

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 12 January 2009 at 6 pm at The William Elder Building, Castlegate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors:	P Herdman (Chairman)	J Robertson
	H Bettison	C Routledge
	A Bowlas	F Simpson
	I Hunter	J Smith
	M McNeely	D Stewart
	V Pauline	J Waterhouse

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Finch, Town Clerk

Lynda Fakir, Locality Officer

Gillian Simmons, Manager, Berwick Borough Local Strategic Partnership

Keith Smith, Northumbria Police

2 members of the public

C065/08 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Hill and Houghton.

C066/08 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council held on 10 November 2008 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

C067/08 3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillor Hunter declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 12 (Northumberland Strategic Partnership Consultation); and in Item 16 (Council Tax Consultation).

Councillors Bettison, Herdman and Smith declared a personal interest in Item 15 (Freemen Trustees and Civic/Ceremonial Succession).

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C068/08

4. STATEMENTS BY THE PUBLIC

There were no statements by those members of the public present.

C069/08

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman wished everyone present a Happy New Year and advised Councillors that:

1. The Chief Executive of Northumberland County Council was to receive a letter of invitation to attend a meeting of Town Councillors.
2. The Chairman and Vice Chairman would be attending a meeting of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Area Committee on 16 January at 10:30 am in the CAB Conference Room in Tweed Street. All members were welcome to attend. The subject would be the budget and council tax.
3. The Friends of Flagstaff Park were part way through the application process to obtain grant aid through the Playbuilder programme to refurbish the play area in Flagstaff Park. The Friends had said they hoped for the support and encouragement of the Town Council as the project moved forward, which the Chairman had offered on the Council's behalf.

C070/08

6. COMMUNITY SAFETY AND POLICING

PC Smith updated members on a range of policing issues within the town.

Speeding on the Old Bridge was a 'live' issue, with a recent conviction. Speed cameras and humps had been rejected. Hand-held speed cameras and speed monitoring equipment would continue to be used.

Operations to contain fireworks and drugs continued to be successful.

For anti-social behaviour, warning letters to parents had recently been re-instated; these were followed by visits from the Neighbourhood Team, then an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement, with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order as the final option.

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Resources had been directed at shop-lifting over the festive period, and large numbers of 'cat-bells' for fixing to purses had been distributed.

On parking, PC Smith said there was one traffic warden in post to cover Alnwick and all points north, including Berwick, so it was difficult to enforce parking regulations. A full-time warden was not likely until a decision was made on the de-criminalisation of parking. In the meantime officers would deal with parking offences as and when appropriate.

Other issues raised by members included:

- (i) Speeding vehicles on Spittal Hall Road and Highcliffe; PC Smith said speed-monitoring cameras could be deployed
- (ii) Results of the drink-driving campaign would be reported to the next meeting
- (iii) Speeding in Prior Road and Dean Drive
- (iv) Large lorries using Mount Road, possibly led there in error by satellite navigation devices; members asked to monitor and report any incidents to the police, and signage may need to be reviewed
- (v) Anti-social behaviour in the Crawford Alley, Town Hall steps areas and outside Boots; officer presence requested at weekends
- (vi) Use of cycles on pavements; confirmed that this is illegal, although discretion used for very small children.

C071/08

7. COMMUNITY FORUMS

The Chairman welcomed Lynda Fakir and Gillian Simmons, who outlined the function and purpose of Community Forums, and the role of local councils, which were expected to be at the heart of the Forums.

It was stressed that the Forums were intended to be a way of working, not an institution. The principle aim was to share knowledge, skills and understanding in addressing issues and projects. With a local focus it was expected that more people could be reached than through existing mechanisms.

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A host organisation was expected to be identified within each Forum, which would have responsibility for the administration.

