



Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council

Minutes of the Town Council Budget and Administration Committee
Meeting held on Monday, 09 September 2024 at 6.00pm in The Meeting
Room, Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Office, Unit 1, 82 – 88
Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors: R Mackenzie (Chair)
R Driver
M Greener
L Hawken
T Stewart (from Item 7 onwards)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stephen Robinson, Operations Manager
Stephen Cozens, Assistant to the Clerk
Cllr J Robertsons
Cllr G Smith
0 members of the public

| MINUTE NO. | TITLE AND DESCRIPTION OF ITEM | Mover | Seconder | Decision |
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| BA042/24 | OPEN SESSION | | | |
| | Members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. This is for a period of 15 minutes overall and is limited to 3 minutes per person. | N/A | N/A | Cllr R Driver reported on correspondence received from a resident regarding future plans for the opening hours of the Leisure Centre. The Operations Manager is meeting with County Councillors and will raise this topic with them. Cllr G Smith raised concerns regarding the steps at Pudding Lane which are in need of cleaning. The Operations Manager will raise with Officers from Northumberland County Council (NCC). |
| BA043/24 | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE | | | |
| | To receive apologies for absence. | N/A | N/A | Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Stewart for his lateness. |
| BA044/24 | MINUTES | | | |
| | To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Budget and Administration Committee meeting held on Monday, 22 July 2024. | LH | MG | Cllr L Hawken enquired if all of the text at the Item for Disclosure of Interests is required in the minutes, or if it could be simplified. The Finance Assistant to make enquiries. Cllr R Mackenzie raised the volunteer database, which would be an item for the Communities and Local Services Committee. After which, the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 22 July 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record. |
| BA0045/24 | DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS | | | |
| | (i) Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required to | N/A | N/A | i. There were no disclosures of interests. |

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| | <p>disclose any personal interest, (which includes any disclosable pecuniary interest), they may have in any of the items included on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 9 July 2012, and are reminded that if they have any personal interests of a prejudicial nature they must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.</p> <p>(ii) To receive and consider requests from members who have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any items on the agenda an application for dispensation under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable members to participate in discussions and voting.</p> | N/A | N/A | ii. There were no requests for dispensation. |
| BA046/24 | ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINES | | | |
| | To be agreed by the Chair, open and / or confidential. | Nem con | | Cllr L Hawken enquired if correspondence from a resident regarding not following procedures was to be discussed to which Cllr R Mackenzie responded that it would be considered under the item Schedule of Policies. |
| BA047/24 | RESPONSES TO AUDIT | | | |
| | To note the successful conclusion of the internal audit and to deal with any issues raised. | Nem con | | Updates included that the Finances Assistant would check the date on the Risk Register uploaded to the website, the Operations Manager reported that staff would be re-inducted and 1-to-1s would be held initially on a monthly basis whilst updates to the |

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| | | | | <p>agreed Appraisal Forms would be investigated. Further to this, the Allotment Practice Note would be deferred to the Communities and Local Services Committee, the Civic Regalia was insured by the Freeman and the Finance Assistant would send an email to the external auditors to see if an update was available.</p> <p>After which, the Committee RESOLVED to note the updates.</p> |
| BA048/24 | SCHEDULE OF POLICIES | | | |
| | <p>i. To receive an update and consider priorities,</p> | <p>Nem con</p> | | <p>i. Cllr R Mackenzie introduced the item and raised the Financial Regulations. Topics included spending by Committees and wording in the Financial Regulation regarding spending over £2.5k, after which it was agreed that the Co-Chairs of this Committee meet with the Operations Manager and Finance Assistant to discuss the Financial Regulations. Further to this, there would be a policies folder available for each Councillor to remain in the office for their reference. Cllr J Robertson updated the meeting regarding the correspondence mentioned at Any Other Urgent Business and that the spending came from Ear Marked Reserves (EMR's). Cllr L Hawken raised the point of information sharing during the budget consultation. A date for the Strategic Plan was agreed as was the process for staff input. Other points raised was the Code of Conduct to be investigate by Cllr R Mackenzie, the Risk Assessment and GDPR are which are upcoming, a Charging Policy, e.g. photocopying to be investigated by</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. To consider a Flexible & Predictable Working Pattern Policy for adoption, iii. To consider a Health and Safety Policy for adoption, and iv. To consider a GDPR Policy for adoption. | <p>Nem con</p> <p>Nem Con</p> <p>TS</p> | <p>RD</p> | <p>the Finance Assistant, the Protocol (Meeting Minutes) be brought to the next meeting, a Training Policy to be investigated by Cllr R Mackenzie, the Privacy Policy to be investigated by Cllr L Hawken and brought to the December meeting of this Committee and a Complaints Policy which should be 'easy to access'.</p> <p>The Operations Manager updated the meeting regarding a Health and Safety Policy, the production of Risk Assessments, an on-line training portal which has been set-up and a proposal to extend the contract for temporary staff, to be deferred to the Staffing Committee,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. The Committee RESOLVED to defer this item to the Staffing Committee, iii. The Committee RESOLVED to defer this item to the Staffing Committee with the Terms of Reference for that Committee to be checked / updated to include consideration of staffing policies. iv. The Committee unanimously RESOLVED to recommend that Council adopt the GDPR Policy. |
| BA049/24 | FINANCE QUERIES LOG | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. To receive an update, and ii. Splash Park – costs to date. | <p>Nem con</p> | | <p>The Assistant to the Clerk introduced the item with a background paper providing costs-to-date for the Splash Park. Members raised a number of points including training for water quality inspections, with Officers to investigate alternative options, operation of the</p> |

