

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Finance and Resources Committee Meeting held on Monday, 15 June 2015 at 6.00 pm in the Ante Room at The Town Hall, Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors: G Hill (Chair)
H Bettison
I Dixon
A Gibson
G Roughead
C Seymour

IN ATTENDANCE:

W Pattison, Town Clerk

7 Members of the Public

Councillor Hill welcomed Councillors and public to the meeting. Cllr Hill vowed to take all necessary steps to restore public confidence in BTC and mentioned recent fraud allegations. Cllr Bettison advised that she had not personally been contacted by the Police and had actually been into the Police Station to try and ascertain the basis of the alleged allegation without receiving any explanation.

F014/15 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence - None

F015/15 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2015 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

F016/15 3. STATEMENTS BY THE PUBLIC

Mrs Graham advised she was still trying to ascertain more information in regard to the xmas tree at Threefields but had not been successful due to enquiries to Four Housing proving difficult. Mrs Graham also had concerns on a housing issue regarding a family of 5 and a further concern regarding children accessing the road at Sea View. Cllrs Bettison and Dixon advised they were both Social Services issues. Cllr Blackburn expressed concern at the neglected Playhouse Cinema site

and advised he had brought up the same concern last year and felt a conversation with BTC insurers was required. The proposal re a Premier Inn taking over the site was also mentioned but was thought lack of car parking may have been an issue. A query on the transfer of play parks was also brought to the meeting and was advised that repairs needed to be done first and then the freehold would also be transferred over at the same time.

F017/15

4. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Cllr Hill declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Tweedmouth Feast and a personal interest in Berwick Literary Society. Cllr Roughead also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Tweedmouth Feast and also a personal interest in the Hoppa Bus. Cllr Seymour declared an interest in the Charter Market and Cllrs Dixon and Bettison also declared an interest in the Charter Market and Spittal Splash Park.

F018/15

5. REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION

There were no requests for dispensation.

F019/15

6. AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS AND ORDERS

Cllr Bettison advised she had requested an extra column be provided on the finance spreadsheet in order for explanations to be given on all payments submitted for approval. Any queries regarding payments on the list should be made directly to the Officer concerned. Cllr Hill said that she would seek further clarification on an NCC miscalculation in regard to holiday entitlement and further queried a payment already made to Berwick Visual Arts from Portas money for the Lowry Exhibition. Cllr Bettison said that the payment had already been approved at full Council. Cllr Hill felt this payment needed to have further clarification and it was eventually agreed to be deferred until Cllr Hill was satisfied with her enquiries.

RESOLVED: To approve all payments and orders appended to these minutes and to defer approval of the retrospective payment to Berwick Visual Arts.

Suspension of standing orders

Ms Janet Clare Dean advised that she will send/deliver a letter clarifying the recent fraud allegations into the Town Council Office

Standing Orders Resumed

F020/15

7. APPROVAL OF PLANNED EXPENDITURE

None

F021/15

8. BERWICK CHARTER MARKET

Figures have been provided and appear to be viable for BTC. However, Cllr Dixon felt more detail was required before BTC could make an informed decision and was concerned that NCC could increase costs and thought the item should be deferred until more information and further insight into how the Market could be improved upon was gathered.

Suspension of Standing orders

Cllr Blackburn thought Portas funding could pay for more stalls

Resume Standing Orders

Cllr Bettison suggested a list could be compiled of issues to discuss and look into more closely and would include amongst others, collection of money from stall holders, banking arrangements, how many pitches and costs per metre for each stall.

RESOLVED: It was decided that Cllr Dixon as the Chair of Environment and Regeneration would further investigate market costings along with 2 Councillors and appropriate Officer(s).

F022/15

9. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

A suggestion has been made to streamline and modernise the current committee structure. Budgets would be decided at a budget setting Finance meeting in November for the following financial year. The Chairman of each committee would be responsible for staying within the allocated budget. In the event of any overspend or major works required, full Council would be approached for the extra funding. A reserve would always be factored in. Cllr Dixon thought items should go straight to Finance committee. Cllr Hill advised a date should be set for a Policy and Strategy meeting to discuss Committee roles and Terms of Reference and this was agreed.

RESOLVED: To discuss Committee Structure and roles in further detail at a Policy and Strategy meeting, date to be confirmed.

