about problems with traffic that NCC were looking at. Cllr Bob Parker suggested that the resident contact the Planning Department at NCC directly.

A question was raised regarding the surface used on the play areas at Cottingwood Green and Laverock Place and if another surface could be considered. Cllr Potts agreed that the sandy form of surface used at Cottingwood Green is not ideal but soft pour that is used for many play areas is very expensive and easy to vandalise. Bark has been more recently used for some play areas. Cllr Potts also acknowledged the problems with drainage at Laverock Place and explained that this was now

being dealt with. He also commented on the incidents of vandalism and the Council's decision to install CCTV on all play areas as they are refurbished. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the meeting that the drainage work at Laverock Place had been underway during the week and hopefully it would be signed off on Friday (25 May). Cllr Walls questioned the back-filling as it wouldn't be ready for use. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that it had been back-filled as the connections were made to the main drain.

Cllr Potts informed the meeting that work was currently being carried out on the adventure trail at North Farm. The design of all play areas is carried out in consultation with residents of the area once the options are received from KOMPAN, the contractor used to design and install the play areas. He also noted that we have been looking at specially designed equipment for wheelchair users and while this is expensive it is hoped that it is something we could install in the future.

A question was asked regarding the use of contractors for construction work and if the Town Council used local labour. It was confirmed that for most work NCC or local contractors are used. A tender process is carried out for major work such as the war memorials but in fact a local business, Art of Stone, won that contract. The Town Clerk confirmed that local businesses are used unless specialist work is required that isn't available locally.

The next question concerned the land adjacent to the Mason's Arms and the weeds, litter and broken wall. Cllr Potts pointed out that NCC are carrying out the weed spraying and using a special dye this year so that it can be more easily monitored.

The discussion turned to litter in the Town. It was agreed that this is a major problem and the employment of an Environmental Enforcement Officer is one step that has been taken to tackling the problem. Cllr Richardson pointed out that there had been FPNs issued and the culprits can be taken to court so people should be encouraged to report incidents so that they can be followed up.

A request was made for a couple of litter bins at the lighthouse end of the beach.

There is a problem with people stubbing out cigarettes outside of pubs. The Enforcement Officer has been to speak to landlords regarding this.

The Mayor confirmed that he had been to the Masons Arms with Cllr Warren Taylor and the Environmental Enforcement Officer and spoken to the landlord regarding the litter. Letters had also been issued to nearby residents.

A complaint was made regarding the weeds in front of the Sports Club. The Town Clerk said that the Partnership Team would be informed.

A question was raised regarding by-laws that were in existence some time ago that meant businesses had to keep their own premises clean and tidy. Cllr Potts recalled an issue at Morpeth and was sure that all local by-laws had been repealed. It is possible for the Town Council to pass by-laws but enforcing them is the problem. The Town Clerk agreed that litter is a major problem and various options are being discussed with regard to tackling this.

It was felt that more pressure should be put on the County Council to address the problems with weeds.

Morrisons car park and the borders are an area of concern. Discussion took place regarding the ownership and it was agreed that this would be followed up.

A member of the public had some negative views on the town centre and NCC and felt they weren't committed to the town. The Town Clerk felt that NCC were doing a lot of good work in Blyth.

A positive comment was made before the close of the meeting from a member of the public who had received visitors from out of the area recently and their impression was that Blyth was a nice place to visit.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and taking part in the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

Date:

Signed:

Final
Subject to ratification