

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 14 July 2015 at 6 pm at The Town Hall, Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors:	H Bettison (Town Mayor)	T Forrester
	D Blackburn	G McLean
	G Hill	C Seymour
	A Gibson	G Smith
	K Graham	G Roughead
	A Forbes	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Pattison, Clerk

Joyce Benton, Sergeant-at-Mace

11 members of the public

Cllr Bettison welcomed everyone to the EGM and advised that the meeting had been convened to approve the accounts which had been audited internally by reputable accountants and with no problems or issues found. Cllr Bettison also advised her full commitment to transparency and thanked Cllr Hill as the Chair of the Finance Committee and the Clerk for their scrutinisation of the 2014/15 accounts.

OPEN SESSION

Mr Spencer Barclay advised of a phone number for the Clerk to contact a Blyth company re the installation of a bus shelter outside Asda in Tweedmouth. Cllr Roughead advised resident concerns re loose stones on the old bridge and the Clerk will look into this matter. Cllr Roughead also mentioned that there was no timetable in place at the Golden Square Bus Shelter and the Clerk advised that NCC had been informed of this some time ago and would contact them again on this matter. Cllr Blackburn advised his concern regarding the closure of the Castlegate Toilets and wanted immediate action. The Clerk advised that the Police had been invited to attend the Council meeting of 27th July to discuss this issue but had not responded as yet. Cllr Bettison requested that Cllr McLean put this matter onto the LMAPs agenda for all interested parties to discuss. Cllr McLean advised he would do so and also

advised he would have to leave the Council meeting at 6.50pm due to a previous engagement.

C049/15 **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been accepted on behalf of: Councillors J Beresford and J Lang. Cllr I Dixon (no apologies)

C050/15 **2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Roughead, personal interest, Tweedmouth Feast

C051/15 **3. REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION**

There were no requests for dispensation.

C052/15 **4. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015**

Cllr Hill advised her concerns re the clarity of accounting statements/audit and felt that BTC Risk had not been managed correctly. Cllr Hill also advised that the external auditors, BDO, would not fine the Council for a late audit return and in fact the accounts should have been completed before the deadline of June 30th and were already late so BTC would only be able to get a "qualified audit opinion". Concern regarding the current fraud allegation /investigation ensured that the signing off and agreement of the accounts by all Town Councillors could not be done until a thorough investigation had been completed and the Police investigation had reached a conclusion. Cllr Hill asked for this item to be deferred until such time. Cllr Bettison asked why Cllr Hill had not brought her concerns regarding the accounts at an earlier date. Cllr Hill responded that she had done so and it was this concern which had prompted her to submit a motion to consider options for a further audit. Cllr Bettison advised that no other Councillors had made any enquires about the accounts although everyone was invited to look at them. A finance meeting is also in place every Friday at which the Chairman, the Finance Officer and the Town Clerk go through all payments/invoices received and Cllr Hill as the Chairman of Finance is also invited to attend.

Cllr Hill proposed that approval of the 2014/15 accounts be deferred and this was seconded by Cllr Forrester.

A vote was taken with 6 Councillors agreeing to defer approval until a later date - Cllr Graham, Cllr Hill, Cllr Forrester, Cllr Roughead, Cllr Seymour and Cllr Smith and 5 Councillors – Cllr Bettison, Cllr Blackburn, Cllr Gibson, Cllr Forbes and Cllr McLean abstaining.

RESOLVED: To defer approval of the 2014/15 Annual Accounts until investigations

are completed.

C053/15

5. AUTUMN FESTIVALS

It was agreed by all Councillors to award £2,100 to Berwick Autumn Festivals.

RESOLVED: To award £2,100 to Berwick Autumn Festivals.

C054/15

6. DESK TOP COMPUTERS

It was agreed by Councillors to purchase 3 desk top computers from Northern Labs, however, Northern Labs have requested payment in advance and this was agreed by Councillors.

RESOLVED: To purchase 3 Desk Top Computers from Northern Labs for BTC office use

C055/15

7. CHANGES TO BUDGET

Changes to the budget were approved by all Councillors with Cllr Hill abstaining.

C056/15

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council would be held on Monday 27 July 2015 at 6 pm.