

PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of Ordinary Meeting (including Budget Meeting), held in The Spetchells Centre at
7:00pm, 28th January 2015**

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs E Burt, Cllr G Simpson, Cllr B Futers, Cllr A Gill, Cllr G McCreedy, Cllr A Piper, Cllr G Price, Cllr Mrs N McGee, Cllr Mrs J McGee, Cllr Mrs C Cuthbert, Cllr Ms J Rose, Cllr D Couchman, Cllr E Dobson, Cllr A Reid

1415/131 Apologies for Absence None

1415/132 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Couchman – Member of 1st Prudhoe Scouts
Cllr A Reid – Member of Prudhoe Community Partnership

1415/133 Minutes of Ordinary Meeting, held on 17th December 2014

It was AGREED to receive the minutes

Proposed: Cllr E Dobson Seconded: Cllr A Reid

1415/134 Matters Arising NONE**1415/135 Minutes of the Planning, Contracts and Works Committee Meeting, held on 14th January 2015**

It was AGREED to receive the report

Proposed: Cllr E Dobson Seconded: Cllr Mrs N McGee

1415/136 Accounts

a) Monthly Bank Reconciliations – to receive statements 10th December 2014 – 9th January 2015

It was AGREED to receive the monthly bank reconciliations

Proposed: Cllr G Simpson Seconded: Cllr Ms J Rose

b) Statement of Expenditure from 1st April 2014 – 22nd January 2015

It was AGREED to receive the statement of expenditure

Proposed: Cllr G Simpson Seconded: Cllr Ms J Rose

c) Endorsement of accounts paid since December meeting, and authorisation of accounts to pay (listed in schedule of accounts to be paid, tabled at the meeting)

It was AGREED to endorse those accounts paid, and to pay those listed in the schedule of accounts (tabled)

Proposed: Cllr Mrs J McGee Seconded: Cllr G McCreedy

1415/137 Grant Aid Applications 2015/16

Cllr Mrs Burt introduced the summarised grant aid report that has been prepared by the administrator from the information given in grant aid application forms. Cllr Mrs Burt added that at the last meeting Cllrs were encouraged to read the applications held on file in the town council office, and she was aware that some Cllrs had done so. Cllr Mrs Burt presented those proposals listed and hoped that Cllrs would support her ideas. Cllr Mrs Burt offered that she did not feel the town council should support larger national charities, or begin supporting Parent and Teacher Associations (PTAs). Cllr Mrs Burt also explained that she had attempted to equalised awards to 'like' groups, for example the Scouts and the Guides and the Air Cadets and the Army Cadets. Cllr Mrs Burt invited Cllrs to give their views.

Cllr Gill questioned giving large sums of money to groups who had large balances and those with a majority of members living outside of Prudhoe. Cllr Gill especially questioning funding groups where their income in the previous year exceeded their expenditure and thus grant aid was simply adding to balances. Cllr Gill also questioned the level of activity for the sums awarded.

Cllr Reid argued that groups should not be penalised for having good fundraising strategies and acknowledged that they were doing great work in the town. Cllr Reid also explained that in a lot of cases the voluntary sector were bridging the gap left by county council cuts and whereas county council increases were capped, those of the town council were not. Cllr Gill repeated that where groups have large balances and their income exceeded their expenditure, this was not 'aid'. Cllr Futers supported Cllr Gill, adding that this supposition was not a criticism of the work being carried out but simply that the town council should not be topping up bank balances.

Cllr Simpson suggested that the council could look at the way it views healthy bank balances in the future; where money is not being held for specific reasons. Cllr Simpson also recommended that those groups receiving large sums of money could be invited to present their work to the town council periodically. Cllr Simpson supported a group of the town council looking at grant aid in greater detail for the next rounds in 2016-17 but not moving the goalpost in the current financial year. Cllr Mrs Cuthbert was in favour of going back to groups to ensure they deliver on what they include in grant aid applications.

Cllr McCreedy defended groups, who he believed gave the council the information asked for; if the council wish to extract more information, (etc. what balances are held for) this question should be included on the form. Cllr McCreedy did however question giving certain groups a third of running costs, especially when the majority of members live outside the area.

Cllr Simpson summarised that it was a legitimate point about balances but if the council decided to be strict they needed to be even-handed about it and defer changes to next year.

It was AGREED to award the Grant Aid shown at Appendix A, including the use of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 to pay those shaded green.

