

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 22 February 2016 at 6 pm at The Town Hall, Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors:	H Bettison (Town Mayor)	K Graham
	J Beresford	G Hill
	D Blackburn	P Hodgson
	I Dixon	G McLean
	A Forbes	G Roughead
	T Forrester	C Seymour
	A Gibson	G Smith
	E Goodyer	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Pattison, Town Clerk
County Councillor G Jones
County Councillor I Hunter
County Councillor J Smith
Steve Cozens, Assistant to the Clerk
Joyce Benton, Sergeant-at-Mace
Mr Ian Hay, Sheriff
28 members of the public

OPEN SESSION

Mr Brian Darling expressed his concern at the waiting list for GP referrals to the Swan Centre, Cllr Beresford also advised there was a long waiting list. Mr Darling and Cllr Beresford had a slight difference of opinion and Mr Darling will come into the BTC office to listen to the voice recording. Cllr Bettison also requested that County Councillors could look into this matter further and see if anything can be done.

C208/15 **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been accepted on behalf of: Councillor J Lang (personal).

C209/15 **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council meeting were requested by Cllr Hill and Cllr Forbes to have an additional statement added and requested the Clerk minuted that Cllr Bettison had read out a personal statement at the Council meeting, the Clerk added this to the minutes but advised both Councillors that this statement of request was untrue and had not been a personal statement. The minutes of 25th January 2016 were then agreed and signed as a correct record.

C210/15 **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Mclean – item 14, Cllr Roughead, Hoppa Bus, Cllr Goodyer, LED Street Lighting.

C211/15 **4. REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION**

There were no requests for dispensation.

C212/15 **5. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported on events attended since the last Council meeting. Cllr Bettison apologised if she had startled any members of the public by banging her hand down on the table at the last Council meeting and this was because she did not have her gavel. Cllr Bettison went on to say she had visited the new Gymnastic Club in Tweedmouth and also advised a 1940's tea dance will be held on March 20th. Cllr Bettison also wanted to thank everyone for a wonderful night in organising the fashion show last Friday held in aid of the Mayor's charity.

C213/15 **6. COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

Reports from Councillors, G Jones, I Hunter and J Smith have been received and circulated and are available to read. All County Councillors were present at the meeting and Cllr Hill asked Cllr Hunter about proposals for the devolution of powers from central government to the new North East Combined Authority (NECA). Cllr Hunter felt more information was required. Cllr Graham asked Cllr Jones what the future was re the Swan Centre and Active Northumberland in regard to ongoing concerns that Active Northumberland was in financial difficulty. Cllr Jones advised that a long term agreement was in place and was signed in 2015 for the administration of the Swan Centre. Several Councillors expressed their own concerns and Cllr Beresford advised there was 2 million in the budget and where was this money? Cllr Jones will look into this matter further on the Town Council's behalf. Cllr Graham also requested County Councillors look into why

no answers had been received from NCC in regard to value of the Degas painting. The Clerk advised, Mr Keith Merrin, Woodhorn Museum, had advised he would again contact NCC for an insurance valuation and would also look at security issues in regard to bringing the painting back to Berwick. Cllr Blackburn mentioned his concerns re footpaths and Cllr Smith advised this work was currently in progress and Cllr Seymour also expressed her concern re Spittal Hall/Highcliffe down to Fortes Ally and had reported matters to Bob Hodgson, NCC. Cllr Hunter urged everyone to use the NCC website to report highway problems.

C214/15

7. AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS AND ORDERS

Cllr Mclean queried fencing at Highcliffe and Cllr Hill queried the Zurich payments re a regalia replacement.

RESOLVED: It was then agreed by Councillors to approve the payments and orders appended to these minutes.

C215/15

8. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2016/2017

- a) Draft Budget 2016/17 as supplied by Finance Officer - Cllr Hill advised of failure to consult in previous years and this was now being addressed. Cllr Hill's proposal re the draft budget would entail no need to increase the precept and would remain at £218k and requested the precept be frozen at this amount. Cllr Hill mentioned substantial reserves of £250k and that the budget did not include the schedule 3 surplus or advised projected income. Cllr Hill advised the Council were in a good position and needed to ensure fiscal discipline was maintained.
- b) Cllr Hodgson advised that the decision made at the November meeting to not increase the precept was made against a draft budget and this was not acceptable to NCC. Six signatures had been obtained as advised in the Council's standing orders to overturn the November decision. Cllr Hodgson also advised the reserves were not £250k as mentioned by Cllr Hill and that £120k was earmarked for Flagstaff Park and other playparks. The current budget deficit of £32k would double by next year and in every year following. Transfer of running costs was not the way forward and this should be met from the precept. Growth projects were also not listed in the draft budget. The Council will only be able to raise the precept by 2% in future years unless they pay for a referendum in order to raise the precept further and the costs for this would then have to be met by the town council. Cllr Hodgson also mentioned figures if the precept was raised, 32k to cover deficit, £50k to ensure