F023/15

10. SALARY PAYMENT

Discussion regarding a salary issue which is of a confidential nature was deferred until the end of the meeting

F024/15

11. OFFICE EFFICIENCIES

Approval of 2 bins to be provided for the Town Council Office was agreed at a cost of £202.58 per year. Approval of 2 extra phone lines for the Town Council Office was also approved. Approval to purchase 3 desk top computers for the Town Council Office was given to the Clerk

Suspension of Standing Orders

Ms Clare Dean advised against buying a Lenovo computer as they are very difficult to get repaired. Mention was also made of ensuring the computers have gigabyte capacity re computer data storage capacity and the need to take account of Windows 10 when buying the computers.

Resume Standing Orders

RESOLVED: To purchase 2 bins, 3 desk top computers and 2 extra phone lines for the BTC office.

F025/15

12. RISK MANAGEMENT/ASSESSMENT

Various changes to the current Risk Assessment were discussed. Councillor Roughead expressed his concern that the Council had a balance in one bank account well in excess of the compensation scheme guarantee of £85k. Cllr Hill agreed extra insurance was required and this had been flagged up before as well as the very low interest gained. Cllr Bettison wanted any references to 'periodic' taking out of the Risk Assessment and specific time scales putting into place. Audio recordings were mentioned by Cllr Seymour and Cllr Hill referred to the Norman Dunn report which advised that not enough thought had been given to Risk when BTC took on Portas responsibilities and that there was an urgent need for a Risk Assessment. A request was also made that the Portas minutes **must** be emailed to the Chairman, Cllr Bettison and to all Councillors.

Any office lap tops containing any record of the Council's finances should **not** be removed from the BTC office. Clarification re current BTC insurance needs to be ascertained and a copy of the policy to be sent out to all Councillors. Health and Safety in the BTC office is also a majorly concerning issue, several boxes and equipment are lying on the floor. It was agreed that Cllr Gibson and other Councillors will help/assist moving all the boxes and clutter from the office floor and put them onto the upper gallery of the office.

It was decided a meeting should be held to update and to clarify all the Risks.

Suspend Standing Orders

Cllr Blackburn advised of his many years of experience re ascertaining Risk and he will be happy to take part in a meeting to discuss further.

Resume Standing Orders

Asbestos risk will also need to be factored in

RESOLVED: To hold a meeting to ascertain all BTC Risks and to compile a new Risk Assessment

Cllr Dixon left the meeting

F026/15

13. FINANCIAL DECISIONS MADE BY OTHER COMMITTEES

It was agreed to buy 2 signs for Spittal Splash Park from Vital signs at £52 each including fitting. It was agreed to employ a cleaner for one hour per week to clean the Town Council office. It was also agreed to repair all seats in current disrepair which were reported at Environment and Regeneration meeting and to also look at the 2 seats in disrepair at Flagstaff park by removing if beyond repair and to also repair a seat located near to the circle of green.

RESOLVED: To approve 2 signs for Spittal Splash Park; to employ a cleaner at the BTC office for one hour every week; to repair all reported seats as of Environment meeting of 8th June and to take away/repair 2 seats at Flagstaff Park and repair a seat near to the circle of green

F027/15

14. BUS SHELTERS

Councillors discussed three quotes for cleaning the 27 bus shelters in the Town. Quotes were received from NCC, Mr S Burgon and Mr Colin Renton. After consideration, it was proposed by Cllr Gibson and seconded by Cllr Seymour and agreed also by Cllr Hill to request Mr S Burgon clean all 27 bus shelters and further consideration will be given re future cleaning at a later date. Cllr Roughead also mentioned problems at Ord Road bus shelters regarding tree branches and the difficulty in getting behind the shelter to clean. The Clerk will advise NCC to remove the branches.

RESOLVED: To request Mr S Burgon clean all 27 bus shelters and to request NCC trim trees which are blocking the back of the bus shelters on Ord Road.

F028/15

15. FESTIVE TREES AND LIGHTING

Although money is in the budget, Cllr Hill advised the projected costings re £7k for

installing xmas lights seemed quite high and that it would be more cost effective to look at other quotes, Cllr Gibson thought the quote was justified and not particularly excessive.

RESOLVED: To explore more quotes re the installation of xmas lights

F029/15

16. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Councillors Hill and Roughead left the room

Cllr Bettison proposed and Cllr Gibson seconded to give Tweedmouth Feast £1,500 towards costs.