1415/138 Budget 2015/16

Cllrs reviewed the budget sent out with the agenda papers.

Cllr McCreedy asked if the council was confident that it could achieve the funding required to add to the £40k in the budget for Highfield Park, for the development of both play areas in 2015/16. Cllr Mrs J McGee advised that the council expected to apply for section 106 funding from Northumberland County Council as well as hopefully securing funding from both County Cllrs Capital Small Schemes funding. Cllr Mrs J McGee added that if the required funding was not forthcoming, she hoped the council would agree to use money from the asset reserve fund, in order to complete the scheme in 1 year. Cllr Mrs J McGee concluded that it was more cost effective to complete the scheme in one go than over a longer period of time.

Cllr Mrs Burt expressed that she would rather not use the asset reserve fund and did not perceive that it was a huge deal to complete the project over 2 years, however she did hope that the town council would be able to attract the necessary funding.

Cllr Reid explained that the council could roll the project over 2 financial years but still have everything done at the same time, elaborating that if the project started at the end of 2015, payments could be made from both financial years.

Cllr Gill reported that the council were doing good things and achieving praise; for flowerbeds, Christmas lights, Edgewell Cemetery and events, and it would be prudent to continue in this vein. Cllr Gill added that NCC was transferring additional responsibilities with each financial year and he would rather see a gradual increase in the budget and subsequently the precept, than a dramatic increase in future years.

Cllr Mrs Burt agreed that the budget presented did represent the good things the town council are doing, as well as showing that the town council continue to be ambitious.

It was AGREED to approve the budget allocations for 2015/16 shown at Appendix B

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt Seconded: Cllr G Simpson

It was AGREED to hold £40,000 in the asset reserve fund, separate to the 2015/16 Budget

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt Seconded: Cllr Ms J Rose

It was AGREED to use £33,269 balances to off-set against the precept demand for the 2015/16 Budget. The precept demand for 2015/16 would be £288,793

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt Seconded: Cllr Ms J Rose

1415/139 Prudhoe Hospital Development

Cllrs were informed of the response of Gentoo Homes regarding the name 'Cottier's Grange' for the former Prudhoe Hospital development. Emma Walker of Nathaniel Lichfield gave the following response "I can confirm that the name 'Cottier's Grange' has been based on the Daniel Cottier's stained glass window located within Prudhoe Hall".

Cllr Futers reported that the stained glass window at Our Lady and St. Cuthbert's Catholic Church was also by Daniel Cottier and his work was highly regarded. The clerk offered tabled information extracted from various sources about the artist's work.

Cllrs agreed that the chosen name, although acknowledged this was for internal marketing purposes, was appropriate and respectful of these celebrated works.

1415/140 NCC Core Strategy Full Draft Plan

It was AGREED to respond with the recommendations made by Cllr Mrs J McGee (report available on request)

Proposed: Cllr Ms J Rose Seconded: Cllr G Simpson

Cllr Dobson thanked Cllr Mrs McGee for carrying out such a robust and diligent appraisal of the Core Strategy. Cllr Simpson agreed that Cllr Mrs McGee has done a fantastic job. Cllr Simpson added that building more affordable homes would put less pressure on the greenbelt.

Cllr Futers also commended the work of Cllr Mrs McGee and added that the town council should keep a close eye on the Prudhoe Hospital site. Cllr Futers commented that walking around Humbles Wood, it was clear that houses were not selling and if the intention is to build on the footprint of the site there is no reason to remove the greenbelt status.

Cllr Mrs Burt also thanked Cllr Mrs McGee for her work and commented that she did not think it was unreasonable to remove some areas of safeguarded land from the greenbelt after 20 years, as it tidies up the land. Cllr Mrs Burt added that developers have indicated that they do not wish to develop outside the footprint of the Prudhoe Hospital site. Cllr Mrs J McGee reiterated those comments of Cllr Futers that if this is the case, why remove greenbelt status, concluding that 410 houses are enough to cope with.

Cllr Mrs J McGee felt strongly that the orange area on the map surrounding Bewick Grange should remain as greenbelt as it adds to the character of the town and the locally referred to 'High Road' takes in the openness of the land and fabulous views. Cllr Mrs Burt offered that it was also beautiful before Bewick Grange was built and if people need homes, houses will be built. Cllr Mrs J McGee argued that the greenbelt, as it stands, can be built upon if there is a strong enough case to do so; therefore, the distinction does not need to be removed.