safety and £100k to make some differences. Cllr Hill made a Point of Order and advised reserves were £314k. Cllr Blackburn advised the Council were getting sucked into a cloud of figures and as a resident on a low income he would be affected by any precept rise but felt that he wanted to support the Chair of Finance's recommendations. Cllr Seymour thought the precept should not be raised and fully supported and seconded Cllr Hill's proposed Budget, Cllr Mclean advised of other Councils with much higher precept percentages and mentioned Choppington as having a higher precept than Berwick. He also fully supported the Acting Clerk's guidance on this matter. Cllr Hill made a point of order and advised the Council could only vote on her proposal as Cllr Hodgson's proposal to increase the budget was not a formal resolution and quoted BTC standing orders item e, "An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion". Cllr Roughead advised BTC has substantial reserves and there was no need to raise the precept. Cllr Forbes agreed with this and advised "shame on the council for wanting to raise the precept". Cllr Goodyer thanked Cllr Hodgson and Staff for bringing BTC to this point and expressed concern at the lack of any management accounts and strongly opposed reserves to fund revenue. One off projects such as CCTV, Victorian fountain, repairs to seats and benches could logistically come from reserves. **Suspend Standing orders - Mr Michael Stewart opposed any rise in the precept and thought Councillors should take their time and consider it properly for next year – Reinstate Standing orders.** Cllr Graham supported a rise in the precept because she felt the town needed to be upgraded and some money needed to be spent on it. The Town Clerk advising as the RFO also firmly advised that the Council should increase the precept, build up reserves and ensure the Council had a contingency fund for anything unexpected occurring and went on to say that everyone saves for retirement but they also save for any unforeseen eventuality which can arise and when least expected and this same doctrine also applied to the Town Council.

A vote was then taken on Cllr Hill's proposed budget. To agree the budget, Cllrs Hill, Seymour, Forbes, Roughead, Forrester. Against the budget, Cllrs Bettison, Gibson, Mclean, Hodgson, Goodyer, Blackburn, Dixon, Beresford, Graham, Smith.

RESOLVED: Cllr Hill's proposed budget was denied.

- c) Agreement on the BTC Council precept will be deferred until the EGM on Monday

29th February. The Clerk expressed concern this timeline may be too late.

RESOLVED: To agree the Precept at a Council EGM on Monday 29th February at 6pm.

C216/15

9. COASTAL REVIVAL FUND

Cllr Goodyer advised the Coastal Revival Bid had been budgeted for in advance of the bid and appropriate costs considered and worked out and went on to successfully win the money. Cllr Goodyer then requested virement approval/permission for any unspent monies which would be used for anything which would be useful to the bid/project. Virement represents a flexible mechanism to effect budgetary amendments Cllr Bettison thought the grant award had been a wonderful achievement for the town. Councillors then agreed unanimously to agree virement approval/permission.

RESOLVED: To agree virement approval for any unspent monies.

C217/15

10. BERWICK INVESTORS CONFERENCE

Cllr Goodyer advised of the runaway success of the Conference re interest and attendance on 17th March 2016 and was now up to 90 people attending and was delighted with response. Cllr Goodyer advised he may need to supplement the money already put aside for catering and realised he could not ask BTC at the Council meeting for an extra £250 as this request was not on the agenda. This request will now be put onto the EGM agenda for Monday 29th February. Cllr Hill advised £50 had been pledged from Simpsons Malt.

RESOLVED: To put a request for £250 towards catering for the Investors Conference onto the EGM Council agenda on 29th February.

C218/15

11. FORMER KWIK SAVE

Cllr Bettison advised Cllr Blackburn that work had already started on the Kwik save site. Cllr Blackburn spoke of his ongoing opposition to the Kwik Save Development and will carry the fight to its final stages. **Suspend Standing Orders** – Mrs Rose Osborne wanted to know why offices were being built when nobody wanted them and those questions needed to be asked. **Reinstate Standing Orders.** Cllr Mclean advised it was unethical for council to send a letter to GWA and that as a major employer we should not dictate to them in regard to their own business plans. Cllr Goodyer spoke passionately about his battle against maladministration in regard to planning permission being given without taking into consideration the number of empty office space in the town and referred to his vindication by the Ombudsman and gifted the apology to the people of

Berwick and to the children/young people who would not benefit from a college which was the original intention when One NE bought the site with tax payers money several years ago. **Suspend Standing orders** – Cllr Graham asked Cllr Jones through the Chair why he had supported the Kwik Save initiative. Cllr Jones advised the building had been derelict for 10 years and 2 previous and more experiences Councillors had failed to move the project forward. **Reinstate Standing orders.** Cllr Blackburn then requested a named vote on all resolutions.