Cllr Bettison left the meeting and Cllrs Hill and Roughead returned to the meeting.

Berwick Literary Festival – It was agreed to give Berwick Literary Festival £2, 500
Councillor Seymour queried how much was in the events budget and was advised £6k.

RESOLVED: To grant Tweedmouth Feast £1,500 and Berwick Literary Festival £2,500

The public left the meeting

F030/15

10. SALARY PAYMENT

Discussion regarding a salary increase for Mr Steve Cozens, Assistant to the Clerk from LC19 to LC 20 was agreed and will be backdated from April 1st 2015.

Councillors thought Mr Cozens worked hard and deserved an increase in salary.

RESOLVED: To increase the Assistant to the Clerk's salary from LC 19 to LC 20 and backdate to 1st April 2015.

F031/15

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Monday, 13 July 2015 at 6.00pm.

Finance Resources Committee

Appendix A
Item 6
15th June 2015

12 June 2015 (15-16)

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council
PAYMENTS TO BE APPROVED

Voucher	Code	Date	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
47	Salaries: Other	12/06/2015	101096	Casual clerk	W Pattison	652.50	0.00	652.50
48	Salaries: Other	12/06/2015	101096	Casual clerk	W Pattison	810.00	0.00	810.00
49	Civic expenses	12/06/2015	101097	Mayor's visitor book	Geo C Grieve	9.99	2.00	11.99
50	Civic expenses	12/06/2015	101098	Mayor & Sgt at Mace Shirts	Robertson's	54.87	10.98	65.85
51	Floral Displays [materials]	12/06/2015	101099	Bowser Service	T Sherrif & Co	523.32	104.66	627.98
52	Stationery & Printing	12/06/2015	101100	Stationery	Viking	104.16	20.83	124.99
53	Stationery & Printing	12/06/2015	101100	Stationery	Viking	40.63	8.13	48.76
54	Mayor personal & official expenses	12/06/2015	101101	Catering	Castlegate Catering	175.00	0.00	175.00
55-64	Salaries:	12/06/2015	101102	Salaries:	Northumberland County Council	7,057.81	0.00	7,057.81
65	Hoppa Bus	12/06/2015	101103	Laminates	Fantasy Prints	9.00	1.80	10.80
66	Hoppa Bus	12/06/2015	101103	Laminates	Fantasy Prints	7.50	1.50	9.00
67	IT Support	12/06/2015	101104	IT support	Northern Lab	90.00	18.00	108.00
68	Photocopies	12/06/2015	101105	Photocopies	Capital Solutions	24.04	4.81	28.85
69	Rent	12/06/2015	101106	Rent	Edwin Thompson	1,650.00	330.00	1,980.00
70	Service Charge	12/06/2015	101106	Service charge	Edwin Thompson	53.39	10.68	64.07

See page 3 for accompanying explanatory notes

**Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council
DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS TO BE NOTED**

Voucher	Code	Date	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
46	Mayor personal & official expenses	18/05/2015	debit card	Phone Credit	Joyce Benton	30.00	0.00	30.00
73	Telecoms	12/06/2015	debit card	Internet services	BT	91.50	18.30	109.80

**Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council
DIRECT PAYMENTS TO BE NOTED**

Voucher	Code	Date	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
71	SSP Electricity	12/06/2015	direct debit	Electricity	British Gas	16.93	0.84	17.77
72	Salaries: Pension	12/06/2015	direct debit	Pension	NEST	214.39	0.00	214.39

Explanatory Notes to accompany payment list.

Voucher	Notes
45	Grant awarded towards cost of Lowry Exhibition 2014 and subsequently varied by e-mail agreement; application, meeting minute and variation agreement circulated.
46	Top-up for Mayor's Secretary's mobile phone
47/8	Payment for Temporary Clerk cover in May/June
49/50	Expenditure associated with new Mayor
51	Costs for servicing BTC's water bowser EGM 7.4.15 [This water bowser is used for watering the town's floral displays]
52	Office supplies
53	Photocopy paper EGM 7.4.15
54	Catering for Mayor making
55-64	Salary details to be provided by separate cover
65/6	Hoppa bus timetables EGM 7.4.15
67	Monthly payment for IT support contract
68	Payment for colour photocopies [NB copier contract allowed 45500 free B&W copies. 3322 are remaining].
69/70	Quarterly rent & service charge
73	Payment due to direct debit not being set up in time by BT