Cllr Futers argued that the homes that are being built do not tackle the issues of homelessness and sofa-surfing, as they are not in the main social or affordable homes being built. Cllr Mrs Burt responded that new housing of any kind allowed people to move up the housing ladder which did free up social and more affordable homes. Cllr Piper questioned whether there were a large number of homeless in Prudhoe. Cllr Futers suggested that the local MP should speak out about protecting the greenbelt in Prudhoe as much as he did about protecting the greenbelt in Ponteland. Cllr Price concluded that if Cllrs wished to hear comments from Guy Opperman that they should contact him and he would respond.

Cllr Mrs J McGee thanked the clerk for his help in putting together the report.

1415/141 Christmas Lights Provision

It was AGREED to extend the existing Christmas Lights contract and to offer Christmas Plus a 3-year contract, in line with other contracts for services.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs J McGee Seconded: Cllr A Gill

1415/142 Reports from outside bodies

Northumberland County Council: Cllr Reid reported that a peer review had been undertaken by the leader of another party. Progress was observed as good, especially in view of developments between the local authority and the NHS.

Cllr Futers asked if County Cllrs were able to inform the Town Council about developments in the town before they appeared in the local press. This related to the Hexham Courant story about £400,000 being invested in Prudhoe Front Street. Both County Cllr Mrs Burt and Cllr Reid expressed that they were unaware of the story or its foundations and therefore had nothing to report on the issue. Cllr Mrs J McGee added that she found the story derogatory, referring to the Front Street as being run-down and the 'Cinderella of Tynedale'. Cllr Mrs J McGee accepted that there were some areas requiring improvement, however shops were full and businesses were doing okay in the current climate.

NCC Town and Parish Liaison Working Group: Cllr Dobson reported that 'Cemetery Provision' was the main topic of conversation and he and Cllr Gill had attended a couple of meetings where it was acknowledged that double charging would be equalised by way of a refund. Cllr Gill advised that it was likely the town council would receive a refund of £4,000 which had been calculated over 2 to 3 years. Cllr Dobson commented that he was impressed with the openness and willingness of NCC, demonstrating that they do want to work with the town council.

Northumbrian Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB): It was AGREED to receive the quarterly report from Moira McFarlane. Cllrs noted that the report showed CAB was doing a great deal of work in Prudhoe and was now available 5 days a week; 2 days for drop-in and the remaining 3 days for appointments. Cllrs acknowledged that although this was positive it was also sad that the need appeared to be growing.

West Northumberland Youth Service: Cllr McCreedy reported that the minutes of the Prudhoe Town Council Young People's Forum (PTCYPF) would be brought to the next meeting of the town council. Cllr McCreedy also passed on the good news that the PTCYPF had been shortlisted for an award in 'Northumberland's Finest' - participation work of the year. This category hosts nominations for groups

or individual young people who have got involved and effected change. The event is being held on Friday 6th February at Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre.

East Tynedale Local Councils Forum: Cllr Reid reported that dog fouling is being tackled strongly and fines have been issued, 'not before time'. Additionally, Cllr Reid reported that Ovingham Bridge looked set to re-open in July.

NCC Planning Issue (Response to Deloitte Report): Cllr Mrs Burt advised that although she was happy for the meeting to discuss concerns with the recommendations relating to local council involvement in the planning process, it was felt more appropriate that this be placed on the agenda of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee (PCW). Cllr Price reported that he had raised the issue with Jo-Anne Garrick (NCC Planning) at the recent Core Strategy drop-in session, and she advised that the implication was that Town and Parish Councils would be by-passed in favour of streamlining the planning process. Cllr Price echoed the comment that it was about mitigating complaints about the length of time planning applications take, against a more streamlined service, whilst at the same time valuing the opinion of town and parish councils. Cllr Dobson reported that in response to the report, NALC had checked and Town and Parish Councils are not statutory consultees. Cllr Mrs J McGee agreed that the matter should be placed on the PCW's agenda and that the council should fight hard to ensure their views are taken into account. **It was AGREED to place the item on the PCW's agenda for Wednesday 11th February.**