Cllr Bettison declared an interest in item (a).

The Clerk advised she did not feel (item a) was appropriate re the Council writing to Greaves West and Ayre, Most Councillors disagreed with the Clerk.

- a) To call upon GWA to withdraw from any agreement to occupy offices on Walkergate and advise the Town of their intentions. Agreed to write to GWA – Cllrs Hill, Goodyer, Blackburn, Smith, Dixon, Forrester, Graham, Hodgson.
Cllr Roughead abstained. Against – Cllrs Gibson, Beresford, Seymour, Mclean, Forbes.

RESOLVED: To write to Greaves, West and Ayre.

- b) To call upon our Berwick Lib Dem County Councillors to provide front line vociferous opposition to the construction of offices in Walkergate.

RESOLVED: Agreed unanimously by all Councillors.

- c) To call upon our MP and the NCC Conservative Party Leader Peter Jackson to vigorously oppose the construction of offices.

RESOLVED: Agreed by all Councillors apart from Cllr Gibson who abstained.

- d) To call upon Steve Mason (CEO NCC), Peter McIntyre (CEO Arch) and Grant Davey (NCC Labour Leader) and Allan Hepple (NCC Cabinet member for economic Growth) to withdraw from their contract with HCA in order that the way can be paved for more economically productive and community based use of the land on the Kwiksavve site in accordance with the wishes of the people of Berwick.

RESOLVED: Agreed by all Councillors apart from Cllr Mclean who abstained.

C219/15

12. RETIREMENT OF DAVID FRANCIS

Cllr Bettison suggested Councillors buy an appropriate gift for Mr Francis using their own money and this would be recognition re how much advice and guidance all Councillors had received over the years from David. Cllr Hill advised Mr Francis was giving training to Councillors on Saturday 27th February and Cllr Bettison asked Cllr Hill to organise a

collection and gift and formally present to him on Saturday.

RESOLVED: Cllr Hill will organise a collection and present a gift to Mr Francis on Saturday 27th February from Berwick Town Councillors and also the Clerk.

C220/15

13. BERWICK TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The Clerk advised that Councillors met with 2 NCC officers on Friday 19th February. It was looking very much as if the move into the library was going ahead as although the Town Council would consider offering to pay the rent for the building they are currently in, NCC Officers advised that staffing costs and the running of the TIC would also have to be taken into consideration if the TIC stayed where it was and the running of the business/TIC would have to be taken on by BTC. Cllr Blackburn strongly advised that this was not an option and the Town Council must fight to keep the TIC where it is and suggested the rent was the reason given for moving the TIC given by NCC some time ago. Cllr Bettison advised the library would be open on Thursdays and Saturdays which it was not currently and Sunday opening was under consideration. Staff would be multi skilled and would do library and tourism duties in tandem. Tourism leaflets could be made available in local shops and café /restaurants and NCC would be considering suggestions made by BTC. Cllr Seymour advised that she was present at the meeting and it looked very much that the TIC would be moving into the library.

RESOLVED: To await NCC proposals.

C221/15

14. BERWICK LOCAL SERVICES OFFICERS

Cllr Mclean advised that there will be 2 local service officers in place between March and September. They will be flexible, work in partnership and work will be channelled through the Town Clerk. They will improve standards all around the town and Cllr Bettison advised they would be an enhancement to the service provided by NCC. They will work a 7 days week. Cllr Hill asked if the jobs would be advertised and Cllr Mclean advised it had been advertised internally at NCC and will also be put onto the NCC website. Cllr Hill also mentioned her concerns re pension, vehicle and other costs. Cllr Hodgson advised any unused costs would be refunded back to BTC.

C222/15

15. MARYGATE

Cllr Forbes advised her concern at the danger to people trying to cross the road in Marygate because of cars reversing into parking places without paying attention to passers-by and car doors opening unexpectedly. Cllr Bettison also advised she had been nearly knocked over while someone was trying to park. Cllr Seymour thought the bollards

should have been removed. Cllr Graham advised of 7 accidents reported by NCC and also agreed the bollards were not meant to be there. Cllr Blackburn also agreed.

