

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 25 November 2024 at 6.00 pm in
The Meeting Room, Town Council Office, Unit 1, 82 – 88 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed**

PRESENT:

Councillors:	J Robertson (Chair)	P Rowe
	G Brown	G Smith
	J Bowden	L Stephenson
	R Driver	T Stewart
	M Greener	J Turton
	R Mackenzie	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stephen Robinson, Operations Manager

Steve Cozens, Assistant to the Clerk

Joyce Benton, Sergeant-at-Mace

Cty Cllr C Seymour

3 members of the public

C096/24

1. OPEN SESSION

Concerns and issues raised by members of the public included the loan to the Lions House Allotments Association, feedback from the visit of a cruise ship and audio recordings of meetings which don't appear on the Town Council website.

Councillors and Officers provided responses that the Lions House Allotments Association are keeping up their repayments and a breakdown would be provided, the Tourism Officer for Berwick Community Trust is doing a piece of work regarding future large-scale people visits and that the recordings missing from the website are due to poor quality and there has been no decision on this matter.

There was a further discussion on audio recordings, after which, Cllr G Brown asked that, in order to bring the item on recordings to a close, that the Chair states categorially it is not the Councils intention, never will it be the Councils intention, to

reduce the transparency of the Council and we will resume audio recordings, possibly with visual recording as soon as is possible.

Cllr G Smith enquired about the white goods item on Hide Hill to which the Operation Manager responded on the arrangements of the owner and partner organisations to remove. Cllr R Mackenzie then updated the meeting on the increase in passenger numbers using Berwick Station. An update was also provided by the Mayor on the new Chief Officer who will start in post in February.

C097/24

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr L Hawken.

Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to the request from Cllr L Hawkin for 6 months leave of absence.

C098/24

3. MINUTES

Cllr R Mackenzie welcomed Cllr P Rowe to the Council. Points raised by Councillors included the bus shelter to be installed opposite Asda and street furniture for Highcliffe. The Operations Manager responded to say that the bus shelter has arrived and a contractor appointed to install along with the unit for Cornhill Road. Meanwhile, the street furniture for Highcliffe has been installed.

After which, the minutes of the meeting of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council held on 30 September 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

C099/24

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

- i. There were no disclosures of interest.
- ii. There were no requests for dispensation.

C100/24

5. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Cllr R Mackenzie introduced the item and during the discussion it was noted that items in bold need to be kept in as a legal requirement.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the proposed Financial Regulations.

C101/24

6. MARKET

The Operations Manager updated Councillors on meetings with Northumberland County Council (NCC) Officers to explore accurate costings.

After which, the Council **RESOLVED** to instruct the Operations Manager that the negotiating figure should be £35,000 at £5,000 p.a. and not £40,000. Council further **RESOLVED** to correct the recording that the NCC Markets Manager offering nothing to the town is a perception and not based on fact.

C102/24

7. ALLOTMENTS

Cllr J Robertson updated members of the public of the need to replace the fence at the Five Arches site so the option to extend the site and add a water supply was being investigated so the projects could be completed simultaneously.

Standing Orders were suspended sufficiently to allow a member of the public to raise the issue of land owned by Network Rail and a response was provided that they intend to keep the land.

Points raised by Councillors included liaising with partners of the site for their agreement. An update was provided by Officers that NCC would contact partners for feedback and an update would be provided before an application for asset transfer is submitted.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to note the update.

C103/24

8. OUTDOOR FITNESS EQUIPMENT

The Operations Manager introduced the item and updated Members that all quotes received include grass-matting and manufacturers have been approached for information regarding robustness and after sales service.

Members asked a number of questions and raised a number of queries and possibilities including can the equipment be used by all, robustness, should the equipment be trim trail or fitness equipment and consulting with schools.

Standing Orders were suspended sufficiently to allow Cty Cllr C Seymour to provide an update on the play zone.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to agree that continuation of the project is based on spending of up to £20,000 net.

C104/24

9. STRATEGIC PLAN

Feedback and updates provided by Councillors included in Section 3 'at the level of' be replaced with 'include' whilst allotments be added to the list, the document should be reviewed every year and this mentioned in the footer and also the document should be included in the newsletter and placed on the website.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to agree the feedback and updates.

