

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 16 November 2009 at 6pm at The Town Hall, Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors:	F Simpson (Town Mayor)	I Hunter
	J Beresford	M McNeely
	H Bettison	J Robertson
	A Bowlas	C Routledge
	B Douglas	J Smith
	P Herdman	J Waterhouse
	G Hill	

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Finch, Town Clerk
Adam Drummond
W F Grant
4 members of the public

OPEN SESSION

The Town Mayor welcomed those present.

The issue of items associated with recreational drug use within Berwick, the risks they might pose to the public and the need to consider measures to minimise those risks both to the public and to employees whose jobs might expose them to risk was raised. Councillor Hunter said she would refer the matter to the County Council. Councillor Bettison said she would ensure the matter was considered by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Inspector Baylis said the police would support efforts to identify problem areas and that Environmental Health should also be involved.

Councillor Douglas outlined the progress of the Berwick Environmental Group, subject of Item 10 in which he would normally be required to declare a personal and prejudicial interest but which would

not now be considered in the absence of supporting reports.

Inspector Baylis up-dated those present on progress in dealing with matters which had been prioritised at the previous meeting, including 'boy-racers', vandalism, drink-related crime, drug abuse and drug dealing, and parking.

He also provided information on the performance of Northumbria Police and Berwick division in particular; which showed the county as 'good', and an overall reduction in anti-social behaviour of 16.9%.

The Town Mayor, on behalf of members, thanked Inspector Baylis and his officers for their work.

CO53/09 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from the Councillor V Pauline.

Councillor Robertson proposed a vote of no confidence in Councillor Houghton. The Town Clerk advised that the proposal had not been notified in advance of the meeting and was not therefore valid; she said she would seek advice on the issue of councillor attendance.

CO54/09 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council held on 21 September 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

CO55/09 3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillors Herdman, Robertson and Smith each declared a personal interest in Item 6 (Berwick-upon-Tweed Corporation (Freemen) Trustees). Councillor Douglas declared a personal interest in Item 8 (EBDA Award Nomination 2009) and a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 10 (Berwick Environment Group).

CO56/09 4. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported on events she had recently attended; she also advised those present of a proposed swimathon in aid of her charity.

CO57/09 5. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

The Town Mayor welcomed Bill Batey, Director of Street Scene for Northumberland County Council.

Mr Batey referred to the Charter for Local Councils which had been developed by the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, adopted by the County Council and provided a framework for future relations between local councils and the unitary authority.

The Charter set out a range of services which local councils would be expected to deliver and for which they would need to precept from Berwick residents. It had been proposed that for 2010-11, play areas, public seats, bus shelters and seasonal lighting should be transferred. Allotments would also be transferred, but local councils had a statutory duty to manage these. Mr Batey clarified that local councils were not statutorily obliged to take on the services, but that if they resolved not to do so, a special expense would be levied by the County Council to meet the cost of the services in the Town Council area.

Members expressed serious concerns about the proposals, making particular reference to the limited information available about the condition of the assets which it was proposed should be transferred, the inaccuracy of the data which had been provided so far, and the very short timescale in relation to the setting of the precept, which would not allow a full assessment of the condition and maintenance, and insurance implications, of the assets.

It was agreed that a meeting should be held as soon as possible of the Mayor, Deputy-Mayor, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Resources Committee, with an officer from the County Council, to consider the proposals in more detail.

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Batey for attending the meeting.

CO58/09

6. BERWICK-UPON-TWEED CORPORATION (FREEMEN) TRUSTEES

Members noted the report for 2008-09.

CO59/09

7. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

The Town Mayor highlighted the amendments which had been proposed by the working group which had met to review the Standing Orders.

Member agreed these but it was suggested that further consideration needed to be given in a future review to guidance for members who represented the Council on outside bodies.

RESOLVED: The Town Council to adopt the revised Standing Orders.

CO60/09

8.EBDA AWARD NOMINATION 2009

Members had been invited to consider a Town Council nomination for the Eastern Borders Development Association Annual Award.

RESOLVED: To nominate TEDCO (Workspace) for the EBDA Award 2009.

Councillor Douglas, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest, left the room during consideration of this item.

CO61/09

9. STREET NAME REQUEST

Members considered the invitation from the County Council to suggest a name for the development of 19 new apartments at 7 – 13 Main Street, Tweedmouth. It was agreed none of those already proposed was suitable.

RESOLVED: To propose as first choice Macgregor Court; and as second choice Shiel Close, both names having relevance to the location of the development.

CO62/09

10. BERWICK ENVIRONMENT GROUP

This item was referred to the next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee, to allow full supporting documentation to be provided to members.

CO63/09

11. MITCHELL MEMORIAL HALL

The Town Clerk reported that discussions had been initiated with the Asset Management team at the County Council, to take forward the Council's expression of interest in acquiring the Hall, agreed by the Council at its meeting on 23 June 2008 (minute C026/08).

It was noted that the County Council was now developing a policy in relation to

asset transfer and disposal, and that the Town Council would be required to demonstrate its intentions for the Hall in a business plan.

It was agreed that Councillors Bowlas, McNeely, Robertson and Smith should meet to discuss options for the Hall.

CO64/09

12. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Routledge, as the Town Council's representative on the Market Town Welcome Group, reported that it had been proposed that the Town Council should form a working group to consider the future of Berwick Charter Market. At present the proposed membership included Councillor Routledge, Councillor Robertson (representing the Chamber of Trade), Terry Garnick (Northumberland County Council) and Ruth McNeely (North Northumberland Tourism Association). A second Councillor was required to ensure the Council was always represented at meetings.

RESOLVED: Councillor Bowlas would represent the Town Council in the absence of Councillor Routledge at any meetings of the Berwick Charter Market Working Group.

CO65/09

13. PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 15 September 2009 and on 20 October 2009.

Concern was expressed that the Council was no longer being provided with schedules of delegated planning decisions. The Town Clerk advised that the Assistant to the Clerk was proposing to collate this information from the individual notifications to the Council and would provide lists to the Planning Committee.

Councillor Smith referred to the poor signage to the town centre, which did not encourage passing traffic to divert into Berwick. This would be raised by the Environment and Regeneration Committee.

Other issues raised in relation to visitors to Berwick, and which would be referred to the Environment and Regeneration Committee, were the absence of any taxi with a motorised wheelchair; and the lack of adequate coach-parking facilities in

Berwick.

CO66/09

14. TOWN TWINNING

Members noted that a public meeting to discuss the future of town twinning would be held on 26 November 2009 at 7pm at the Town Hall; Councillor Bettison would chair the meeting.

CO67/09

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Owing to the Area Committee North meetings having been arranged for 18 January and 15 March, the dates of the next two Council meetings would be changed to 25 January 2010 and 22 March 2010.