Suspend Standing Orders – Mr John Haswell advised the reason for the bollards was because NCC ran out of silver studs. **Re-Instate Standing Orders** – Cllr Dixon advised it the experiment hadn't worked and that stall holders were now parking all the way down the street. Cllr Goodyer advised the street should be pedestrianised on Market Days from 10am until 4pm. A unanimous vote was then taken to reject prolonging the project any further and to ask NCC officers to come back to BTC and discuss options.

RESOLVED: Car parking on Marygate to revert back to the previous arrangement.

C223/15

16. LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Goodyer advised 4 Drop in sessions had been held in various wards in the town with a final Drop in session taking place on Friday 26th February at the Guildhall.

C224/15

17. REQUEST TO LEADER

Cllr Goodyer asked for Councillor permission to apply for a grant from LEADER to assist with initial funds to carry out a feasibility and business study regarding a Destination Organisation. Councillors were unanimous in approving this.

RESOLVED: To apply to LEADER re Destination Organisation funding.

C225/15

18. APPROVAL OF PLANNED EXPENDITURE

None.

C226/15

19. FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: The minutes were proposed by Cllr Hodgson and seconded by Cllr Graham and agreed by all to adopt the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held on 11 January 2016.

C227/15

20. PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: It was proposed by Cllr Seymour and seconded by Cllr Graham and agreed by all to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 15 December 2015.

C228/15

21. STAFFING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: It was proposed by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Gibson and agreed by all to adopt the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 21 September 2015.

C229/15

22. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

No invitations had been received.

C230/15

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council will be an EGM held on Monday 29th February and also on 21 March 2016 both at 6 pm.

**Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council
PAYMENTS TO BE APPROVED**

See page 3 for accompanying explanatory notes

Voucher	Code	Date	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
395	Stationary & Equipment	04/02/2016	101257	Printing	Shiel Morrison	267.00	0.00	267.00
396	Stationary & Equipment	04/02/2016	101257	Printing	Shiel Morrison	35.00	7.00	42.00
397	Civic expenses	11/02/2016	101257	Printing	Shiel Morrison	44.00	8.80	52.80
399	Professional Services	11/02/2016	101259	Legal services	Collingwood Legal	1,411.00	282.20	1,693.20
400	Bins - litter/grit	11/02/2016	101260	Litter bins	Broxap Ltd	2,070.00	414.00	2,484.00
401	Cleaning	11/02/2016	101261	Cleaning	Crystal Stone Ltd	60.00	0.00	60.00
402	Publicity	11/02/2016	101262	Neighbourhood plan publicity	Johnston Publishing Ltd	275.00	55.00	330.00
403	Maintenance & installation	11/02/2016	101263	Festive Lighting	Steven Monks	3,727.00	745.40	4,472.40
404	Equipment & Furniture	11/02/2016	101263	Office equipment	Steven Monks	155.00	31.00	186.00
405	Bus Shelter Maintenance	11/02/2016	101263	Bus Shelter repairs	Steven Monks	124.98	25.00	149.98
406	Job Evaluation	11/02/2016	101264	Job evaluation	Local Government Resource Centre	300.00	60.00	360.00
407	Civic expenses	11/02/2016	101265	Regalia Replacement	Thomas Frttorini Ltd	3,304.93	660.99	3,965.92
408	Site Repairs	11/02/2016	101266	Fence repair	Northumberland County Council	280.00	0.00	280.00

**Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council
PAYMENTS TO BE APPROVED**

See page 3 for accompanying explanatory notes

Voucher	Code	Date	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
398	Bus Shelter Purchase	11/02/2016	101258	Bus Shelter purchase	Morethan Shelters	336.00	67.20	403.20

DIRECT PAYMENTS TO BE NOTED

Voucher	Code	Date	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
409	Electricity	11/02/2016	directdebit	Electricity	Southern Electric	49.78	2.48	52.26
410	SSP Electricity	11/02/2016	directdebit	Electricity	British Gas	12.14	0.60	12.74

Explanatory Notes to accompany payment list.

Voucher	Notes
395-6	Printing & delivering newspaper inserts for Neighbourhood plan
397	Civic Party Christmas cards
398	Additional work on Asda bus shelter
399	Cost of legal advice during August
400	Cost of new litter bins
401	Office cleaning cost
402	Cost of having neighbourhood plan inserts included in newspaper
403	Cost of checking Christmas lights, installing lights on trees provided by BTC and taking lights down again
404	Cost of repairing office emergency light
405	Cost of repairing lights at various bus shelters
406	Cost of Sargent at Mace/Mayor's Secretary job evaluation
407	Cost of new Sherriff's Lady's pendent, covered by insurance claim [less £100 excess]
408	Fence repairs at Highcliffe play area
409	Office electricity cost
410	Spittal Splash Park electricity costs