Correspondence

1. Northumberland County Council: Section 106 Funding for Sport, Play and Recreation in Areas of Northumberland

Letter dated January 2015 from Val Knowles, Leisure Development Officer, NCC. The letter states that in certain areas of the county, including Tynedale, section 106 monies "are collected and may be spent in specific geographical areas on a variety of sports, play and recreation projects." The letter notes that "the collection of section 106 monies is due to change when the new Community Infrastructure Levy is introduced, which it is anticipated may happen, during 2015-16." The letter states that the funding is for capital projects, and indicates what these might be, who can apply (includes parish / town councils), how much funding is available, how it can be applied for, and the schedule of the application rounds through 2015. The figures in respect of the Council's area are as follows (double-checked as accurate with NCC):

Play Provision - Area 2: Prudhoe (including Mickley) – £33,368.00

Sports Provision - Area 2: Prudhoe plus Hedley-on-the-Hill, Shotley Low Quarter, Broomley & Stocksfield, Horsley, Ovington, Ovingham, and Wylam – £26,978.00

The deadline for the next round of applications to be received by NCC is Friday 20 February 2015.

It was AGREED to receive the letter and to apply for funding for Highfield Park.

2. Interim Audit 2015-16: Internal Auditor's Report

Letter dated 23 January 2015 from Mr Peter Basnett, Internal Auditor. He reports that he has "completed a comprehensive interim internal audit of the financial transactions to date...guided by the Town Council's Risk Management Report...included an examination of the insurance cover which I consider to be both appropriate and adequate. I also examined the VAT records and assets register. The audit included an inspection of the minutes and a cross check and verification of income and expenditure from invoices / paying-in vouchers to cash book to bank statements to cheque book stubs to paying-in counterfoils. The audit also included the correlation and certification of transfers between the Town Council's bank accounts. A small number of queries raised have been answered to my satisfaction. There are no matters arising from the audit to draw to the attention of the members of the Town Council."

It was AGREED to receive the report

3. The Prince's Trust: Badger Renovations

Email dated 28 January 2015 from Adam Crolla, Prince's Trust Team Leader, Whickham Thorns. "Further to our conversation on 27/01/15 at 1400, I am contacting you regarding renovating the Badger on Prudhoe bank.

We deliver a 12 week Prince's Trust Team Programme based at The East Centre in Prudhoe. As part of the course we have to plan and carry out a Community Project with the students. They have taken a great interest in refurbishing the Badger as most of them see it as a recognisable symbol of Prudhoe heritage and they feel it is in need of some TLC.

We have a team of 15 young people aged 16-22 with varying degrees of skill in regards to this project, however we feel that the plans they have proposed are well within their abilities. They hope to be able to clean and emphasize the border of the Badger; to make it more noticeable, repaint the Badgers head white; giving it a new lease of life, and hopefully with available funding plant perennial bulbs in eye catching designs to provide colour throughout the year. However if you wish to have any input on the final design please let us know.

The work will be expected to be carried out on the 9th to the 13th of February, between the hours of 0930 and 1600. All tools, equipment, and necessary health and safety precautions will be provided by ourselves.

We are also happy to engage with any external volunteers or groups that wish to aid in the successful completion of this project. We are heading to the site tonight to give it more consideration in order that we can answer any more questions.

Cllr Mrs Burt advised that the Town Council had previously agreed £2,000 funding for the Youth Service for an 'Environmental Project'. At the time it was described that the Prince's Trust would take forward any scheme and this example had been used, as well as being advised of talks with Prudhoe Gardeners Association regarding hedging works at Castle Allotments.

Cllr Reid raised concerns about the safety of the site for working, especially during wet/icy weather. Cllr Mrs Burt reiterated that a risk assessment would be carried out by the Princes Trust and health and safety would be their responsibility. **It was AGREED that Cllr Reid would contact Adam Crolla with a view to supporting the scheme.**

Tabled Items

1. Mitry-Mory – L'évolution – municipal information magazine for Mitry-Mory, January 2015
2. Society of Local Council Clerks "The Clerk" magazine, January 2015
3. Clerks & Councils Direct magazine, January 2015
4. Community Action Northumberland NEWS, Winter Issue, December 2014
5. Daniel Cottier "Pioneer of Aestheticism 1838-91," article published in the Decorative Arts Society Journal No. 23 (1999)