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| | | | | Splash Park, frequency and timing of invoices and periods of billings. After which, the Committee RESOLVED to note the updates. |
| BA050/24 | INTERNAL CONTROLS | | | |
| | To delegate to two Councillors authority to carry out internal control duties. | Nem con | | During the item Councillors discussed frequency of checks and tasks that should be included as part of the internal controls. After which, it was RESOLVED that Cllr T Stewart contact the Internal Auditor for a template of tasks to be carried out during internal controls. |
| BA051/24 | FINANCE TRAINING | | | |
| | To receive an update. | Nem con | | The Councillors discussed the need for Rialtas training and agreed that proposals and costs be brought to a future meeting of this Committee. |
| BA052/24 | LITTTER BINS | | | |
| | To consider a request for 5 more litter bins fitted with seagull flaps and to further consider a virement from reserves to cover the cost. | Nem con | | The Committee RESOLVED to agree a request for 5 more litter bins fitted with seagull flaps and to further consider a virement from reserves to cover the cost. |
| BA053/24 | NOTIFICATION OF PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS | | | |
| | To note payments and receipts in July. | Nem con | | Members asked a number of questions and raised a number of queries including cost differences and VAT, costs for training with a refund policy for staff who leave the organisation, hanging baskets. The Committee then unanimously RESOLVED without division to note the schedule of payments and receipts. |
| BA054/24 | BANK RECONCILIATIONS | | | |

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| | To note the bank reconciliation processes for June and July. | Nem con | | The Assistant to the Clerk introduced the item and updated Councillors with regard to the June reconciliation. Members then asked a number of questions including debit card transactions. After which, the Committee unanimously RESOLVED that the Chair sign and receive the bank reconciliations for June and July 2024. |
| BA055/24 | PURCHASE ORDERS | | | |
| | To note the purchase orders raised. | Nem con | | Members unanimously RESOLVED to note all active Purchase Orders for the previous time-period. |
| BA056/24 | ACTION PLAN | | | |
| | To receive an update – Priorities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web site update (BA51), • Events Schedule (BA53), • Community Emergency Plan (BA54) and • Strategic Planning Update. | Nem con | | During the discussion it was noted that Cllr M Greener would distribute a draft Community Emergency Plan which would be considered by himself and the Operations Manager and brought back to a future meeting of this Committee whilst it is included on the Schedule of Policies to be reviewed annually. Other items raised by Councillors included the Events Diary Template, the Riding of the Bounds and responsibility for updating the Action Plan. After which, the Committee RESOLVED to note the updates. |
| BA057/24 | EXPENDITURE VS BUDGET YEAR TO DATE | | | |
| | i. To note the report, and | Nem con | | i. Cllr R Mackenzie introduced the item and issues raised included column headings, page numbers, committed expenditure, grant monies committed and the recent decision to offer a grant for the Visitor Services Support which had not been budgeted for. The Assistant to the |

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| | | | | <p>Clerk then distributed an expenditure report in a different format and provided a verbal explanation to the meeting. After which, the Committee RESOLVED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The new format of report be used at future meetings, and b. An item be brought to the next meeting of full Council with a recommendation of which EMR the money for the Visitor Services Support be spent from. |
| At this point it was unanimously RESOLVED to suspend standing orders sufficiently to allow the meeting to proceed beyond 8pm. | | | | |
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| | | | | <p>It was further agreed that the previous year's budget be included in Councillors packs. Further points then raised included Water Quality Inspections for the Splash Park and Maintenance for Play Parks and the Splash Park.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. To receive a verbal update on grant monies awarded. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. The Assistant to the Clerk gave a verbal update on grant money awarded so far this financial year and the process for money to be paid to organisations which included the signing of an agreement letter. The discussion also included the need for further information from a recent application. <p>After which, the Committee RESOLVED to note the update.</p> |
| BA058/24 | ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA AND ACTIONS ARISING | | | |

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| | <p>To confirm items for the next agenda and agreed actions.</p> | | <p>The Committee RESOLVED to confirm the following agreed actions.</p> <p>Cllr L Hawken to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the Action Plan. • Investigate the Privacy Policy. <p>Cllr R Mackenzie to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email appraisal forms to the Operations Manager. • Investigate online training for Councilors. • Investigate training policies. <p>Cllr J Robertson to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Operations Manager regarding an email concerning the Strategic Plan meeting. <p>Cllr T Stewart to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the internal auditor regarding internal controls. <p>The Operations Manager to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning – contact NCC regarding Pudding Lane. • Consult staff regarding ideas for the Strategic Plan. • Produce a ball-park figure for a contract extension of a temporary contract. • Work with Cllr L Hawken regarding a Health & Safety Policy. • Contact NALC. • Investigate testing operations of the Splash Park. • Investigate the grant application of the Greenses Residents Association. |
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| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Cllr M Greener on the Community Emergency Plan. <p>The Finance Assistant to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate with NALC the wording for the minutes regarding the Disclosure of Interests item. • Contact the external auditor for an update. • Investigate a charging policy. • Chase up unpaid invoices from hanging baskets. • Work with Cllr J Robertson on which EMR the money for the Visitor Services Support be spent from. |
| BA059/24 | DATE OF NEXT MEETING | | | |
| | The next meeting of the committee will be held on Monday, 11 November 2024 at 6:00 pm. | N/A | N/A | Noted. |
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| | The Committee RESOLVED that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it was appropriate to exclude the media and public from the discussion of the following items of business on the grounds that public discussion may prejudice the Council's position and/or staffing issues may be discussed. | | | |
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| BA060/24 | BANKING ARRANGEMENTS | | | |
| | To consider the report. | | | Committee RESOLVED to approve the process set out in the report. |