C105/24

10. PROPOSALS FOR GROWTH AND SAVINGS

A background document was distributed by Cllr J Robertson with short term, short-to-medium term and medium-to-long term budget proposals whilst the Operations Manager updated Councillors on a meeting regarding the Splash Park

and work that can be done to provide continued service with costs to be brought to a future meeting. Points raised by Councillors was that the Office lease should be added to the short-to-medium term proposals and that any match funding for projects would not lead to a rise in the precept.

Cllr J Robertson then distributed a draft budget for 2024-2025 with updates and discussions including Election Expenses, Rates for Office, Public Seat and Bus Shelter Maintenance whereby some money will come from ear-marked reserves, Transport, Play Area Maintenance, a Woodland Walk, Visitor Services Support, Markets, Tweedmouth Feast, Grants and War Memorials Reserve. Further updates included that the Coldstream Guards have expressed a wish to march through the town in 2025 and the suggestion will be made that it coincides with either VE or VJ Day, a leaflet will be produced explaining the precept which, if the draft budget distributed is agreed, should equate to an approximate 10p a week rise to Band D properties.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to agree to the points raised including that £5,000 be added to markets annually up to £35,000 whilst noting the updates.

C106/24

11. MINUTES PROTOCOL POLICY

Cllr R Mackenzie introduced the item, after which, Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the proposed Minutes Protocol Policy.

C107/24

12. COUNCILLOR TRAINING POLICY

Cllr J Robertson introduced the item including an update of the need for training and that training courses should be set-up following the elections in May 2025. Points raised by Councillors is that training can't be enforced and 'expected' should be replaced with 'encouraged', specific training courses should be included for all Committees including Planning where possible, the Staffing Committee should include training with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service whilst the National Association of Local Council will be explored for any different types of training.

After which, the Council **RESOLVED** to note the updates and points raised and that the policy be brought back to a future meeting of the Council.

C108/24

13. COMMUNICATIONS TASK GROUP

Cllr P Rowe updated Members on a background paper distributed at the meeting with key points being to get more people communicating with the Town Council, to

make people outside of Berwick aware of what is happening in Berwick and linking everyone and everything together.

Members asked a number of questions including on a calendar of events, visitor services and motorhomes along with facilities.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** that:

1. A Communications Working Group be formed to follow through the Communications Policy as per the Action Plan, and
2. Membership of the Communications Working Group to include Cllrs G Brown, R Driver, R Mackenzie and P Rowe.

C109/24

14. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Council **RESOLVED**:

1. That Cllr P Rowe join the Communities & Local Services Committee and Planning Committee, and
2. To note that maximum numbers and representation from each Ward for Committees be discussed at the next Annual Meeting of Council.

C110/24

15. BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

- i. It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr R Mackenzie, seconded by Cllr R Driver to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Administration Committee held on 09 September 2024 (noted at the meeting of 30 September 2024).
- ii. It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr R Mackenzie, seconded by Cllr M Greener to note the draft minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Administration Committee held on 11 November 2024.

C111/24

16. COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

- i. An enquiry was made regarding real-time passenger information at bus shelters and it was noted that the Operations Manager would investigate. After which, it was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr J Bowden, seconded by Cllr G Brown to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Local Services Committee held on 02 September 2024 (noted at the meeting of 30 September 2024).
- ii. An enquiry was made regarding Christmas Lights for Spittal and Tweedmouth and the Operations Manager provided an update that due to problems with the lights there had been a delay, but they would be up as soon as possible.

After which, it was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr G Brown, seconded by Cllr J Bowden to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Local Services Committee held on 14 October 2024.

- iii. An enquiry was made regarding plant benches/staging whilst it was noted that a partial refund from a recent bedding plant order is due to the Town Council.

After which, it was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr T Stewart, seconded by Cllr J Robertson to note the draft minutes of the meeting of the Local Services Committee held on 04 November 2024.

C112/24

17. PLANNING COMMITTEE

- i. It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr R Driver, seconded by Cllr M Greener to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 16 September 2024 (noted at the meeting of 30 September 2024).
- ii. It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr T Stewart, seconded by Cllr J Robertson to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 21 October 2024.

C113/24

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday, 16 December 2024 at 6 pm.