Members expressed some reservations about the proposed Forums. These included:

- (i) Concerns that there could be an imbalance between urban and rural areas, with a mutual misunderstanding; it was noted that a Forum would limit an area dealing in its own way with its own issues
- (ii) Questioning how a Forum differed from the Town Partnership;
- (iii) The view that there was nothing in the proposed structure to suggest that 'unheard voices' would be more likely to be heard in the Forums;
- (iv) Local councils should already be in touch with, and discussing, the issues which concern their residents;
- (v) The view that the proposed Forums appeared to be similar to Local Strategic Partnerships.

It was acknowledged that plans for the proposed Forums were still being formulated, particularly since financial resources would not be established until the unitary authority's budget was agreed.

It was also noted that the Forums would provide an important bridge between local councils and the three Area Partnerships, which would have key responsibilities.

Members agreed that they would want to be kept informed about the progress of the Community Forums, and be advised of opportunities to consult on the next steps.

C072/08

8. ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the Environment and Regeneration Committee meetings held on 10 December 2008.

Members asked that the issues of road gritting should be raised again with

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Highways; and Councillor Smith agreed to clarify the delay over the pedestrian crossing outside the Co-Operative Store. Raised paving outside the Post Office on West Street was reported.

C073/08

9. FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 5 January 2009, including the following resolutions.

- (i) Approve the net revenue expenditure for 2009/10 of £43,924.00**
- (ii) Approve the level of general reserves for 2009/10 at £35,688 (based on projections at 03/01/09)**
- (iii) Set the precept for 2009/10 at £46,350.00**
- (iv) Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.**

C074/08

10. EVENTS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the Events Committee meeting held on 5 January 2009

C075/08

11. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED:

- (i) To confirm the appointment of Councillor Robertson to represent the Town Council on the Cittaslow Berwick Steering Group.**
- (ii) To confirm Councillor Bettison as representative of the Council to attend the meeting of the Berwick Area Play Partnership on 19 January and thereafter.**

CO76/08

**12. NORTHUMBERLAND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (NSP)
CONSULTATION**

Members discussed the consultation document on proposed changes to the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, together with the covering report which had been circulated.

Members expressed reservations about the procedure for nominating the three local councillors which it was proposed should be members of the Board.

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Gillian Simmons (BBSLP) expected one councillor to be nominated from each Area Partnership.

RESOLVED: The Clerk to respond to the consultation and

- (i) To support the NALC's proposal to ensure there is a meaningful engagement of local councils in the 3 Area Partnerships.**
- (ii) To welcome the increased involvement in local councils through the proposal to have three NALC member representatives on the Board of the NSP; but to note that this representation does not go as far as is proposed in the Charter for Local Councils, to which the NSP is party.**
- (iii) To note that Community Forums, in which local councils will be partners (described in the Charter as 'leading partners'), are the only independent forums in the proposed structure that are not represented on the NSP Board or Executive**
- (iv) To question whether the discrepancies noted above may allow the proposed structure to be sufficiently robust for the purposes of the Comprehensive Area Assessments.**

[NOTE: Councillor Hunter, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest left the room during consideration of this item.]

CO77/08

13. MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

RESOLVED: To agree the Municipal Calendar for 2009/10 which had been circulated.

CO78/08

14. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 18 November and 16 December 2008.

CO79/08

15. FREEMEN TRUSTEES AND CIVIC/CEREMONIAL SUCCESSION

The Clerk reported that decisions on both issues were expected shortly but no further information was available at this stage.

CO80/08

16. COUNCIL TAX CONSULTATION

Members were advised that an Area Committee meeting was to be held on 16

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January 2009 at 10:30 am at the CAB in Tweed Street, at which the unitary authority's proposed changes to the budget and council tax would be discussed.

[NOTE: Councillor Hunter, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest left the room during consideration of this item.]

CO81/08

17. NORTHUMBERLAND CHARTER FOR LOCAL COUNCILS

The Clerk reported that a revised charter had not yet been made available, but it was understood that an up-date would be provided to the Tripartite meeting to be held on 15 January. Members would be advised of any substantive developments.

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