It was AGREED to receive the tabled items

APPENDIX A

GROUP	Grant Aid Agreed
Great North Air Ambulance	£0.00
1st Prudhoe Scout Group	£750.00
Dragon Tale Theatre Group	£400.00
East Tynedale Girlguiding	£250.00
Friends of Prudhoe Woods F.O.P.W.	£100.00
Mickley Aged Peoples Treat	£250.00
Northumberland Credit Union Limited, Prudhoe Branch	£350.00
Prudhoe (PGA) Town Show	£250.00
Prudhoe Aged People's Treat	£750.00
Prudhoe Air Training Corps	£250.00
Prudhoe and District Royal British Legion	£250.00
Prudhoe and District U3A	£200.00
Prudhoe Army Cadet Force	£250.00
Prudhoe Castle Bowling Club	£200.00
Prudhoe Community Allotment	£200.00
Prudhoe Community Band	£750.00
Prudhoe Community Choir	£200.00
Prudhoe Cricket Club	£200.00
Prudhoe Gleemen	£200.00
Prudhoe Leisure Group	£650.00
Prudhoe Over 50s Forum	£250.00
Prudhoe Pathforce	£250.00
Prudhoe Town Twinning Association	£250.00
Prudhoe Youth Football Club	£1,250.00
Tynedale Hospice at Home	£500.00
Prudhoe Ground Force	£50.00
Carers Northumberland	£1,500.00
Prudhoe Community Arts Week	£400.00
Sport Tynedale	£250.00
Tyne Valley Canoe Club	£500.00
Prudhoe Community Events Steering Group	£500.00
Community Crafters	£200.00
Prudhoe Ladies Netball Club	£500.00
Radio Prudhoe	£250.00
Ovingham First School PTA	£0.00
Prudhoe Town Women Football Club	£500.00
Prudhoe East Centre Motor Project	£322.18
Prudhoe Gardeners Association	0.00
Mickley First School PTA	£0.00
Jack & Jill Pre-school Nursery	250.00
	£14,172

Signed (Chair) _____

use of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 to pay grants shaded green above

£9,872.18

<i>West Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureaux</i>	£10,600.00
<i>West Northumberland Youth Service</i>	£20,000.00
<i>Prudhoe Community Partnership</i>	£5,500.00

use of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 to pay grants shaded green above

£25,500.00

APPENDIX B

BUDGET	2015/16
COMMUNITY SUPPORT	
Grant Aid	£14,172
Prudhoe Community Partnership	£5,500.00
CAB	£10,600.00
Live Above Shop Scheme (LASS)	£5,000.00
Youth Service	£20,000.00
Civic & Community Forum	£950.00
Remembrance (Poppy Wreath)	£50.00
War Memorial (Lych Gate)	£1,350.00
TV Licence Scheme	£11,000.00
Prudhoe in Bloom	£1,400.00
Civic Events	£8,800.00
SERVICES & FACILITIES	
Street Scene	
Bus Shelters (SLA)	£2,000.00
Seats (SLA)	£1,000.00
Litter Bins	£1,360.00
Environment	
Hanging Baskets & Planters	
Gateway Bedding	£35,830.00
Formal Floral Bedding	
Roundabouts & Shrubbery	£4,389
Grass Cutting (SLA)	£7,400.00
Kepwell	£0.00
Environmental Improvements	£5,000.00
Play Areas	£3,375.00
Castle Dene Play Area	£4,000.00
Allotments General	£3,000.00
Cemeteries	
Cemetery Contractor (SLA)	£5,000.00
Cemetery Repairs & Development	£15,000.00
Highfield Park	
Maintenance Contractor (SLA)	£6,500.00
Rent	£1,350.00
Repairs and Development	£40,000.00
Other Public Services	
The GLADE (power supply)	£250.00
Christmas Lights (SLA)	£6,995.00

Signed (Chair) _____

(Continued)	
EMPLOYMENT COSTS	
Gross Salary - Executive Officer	£34,700.00
Gross Salary - Administrative Officer	£17,700.00
Chairman's Allowance	£1,000.00
HMRC - Tax and NI	£5,000.00
Pension Contribution	
CORE ADMINISTRATION	
Office rental and rates (PCP)	£5,340.00
Office Sundries and Stationery	£4,500.00
Meeting Hire (PCP)	£1,200.00
FINANCE, SUBS & DEMOCRATIC COSTS	
Audit Fee	£1,000.00
Insurance PTC	£2,540.00
Subscription	£1,561.00
Travel - councillors & staff	£250.00
LEGAL & PROFESSIONAL AND CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT	
Professional Expenses	£5,000.00
Town Council Development	£3,000.00
CONTINGENCY	
Contingency	£18,000.00
GRAND TOTAL	£322,061.98